

JEHOVAH IS SALVATION

COMMENTARY ON BOOK OF ISAIAH

SALVATION THROUGH MESSIAH, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

Paul Apple (December 2012)

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

Isaiah 9:6-7 *“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.”*

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BACKGROUND NOTES

MacArthur: The book derives its title from the author, whose name means “*The Lord is salvation,*” and is similar to the names Joshua, Elisha, and Jesus. Isaiah is quoted directly in the NT over 65 times, far more than any other OT prophet, and mentioned by name over 20 times. . . . Isaiah was a contemporary of Hosea and Micah. His writing style has no rival in its versatility of expression, brilliance of imagery, and richness of vocabulary. . . .

Through a literary device called “prophetic foreshortening,” Isaiah predicted future events without delineating exact sequences of the events or time intervals separating them. For example, nothing in Isaiah reveals the extended period separating the two comings of the Messiah. Also, he does not provide as clear a distinction between the future temporal kingdom and the eternal kingdom as John does in Rev 20:1-10; 21:1-22:5. In God’s program of progressive revelation, details of these relationships awaited a prophetic spokesman of a later time. . . .

The most critical of the interpretative challenges in Isaiah focuses on whether Isaiah’s prophecies will receive literal fulfillment or not, and on whether the Lord, in His program, has abandoned national Israel and permanently replaced the nation with the church, so that there is no future for national Israel.

On the latter issue, numerous portions of Isaiah support the position that God has not replaced ethnic Israel with an alleged “new Israel.” Isaiah has too much to say about God’s faithfulness to Israel, that He would not reject the people whom He has created and chosen (43:1). The nation is on the palms of His hands, and Jerusalem’s walls are ever before His eyes (49:16). He is bound by His own Word to fulfill the promise He has made to bring them back to Himself and bless them in that future day (55:10-12).

On the former issue, literal fulfillment of many of Isaiah’s prophecies has already occurred To contend that those yet unfulfilled will see non-literal fulfillment is biblically groundless. This fact disqualifies the case for proposing that the church receives some of the promises made originally to Israel. The kingdom promised to David belongs to Israel, not the church. The future exaltation of Jerusalem will be on earth, not in heaven. Christ will reign personally on this earth as we know it, as well as in the new heavens and new earth (Rev 22:1, 3).

J. Sidlow Baxter: What Beethoven is in the realm of music, what Shakespeare is in the realm of literature, what Spurgeon was among the Victorian preachers, that is Isaiah among the prophets. As a writer he transcends all his prophet compeers; and it is fitting that the matchless contribution from his pen should stand as leader to the seventeen prophetic books. All who have any sense of literary appreciation must be impressed by the combined excellences of Isaiah’s style – its grandeur and dignity, its energy and liveliness, its profusion of imagery, its vividness of description, its forceful play on words, its dramatic and rhetorical touches, and last, but not least, its wonderful variety.

The character of Isaiah claims note. . . Boldness, patriotism, tenderness, broad sympathy, stormy indignation at hypocrisy, with deep spirituality and a profound sense of the Divine majesty – oh, these are grand qualities, and just such as need restoring to the preaching of our day!

Todd Beall: Isaiah ministered during the span of four kings of Judah: Uzziah (792-740), Jotham (750-732 B.C.), Ahaz (744-715), and Hezekiah (728-686). His ministry commenced at the end of Uzziah's reign (see 6:1), the end of a stable, peaceful period for both the southern kingdom (Uzziah had ruled for 52 years) and the northern kingdom (under Jeroboam II [793-753 B.C]). This period of prosperity (and religious idolatry) ended abruptly for Israel when Assyria (under Shalmaneser V) overthrew Samaria only 30 years later, in 722 B.C. Twelve years earlier (734 B.C.), Ahaz had been so afraid of the Syro-Ephraimite alliance against Assyria, that when threat of war broke out he appealed to Assyria for help. Assyria was only too happy to oblige. Later, under Hezekiah, Assyria (under Sennacherib) captured 46 cities of Judah, and nearly toppled Jerusalem in 701 B.C. Thus, Isaiah ministered under varied political conditions.

Mark Copeland: executableoutlines.com

Two major themes run throughout the book.

There is the exhortation to "*Trust in the Holy One of Israel*". Faith in the Lord would assure forgiveness for their transgressions and deliverance from their enemies. Eight times the people are urged to "*wait upon the Lord*" (cf. Isa 40:28-31).

"*The Messiah to come and the glory of His age*" is another dominate message. Isaiah spoke frequently of the events to come, foretelling the fall of heathen nations and the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah who would rule in justice and righteousness (cf. Isa 2:1-5). . .

The book of Isaiah can be divided into **two major parts**:

The Assyrian Period (chapters 1-39) - The prophet proclaims the Lord's indictment against Judah and Jerusalem, and the coming judgment against them. He portrays the sovereign rule of the Lord of Hosts who judges not only Israel, but heathen nations as well. He prophesies that the Lord will use Assyria, Babylon, and the Medes to execute His purposes, and afterward judge each of these along other nations, bringing them to desolation because of their sins. (Harkrider)

The Babylonian Period (chapters 40-66) - Isaiah exhorts an afflicted people to have faith and patience. He describes the salvation and future blessings to come upon the true Israel of God. Though Isaiah did not live during the period of Babylonian captivity, through inspiration he was able to speak words of comfort to those who would experience that difficult time of Israel's history. (ibid.)

GENERAL OUTLINE

I. THE ASSYRIAN PERIOD - CONFLICT AND VICTORY (1-39)

- A. PROPHECIES CONCERNING JUDAH AND JERUSALEM (1-12)
 - B. PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE NATIONS (13-27)
 - C. THE SOURCE OF TRUE DELIVERANCE (28-35)
 - D. HISTORICAL INTERLUDE (36-39)
- II. THE BABYLONIAN PERIOD - HOPE FOR TROUBLED TIMES (40-66)
- A. THE ONE TRUE GOD VERSUS IDOLS (40-48)
 - B. SALVATION THROUGH THE SUFFERING SERVANT (49-53)
 - C. THE FUTURE GLORY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE (54-66)

REASONS TO STUDY THE BOOK

There are many reasons why Christians should read and study the book of Isaiah.
Among them:

- It increases faith in Jesus as the Messiah, as one reads the messianic prophecies that were fulfilled in Him.
- It strengthens hope in God as the One who is ultimately in control of all things, and will bring His purposes to pass.
- It inspires love for God and His Messiah, as one reads of the blessings to be found in obedience to God's Word.
- It enlarges understanding as to how God ruled in the nations of men in the past, and how Christ may exercise His rule in the nations today.
- Give yourself the opportunity to be blessed by this wonderful book of the Bible!

Oswalt: Questions answered by Isaiah:

- Is God truly the Sovereign of history if the godless nations are stronger than God's nation?
- Does might make right?
- What is the role of God's people in the world?
- Does divine judgment mean divine rejection?
- What is the nature of trust?
- What is the future of the Davidic monarchy?
- Are not the idols stronger than God and therefore superior to him?

Robert B. Chisholm Jr.: The theological message of the book may be summarized as follows: The Lord will fulfill His ideal for Israel by purifying His people through judgment and then restoring them to a renewed covenantal relationship. He will establish Jerusalem (Zion) as the center of His worldwide kingdom and reconcile once hostile nations to Himself.

"A Theology of Isaiah," in A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament, p. 305.

Constable:

The relationship of chapters 1—5 to Isaiah's call in chapter 6 is problematic. Do the first five chapters describe the prophet's ministry before he received his call—is the order chronological—or do they constitute an introduction to the anthology of prophecies that follow Isaiah's call—is the order literary? The commentators take both views. My preference is to view these prophecies not necessarily as the first ones Isaiah delivered in his ministry but as those he placed here to form an introduction to his whole book. They present in a succinct way the problems that the rest of the book deals with. They are typical of many of Isaiah's succeeding prophecies and set forth his major emphases. Isaiah's call (ch. 6) is the most concise statement of the solution to the Israelites' problem, and the chapters after that one spell it out in more detail. Probably Isaiah, or whoever arranged these prophecies in their final form, put these prophecies here to set before the reader the situation facing Israel that Isaiah addressed in the rest of the book.

Quartz Hill School of Theology: An Outline of Isaiah

I. Prophecies of Condemnation 1-35

- A. Concerning Judah and Israel 1-12
- B. Concerning the Nations 13-23
- C. The Little Apocalypse 24-27
- D. Concerning Sinners in Israel 28-35

II. Hezekiah's Troubles 36-39

- A. The Threat of Assyria 36-37
- B. The Threat of Babylon 38-39

III. Prophecies of Consolation 40-66

- A. God's Greatness 40-48
- B. God's Grace 49-59
- C. God's Glory for Israel 60-66

<http://www.theology.edu/biblesurvey/isaiah.htm>

David Malick:

Message Statement: The restoration of God's created order will come to those in Israel and the world who trust in him after he judges the wicked.

I. (1:1-39:8) Book One: YHWH will bring judgment upon Judah and the world for their unrighteousness, but will also later bring about the blessings of the kingdom for Israel

II. (40:1-66:24) Book Two--Babylon is the Background: YHWH is the source of salvation and deliverance for the nation of Israel and those of God in the world

Parunak: Summary: What is Isaiah All About?

The importance of Isaiah is that it forms the bridge between the OT and the NT.

- Up to this point in Israel's history, we might very well expect that God would continue to expand his earthly rule through his royal nation.
- Isaiah's ministry spans the occurrence of the Assyrian conquest of Israel, prophecies the Babylonian conquest of Judah, and anticipates the restoration of both of them. In other words, it recognizes that the era of the divine-image-as-royal-nation must come to an end..
- Along the way, it points repeatedly to the coming of one who is both God and Man, who will fulfill the promises to David. In fact, one major commentary (Motyer) sees the whole purpose of the book as detailing three facets of the Messiah—his role as king, as servant, and as the Anointed Conqueror.

History has two facets: recording events, and explaining them. The events of the seventh and eighth century BC, the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, were God's way of bringing to an end the wave of divine-image-as-royal-nation and thus preparing for the coming of the true Messiah. Isaiah's role is to interpret these events as they were unfolding. He has to explain to the people that

- their sin means they must forfeit their role as God's representative ruler over the earth,
- Assyria and Babylon are God's tools to bring their tenure to an end,
- but there will be another, final wave, in which the purpose of Gen 1:26-28 will finally be realized in the personal Messiah.

Like Paul Harvey interpreting the events around him, Isaiah gives us “the rest of the story.”

Motyer: The most impressive stress on the divine holiness comes, however, with the use of the title “*the Holy One of Israel*”, which occurs twenty-five times in Isaiah as compared with seven in the remainder of the Old Testament. . . Its use throughout the Isaianic literature is a unifying factor requiring explanation. As a title it is full of majesty and mystery: the God who is transcendent in holiness has brought himself into close relationship with a specified people whereby they may claim that he is theirs and he that they are his. The whole Isaianic literature is an explication of this basic situation: the awesome threat which holiness constitutes to an unworthy, careless,

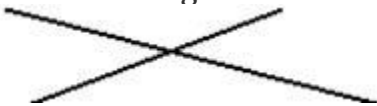
rejecting and unresponsive people (chapters 1-37); the lengths to which the Holy One will go to deal with sin, reclaim the sinner and create a righteous people for himself (chapters 40-55); and the eternal state of holiness which he will prepare for them and wherein they will enjoy him forever (chapters 56-66).

Paul Apple: One structural feature of the book of Isaiah that stands out is the use of **chiasm** (A1 B1 B2 A2) or alternate forms – especially to emphasize the message at the heart of the chiasmus when the structure is (A1 B A2). Some commentators see this form used in abundant fashion – cf.

http://www.valdes.titech.ac.jp/~h_murai/bible/23_Isaiah_pericope_e.html

The word *chiasmus* comes from the Greek letter *chi*, equivalent to our letter X. *Chiasmus* is pronounced *Kī-‘az-məs* and means “inversion of word order.” The singular nominative form is *chiasm* and the plural is *chiasms*.

Chiasmus is a variant on the concept of parallel construction where, in the second half, the order in which ideas or words occur is reversed. The inverted parallelism of a chiasm is illustrated in the last two phrases of Isaiah 2:3. If the two phrases are placed in sequence and lines are drawn from synonymous elements in the two phrases, we obtain:

Out of **Zion** shall go forth the **law**,

and the **word of the LORD** from **Jerusalem**.

The X formed by the two lines resembles the Greek letter *chi*, from which the name *chiasmus* is derived.

<https://isaiahsbookclub.wordpress.com/2010/07/16/structural-artiices-used-by-isaiah/>

See also: http://www.onthewing.org/user/BS_Chiasmus%20-%20McCoy.pdf

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH – SALVATION THRU IMMANUEL

I. (Chaps. 1-35) ORACLES OF WARNING AND JUDGMENT –

Coming Judgments on Both God's People and God's Enemies But Hope Offered in the Future Millennial Kingdom – Focus on the Threat from Assyria

- A. (1:1 – 12:6) Jerusalem and Judah Headed for Judgment (Near Term and Eschatological) but the Delivered Remnant Will Enjoy Millennial Blessings Via the Reign of Immanuel
- (1:1) Introduction to the Book of Isaiah
1. (1:2 – 5:30) Indictment of Judah with Interludes regarding Millennial Blessings and Insights into God's Judgment – chiasitic structure
- a1. (1:2-20) Indictment introduced against Judah for spiritual rebellion – with a call for repentance
- 1) (1:2-9) Spiritual rebellion breaks both the health of the sinner and the heart of the Sovereign
- a) (1:2-4) Indictment of rebellion as shocking and hurtful
- b) (1:5-9) Infection of rebellion as all-encompassing except for a divinely preserved remnant
- 2) (1:10-20) Spiritual rebellion condemned as hypocrisy that demands repentance and reformation
- a) (1:10-15) Rejection of hypocritical religious activity
- b) (1:16-20) Call for repentance and reformation
- b1. (1:21 – 2:5) Interlude regarding the glory of the future Messianic kingdom
- 1) (1:21-31) Despite spiritual harlotry, purified Jerusalem promised a future of justice and righteousness
- a) (1:21-23) Looking at the present – tragic lament – faithful city becomes a harlot
- b) (1:24-26) Looking at the process – tough love – harlot becomes a faithful city
- c) (1:27-31) Looking at God's promises – transformed legacy vs. terminal legacy – redemption for the repentant
- 2) (2:1-5) The glory of the coming Messianic kingdom will be manifested in the universal indoctrination in the Word of God and the unilateral implementation of justice and peace
- a) (2:2-3) The universal indoctrination program of the Messianic kingdom
- b) (2:4) The unilateral implementation program of justice and peace in the Messianic kingdom
- c) (2:5) Application: Learn and Live the Light of God
- c1. (2:6-22) Insight into the terrors of the Day of the Lord when self-absorbed Israel will be abased and quaking before the majestic presence of the exalted Lord – 3 Descriptions of proud Israel's humiliation:
- 1) (2:6-9) Self-absorbed – description of a land filled with iniquity
- 2) (2:10-17) Abased – description of Israel abased and the Lord exalted
- 3) (2:18-21) Quaking – description of Israel quaking before the terror of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty
- c2. (3:1 – 4:1) Insight into the intended targets of God's judgment amidst the chaos of a collapsing society – Jerusalem destined for judgment
- 1) (3:1-15) Rejection of God leads to the collapse of society and specific judgment against lofty, male leaders
- 2) (3:16 – 4:1) Rejection of God leads to the collapse of society and specific judgment against arrogant, aristocratic women
- b2. (4:2-6) Interlude regarding the glory of the future Messianic kingdom as a time of boasting, cleansing and protection – The Messianic God-man will purge Jerusalem to usher in a kingdom of security where God's people make their boast in their beautiful and glorious redeemer
- a2. (5:1-30) Indictment fleshed out to vindicate God's severe, righteous judgment
- 1) (5:1-7) God cannot be blamed for Israel's apostasy and unfaithfulness – Parable of the vineyard
- 2) (5:8-23) God's severe judgment directed against an apostate people – 6 Woes against 6 Perversions:
- a) (5:8-10) Perverters of Possessions
- b) (5:11-17) Perverters of Pleasures
- c) (5:18-19) Perverters of Reverence
- d) (5:20) Perverters of Values
- e) (5:21) Perverters of Wisdom
- f) (5:22-23) Perverters of Justice
- 3) (5:24-30) God's wrath is imminent, intense and inescapable
2. (6:1-13) Isaiah's (Conversion?) Call to ministry and Commissioning
- a. (6:1-7) Isaiah's call to ministry -- Overwhelmed by forgiveness from a holy God
- 1) (6:1-4) Overwhelmed with a vision of the emphasized holiness of the majestic God
- 2) (6:5) Overwhelmed with the guilt of personal and national sin
- 3) (6:6-7) Overwhelmed by the gracious provision of forgiveness
- b. (6:8-13) Isaiah's commissioning to a ministry of hardening hearts

- 1) (6:8) No predetermined expectations -- Requires a faithful prophet
- 2) (6:9-10) Ministry expectations -- Seems contradictory to God's character (e.g. His goodness)
- 3) (6:11-12) Judgment expectations -- Must accept the duration and severity of God's judgment while maintaining a heart of compassion
- 4) (6:13) Remnant expectations -- Still anticipates the hope of a believing remnant

3. (7:1 – 12:6) **Immanuel Introduced** as the only valid object of trust and hope for God's people

- a. (7:1-9) Celebrating the Victory of Faith in the Lord – 4 Ways to reinforce the necessity of faith:
 - 1) (7:1) History lesson – the victory of faith must feed on past experiences of God's faithfulness
 - 2) (7:2-4a) Command – the victory of faith must look to God with courage
 - 3) (7:4b-9a) Encouragement – the victory of faith must be reinforced with godly encouragement
 - 4) (7:9b) Warning – the victory of faith must respond to divine warnings
- b. (7:10-16) The Messianic promise of Immanuel announced – anticipating fulfillment of kingdom objectives -- God sovereignly extends His grace in the form of precious Messianic promises that ensure the fulfillment of His kingdom objectives and meet our need in times of trial
 - 1) (7:10-11) The offer of God's grace comes by way of revelation
 - 2) (7:12-13) The rejection of God's grace tests God's patience (but never frustrates His purposes)
 - 3) (7:14-16) The sovereign extension of God's grace centers on Messianic fulfillment of kingdom objectives
- c. (7:17-25) The exercise of God's sovereignty over wicked world rulers -- Shocking judgment comes from the hand of the Lord as He uses wicked instruments for judgment to bring about almost total desolation
- d. (8:1-22) Rely only on Immanuel
 - 1) (8:1-18) Immanuel is the only safe sanctuary from hostile enemies
 - a) (8:1-4) The arm of flesh (Assyria) can look impressive
 - b) (8:5-8) The arm of flesh will ultimately destroy you
 - c) (8:9-15) The only hope for refuge is Immanuel
 - d) (8:16-18) The signs and wonders associated with the promise of Immanuel encourage us to anticipate deliverance
 - 2) (8:19-22) Avoid any contact with the dark side of the occult – 8 reasons given
- e. **(9:1-7) God will transform His people from gloom to glory by the righteous reign of the promised Immanuel**
- d. (9:8 – 10:4) Rely only on Immanuel -- The unrelenting wrath of God executes waves of judgment against a people that persist in rejecting His counsel
 - 1) (9:9B-12) Critical sin of prideful self-reliance
 - 2) (9:13-17) Critical sin of blind loyalty to godless leaders
 - 3) (9:18-21) Critical sin of self-preservation
 - 4) (10:1-4) Critical sin of judicial injustice and exploitation
- c. (10:5-19) The exercise of God's sovereignty over wicked world rulers -- The tools used by God for His sovereign purposes (e.g. Assyria) must never imagine that they function with independent purpose and power
 - 1) (10:5-11) Contrast between the sovereign purpose and the Assyrian purpose
 - 2) (10:12-14) Contrast between the sovereign power and the Assyrian power
 - 3) (10:15) Contrast between the praise due to the sovereign Lord and praise due to the tool nation
 - 4) (10:16-19) Judgment executed by the sovereign Lord against His tool nation for their moral culpability
- b. (10:20 – 11:10) The Messianic promise of Immanuel realized – fulfilling kingdom objectives
 - 1) (10:20-34) The mighty God carries out His master plan for the repentant remnant by controlling historical cycles of oppression, deliverance and judgment
 - a) (10:20-23) Word of hope for the oppressed
 - b) (10:24-27) Word of deliverance via the coming Anointed One
 - c) (10:28-34) Word of judgment
 - 2) (11:1-10) In the future Messianic kingdom the knowledge of the Lord incarnate in Immanuel will establish justice, peace and unity
 - a) (11:1-5) The establishment of justice – Messianic King ruling in wisdom and righteousness – delighting in the fear of the Lord
 - b) (11:6-9) The establishment of peace – Messianic Kingdom environment enjoying peace and harmony – dominated by the knowledge of God
 - c) (11:10) The establishment of unity – Messianic Kingdom nations submitting eagerly – devoted to the majesty of the Davidic monarch
- a. (11:11 – 12:6) Celebrating the Victory of Faith in the Lord – Final redemption and rejoicing
 - 1) (11:11-16) The redemption of the redeemed -- Exodus redemption revisited in final victory of the regathered remnant
 - 2) (12:1-6) The rejoicing of the redeemed – Exaltation renewed as the rescued remnant gives thanks and Testimony

- B. (13:1 – 23:18) Ten Oracles of Judgment (mainly on the Gentile nations surrounding Judah) Because of Their Pride and Self-Reliance – Destined for Both Near Term and Eschatological Judgment With Some Remnant Hope – Application: Trust in God Alone!
1. (13:1 – 14:27) Judgment on **Babylon** – Root Sins of Pride and Self-Reliance Will Be Judged
 - a. (13:1-22) The wrath of God directs instruments of destruction against evil nations on account of their pride and self-reliance
 - b. (14:1-23) Presumptuous pride brought low – 4 reactions to the destruction of the proud king of Babylon
 - c. (14:24-27) Transition – Judgment on Assyria – demonstrates God’s sovereignty over all the nations
 2. (14:28-32) Judgment on the **Philistines** – God’s Kingdom will Triumph in the End
 - (:28) Prelude – listen to God’s revelation – God provides light in dark times
 - a. (:29-30a) Do not gloat prematurely – God’s kingdom will triumph
 - b. (:30b-31) Instead, bewail your impending doom – God’s enemies will perish
 - (:32) Application to God’s people – Trust in the All-Sufficient Savior
 3. (15:1 – 16:14) Judgment on **Moab** – Compassion for the Lost – Proudful idolaters should stir our hearts to compassion as they face grievous devastation for their rejection of refuge in Christ
 4. (17:1-14) Judgment on **Damascus** – Warning Against Forgetting God – Forgetting God dishonors Him greatly but does not cancel out His covenantal remnant program
 - a. (:1b-3) Devastation coming for Syria and Israel
 - b. (:4-6) Glory fading away for Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel – yet a small remnant preserved
 - c. (:7-8) Faith refocusing on the only true God
 - d. (:9-11) Root sin = forgetting God and seeking security in the arm of the flesh
- (18:1-7) Core Salvation Message for the Gentiles** (represented here by the Ethiopians) – Transition from Woe to Worship Stand Still and See the Salvation of the Lord and Worship Him Alone
- a. (:1-2) Woe – Dangerous threats can stir up a frenzy of protective activity
 - b. (:3) Waiting – Wait for the Lord to manifest His dominion
 - c. (:4-6) Watching – The oppressive invasions by world powers will be nipped in the bud by the Lord who reigns over all
 - d. (:7) Worship – Submission and tribute will be gratefully offered when the Lord reigns visibly from Mount Zion
5. (19:1 – 20:6) Judgment on **Egypt** – The Futility of Trusting in the Arm of the Flesh and the Process of Salvation – Egypt will face deserved judgment and experience undeserved blessing – but will never be a dependable source of salvation
 - a. (19:1-15) Egypt cannot save itself – human wisdom leads to ruin
 - b. (19:16-25) Egypt cannot save you because it needs salvation itself – The Process of Salvation:
 - 1) (:16-17) Conviction of Sin – starting point of the conversion process – Fear of God
 - 2) (:18) Crossroads of Decision – pledging allegiance – Salvation vs. Destruction
 - 3) (:19-22) Consummation of Salvation – leading to worship and growing knowledge
 - 4) (:23) Congregation United in Worship – reconciliation and fellowship on human plane
 - 5) (:24-25) Congregation United in Blessing – unity of saved Jews and Gentiles experiencing God’s blessings
 - c. (20:1-6) Trusting in the arm of the flesh (Egypt and Ethiopia) will be futile – always leads to bondage and humiliation and shame
 6. (21:1-10) Judgment on **Babylon** – The Horror of God’s Judgment – Horror strikes those who perceive the destructive consequences of trusting in the arm of the flesh
 - a. (:1-2) Harsh vision of unrelenting attacks
 - b. (:3-4) Horror overwhelms God’s prophet
 - c. (:5-9) Hopes crushed by the shattering of the arm of the flesh
 - d. (:10) Hard times lie ahead for the people of God before millennial blessing
 - 7-8. (21:11-17) The Certainty of God’s Judgment – There will be no stay of execution with respect to God’s judgment plans for the nations – regardless of how general or how precise the revelation of His timeline
 7. (21:11-12) Judgment on **Edom** (Dumah = Silence) – How much longer? Uncertain timeline but hope will be followed by even more severe hardship
 8. (21:13-17) Judgment on **Arabia** – Precisely one year until fleeing refugees reduced to a very small defeated remnant
 9. (22:1-25) Judgment on **Jerusalem** – The Valley of Vision – Unbelief = The Unpardonable Sin –

Two Specific Examples of Self-Reliance:

- a. (22:1-14) The refusal to trust in God constitutes the unpardonable sin as divine protection is removed from the self-reliant who blindly party their way to destruction
- b. (22:15-25) Self-reliance leads to condemnation – whether the fault lies with the leader (and his presumptuous self promotion) or with the people (and their proclivity for hero worship)

10. (23:1-18) Judgment on **Tyre** – The Pride of Earthly Affluence – Greedy capitalism with its root motivation of prideful self-sufficiency will be judged by God as prostitution – yet a remnant will be restored and sanctified

C. (24:1 – 27:13) Songs of Praise for the Blessings of Faith Enjoyed in Millennial Triumph After the Catastrophic Devastation of the Guilty World – City of Man Reduced to Rubble While the City of God Worships and Sings Praises

1. (24:1-23) Judgment on the Earth – The Whole Earth is Headed for Catastrophic Devastation and Only the Remnant Remains to Praise God
 - a. (:1-12) Catastrophic devastation and gloom on the entire guilty world in the day of the Lord
 - b. (:13-16a) Worldwide songs of praise from the meager remnant glorifying the Lord
 - c. (:16b-22) Catastrophic devastation of eschatological judgment
 - d. (:23) Songs of eternal triumph – Kingdom of God exalted in the new heavens and new earth
2. (25:1-12) Songs of Praise for God’s Greatness and His Salvation – The Redeemed Need to Express Their Praise to God for His Greatness and His Salvation Culminating in Swallowing Up Death for All Time
 - a. (:1-5) Song of praise of the prophet Isaiah – exalting God for His greatness
 - b. (:6-12) Song of praise of the redeemed nations – exalting God for His salvation
3. (26:1-21) Songs of Praise for the Blessings of Faith – Faith in the Rock of Ages is Fortified by Valuable Lessons From God’s Righteous Judgments
 - a. (:1-6) Celebration of faith – blessings and motivations
 - b. (:7-19) Instruction in righteousness – via God’s righteous judgments – impact on the righteous and the wicked
 - c. (:20-21) Application: Escaping the day of the Lord’s wrath
4. (27:1-13) Song of Praise of the Fruitful Vineyard – Regathered Israel Flourishes in the Millennial Kingdom as God Deals Decisively With Her Enemies
 - a. (:1) Transition: Destruction of powerful enemies in preparation for blessing
 - b. (:2-6) Contrasting Song of the Vineyard – the protection and cultivation of the vine keeper produces good fruit that impacts the world in the millennial kingdom
 - c. (:7-11) Two divine actions and two contrasting results – the moderated discipline of the Lord and the unmitigated destruction of the enemy city leads to people being either forgiven or forsaken
 - d. (:12-13) Two images of the divine regathering of saved Israel

D. (28:1 – 35:10) 6 Woes Against Worldly Alliances Based on Pride and Self-Reliance – Destined for Both Near Term and Eschatological Judgment With Some Remnant Hope – Application: Trust in God Alone!

1. (28:1-29) Woe #1 – Directed Against Harmful Political Leaders = Disoriented Drunkards and Security-Seeking Scoffers of Israel –
The Only Sure Foundation = The Precious Cornerstone = the Messiah
 - a. (:1-13) Woe on the disoriented drunkards of Ephraim (Northern Kingdom)
 - b. (:14-29) Woe extended to the security-seeking scoffers of Jerusalem (Southern Kingdom)
2. (29:1-14) Woe #2 – Directed Against Religious Hypocrisy in Jerusalem –
The Lord Judges Rote Religious Tradition with Spiritual Blindness
 - a. (:1-4) Jerusalem reduced to dust
 - b. (:5-8) Jerusalem’s enemies (God’s instruments of discipline) reduced to fine dust
 - c. (:9-14) Judgment of spiritual blindness
3. (29:15-24) Woe #3 – Directed Against the Sophisticated Self Sufficient = Those Who Think They Are Smarter Than God = Deceivers and Defrauders –
Those Who Think They are Smarter Than God Will be Wiped Off the Face of this Earth
 - a. (:15-16) Condemnation for those that mock God = Ruthless Deceivers
 - b. (:17-21) Deliverance in the Millennial Kingdom from those who mock God = Defrauders
 - c. (:22-24) Transformation for the redeemed
4. (30:1-33) Woe #4 – Directed Against Alliances with the World –
 - a. (:1-7) Returning to Egypt is the Pathway to Shame and Futility
 - 1) (:1-5) False security leads only to shame

- 2) (:6-7) Futility is the name of the game
 - b. (:8-17) Rejection of God's Word dooms religious frauds to complete collapse
 - 1) (:8-11) Rejection of God's Word is the characteristic mark of religious frauds who substitute smooth sayings for hard truth
 - 2) (:12-14) Bad choices (Rejection of God's Word) lead to bad consequences (your world collapsing and shattering)
 - 3) (:15-17) Rejection of God's Word leaves nowhere to turn for deliverance
 - c. (:18-33) Restoration and Retribution culminate in the Day of the Lord
 - 1) (:18-26) Restoration to the blessing of covenant privilege = God's Grace
 - 2) (:27-33) Retribution with fire and brimstone on Assyria and the enemy nations – both near term and eschatological focus
5. (31:1-32:20) Woe #5 – Directed Against Those Who Trust in the World's Wisdom and Power
- a. (31:1-9) 3 Arguments for trusting in God instead of in the world
 - 1) (:1-3) By way of Reminder – of the superiority of God to worldly power and wisdom
 - 2) (:4-5) By way of Illustration – two images of the invincibility of God in protecting His covenant people
 - 3) (:6-9) By way of Warning – to trust God alone and escape the fire of His judgment
 - b. (32:1-8) Lousy government and upside down social values will be transformed by the righteous reign of the Messiah
 - 1) (:1-4) Transformed rulers and discerning populace – anticipation of the glorious reign of the Messiah
 - 2) (:5-8) Transformed social values – respect for legitimate nobles vs exposure of fools and rogues
 - c. (32:9-20) Complacent feasting will soon be replaced by judgmental famine in preparation for the eschatological blessings of the outpouring of the Spirit
 - 1) (:9-14) Warning to complacent women at ease in Zion – Abundance replaced with Abandonment
 - 2) (:15-18) Blessings from the outpouring of the Spirit
 - (:19-20) Epilogue – Severe judgment precedes abundant blessing
6. (33:1-12) Woe #6 – Directed Against the Destroyer with Deliverance for Zion – When God Springs Into Visible and Dramatic Action, the Destroyer is Destroyed and God's People are Delivered
- a. (:1-12) Two movements of judgment and deliverance
 - 1) (:1-6) First movement: judgment and deliverance
 - 2) (:7-12) Second movement: judgment and deliverance
 - b. (:13-24) Two results of witnessing God's judgment and deliverance – Appreciate the Savior as our True Deliverer, Lawgiver and King
 - 1) (:13-16) Fellowship with the holy omnipotent God
 - 2) (:17-24) Blessings from the majestic Messiah-King
7. (34:1-35:10) Summary Conclusion of Woes Against Worldly Alliances
- a. (34:1-17) Images of Slaughter and Desolation flesh out the horrifying picture of the unleashing of the wrath of God
 - b. (35:1-10) 3 Kingdom Blessings that encourage believers as we eagerly anticipate the faithful fulfillment of God's promises

HISTORICAL HINGE (Chaps. 36-39) –

Object Lessons Regarding Judgment and Deliverance -- Looking back to Threat of Assyria and Forward to Threat of Babylon

- A. (36:1-37:38) Threat From Assyria
 - 1. (36:1-37:7) King of Assyria Threatens Jerusalem – Seek the Lord for deliverance in times of Satanic intimidation and pressure rather than cutting a deal with the devil
 - 2. (37:8-38) The Power of Prayer – Crisis situations provide the opportunity for God to vindicate His preeminence and glory as He responds to prayers for deliverance from His covenant people
- B. (38:1 – 39:8) Threat From Babylon
 - 1. (38:1-22) Healing of Hezekiah – Divine Deliverance demonstrates the sovereignty of God over life and death . . . and defines our life in terms of worship
 - 2. (39:1-8) Pitfalls of Pride – Opening the door to the threat from Babylon

II. (Chaps. 40-66) ORACLES OF COMFORT AND SALVATION –

The sovereign God of creation and history (40-48) sends His promised Suffering Servant to redeem His people from the judgment they face (49-57) with the anticipation of entering into the future glory of the Messianic Kingdom (58-66) – Focus on the Threat from Babylon

- A. (40:1–48:22) Supremacy of the Lord – Deliverance From Captivity / Ultimate Redemption – His Credentials as Sovereign Creator and as Accurate Predictor/Controller of the Future
1. (40:1-31) Introduction of Supremacy – Application = Promised Comfort of Zion
 - a. (:1-11) Hope Derives from the Salvation and Governing Blessings Associated With the Promised Coming of Messiah
 - b. (:12-31) Hope Requires Patiently Waiting on the Lord for Sustaining Strength and Perseverance Because of His Ultimate Supremacy and Significance
 2. (41:1-29) Test of Supremacy = Who Calls the Shots – Challenge to False Gods to Prove Themselves
 - a. (:1-7) God Calls All the Shots – The Supreme “I AM”
 - b. (:8-20) God’s Covenant People Have No Need to Fear and Much Cause for Rejoicing
 - c. (:21-29) False Gods Are Powerless to Call the Shots
 3. (42:1-25) Praise of Supremacy
 - a. (:1-9) Servant Song #1 – Predicted Justice on Earth is Coming
 - b. (:10-17) New Universal Songs of Praise for God Fulfilling His Promises
 - c. (:18-25) Warning: Clueless Israel Still Unresponsive to God’s Discipline
 4. (43:1-44:5) Redemptive Purposes of Supremacy
 - a. (43:1-13) Confidence and Certainty in God’s Redemptive Purposes
 - 1) God’s Special Relationship to His People Reinforces Our Confidence in God’s Redemptive Purposes
 - 2) God’s Identity as the One True God Makes Certain the Performance of His Redemptive Purposes
 - b. (43:22-44:5) God’s Gracious Forgiveness Can Transform Worthless Worship Into Surprising Salvation
 5. (44:6-46:13) Uniqueness of God Undergirds His Supremacy
 - a. (44:6-23) Idolatry Makes No Sense In Light of the Uniqueness of God
 - b. (44:24-45:13) Divine Deliverance Orchestrated by the Unique Creator/Lord – Predicted Mission of Cyrus
 - c. (45:14-25) The Uniqueness of God Determines the Exclusivity of Salvation
 - d. (46:1-13) Superiority of the Sovereign Unique God Over the Idols of Babylon
 6. (47:1-15) Humiliation of Babylon (and Their False Gods) For Opposing God’s Supremacy – Powerless to Deliver
 7. (48:1-22) Warning Against Neglecting the Message of God’s Supremacy – Keys to Spiritual Listening
“There is no peace for the wicked”
- B. (49:1 – 57:21) Servant of the Lord – Suffering Precedes Glory
1. (49:1 - 50:3) The Unveiling of the Servant with Promised Blessing to Both Israel and the Gentiles
 - a. (49:1-13) Servant Song #2 – The Unveiling of the Servant – God’s Servant-King will succeed in His mission of blessing Israel and bringing light to a lost world
 - b. (49:14 – 50:3) God has not abandoned the nation Israel
 2. (50:4-11) Servant Song #3 -- The Marks of an Obedient Servant -- The victorious Servant/Disciple has God as his helper in effective communication and persevering commitment
 3. (51:1 – 52:12) Preparation for Responding to the Mission of the Servant – Suffering Precedes Glory
 - a. (51:1-8) 3 Calls to Pay Attention -- Listen to God’s Word of Encouragement – Present pressures must not distract us from listening to God’s Word of encouragement regarding the consummation of salvation and righteousness
 - b. (51:9 – 52:12) 3 Wake Up Calls – Embrace the discipline of the Lord that ultimately leads to divine deliverance as sovereign redemption demonstrates that God reigns
 4. (52:13 – 53:12) Servant Song #4 -- The Mission of the Suffering Servant in Accomplishing Redemption
 - a. (52:13-15) Stanza 1 – The Exaltation of the Suffering Servant
 - b. (53:1-3) Stanza 2 – The Rejection of the Despised Servant
 - c. (53:4-6) Stanza 3 – The Substitution of the Punished Servant
 - d. (53:7-9) Stanza 4 – The Silent Submission of the Sacrificed Servant
 - e. (53:10-12) Stanza 5 -- The Exaltation of the Satisfied Servant

5. (54:1 – 56:8) Results of Redemption Accomplished by the Suffering Servant
 - a. (54:1-17) 3 Rocks of Security for the Redeemed People of God
 - 1) (54:1-5) Rock of a Fruitful, Growing Family
 - 2) (54:6-10) Rock of Committed Love in Marriage
 - 3) (54:11-17) Rock of Glorious Fortified City as the Heritage of the Servants of the Lord
 - b. (55:1-13) 3 Superior Aspects of the Gospel of God – God Offers Joy and Peace at No Cost to Anyone Who Will Seek Him in Repentance Before it is Too Late
 - 1) (55:1-5) Command to Come – Superior in terms of its Universal and Grace Oriented Salvation
 - 2) (55:6-11) Command to Seek – Superior in terms of its Power to Save
 - 3) (55:12-13) Command to Celebrate – Superior in terms of its Outcome
 - c. (56:1-8) Outsiders Can Become Insiders – Blessing Promised to All Who Commit to God’s Righteousness – Even Gentiles and Eunuchs
 6. (56:9 – 57:21) Condemnation Remains for Self-Serving Leadership and Man-Made Religion
 - a. (56:9-12) Condemnation of Self Serving Leadership – God Invites Unsuspecting Disaster Upon the Self Serving Leaders Who Should Be Protecting and Feeding his Vulnerable Flock
 - b. (57:1-21) Man-Made Religion Can Never Produce Peace -- Peace Only Comes From Sovereign Grace of a Holy God

“There is no peace for the wicked”
- C. (58:1 – 66:24) Salvation of the Lord – Future Glory Lies Ahead
1. (58:1 – 59:15a) The Need for Salvation
 - a. (58:1-14) Israel Characterized by the False Worship of Hypocritical Ritual – Only Genuine Worship Brings Blessing
 - 1) (58:2-12) Blessing Associated Only With Genuine Fasting
 - 2) (58:13-14a) Blessing Associated Only With Genuine Sabbath Keeping
 - b. (59:1-15a) Israel Characterized as a Depraved Society – The Pervasive, Corrupting Impact of Sin Leaves Society Devoid of Truth, Justice and Righteousness
 - 1) (59:1-8) Sin’s Culpability and Condemnation
 - 2) (59:9-15a) Sin’s Consequences and Confession
 2. (59:15b – 63:6) The Anticipation of Eschatological Salvation
 - a. (59:15b-21) The Redeemer-Warrior Comes to Execute Both Salvation and Vengeance
 - 1) (59:15b-20) The Provision of Redemption and Execution of Vengeance
 - 2) (59:21) The Promise of Redemption = The New Covenant
 - b. (60:1-22) The Magnetic Draw of the Light of the Lord in the Millennial Kingdom (10 Stanzas)
 - 1a) (60:1-5) The Light of the Lord Becomes the Light of Israel (Stanza 1 & 2)
 - 2a) (60:6-9) Transformation of Israel – a Magnet and a Mirror (Stanza 3 & 4)
 - 3) (60:10-14) Transformation of the Nations to Serve Israel and Worship the Holy One of Israel
 - (:10-11) Edification and Enrichment (Stanza 5)
 - (:12) PIVOT VERSE – Contrasting Abrahamic Curse
 - (:13-14) Beautification and Bowing Down in Genuine Worship (Stanza 6)
 - 2b) (60:15-18) Transformation of Israel (Stanza 7 & 8)
 - 1b) (60:19-22) The Light of the Lord Shines Forever (Stanza 9 & 10)
 - c. **(61:1-11) The Promised Messiah Comes on a Mission of Blessing and Vengeance**
 - 1) (61:1-3) The Mission of Messiah Involves Both Blessing and Vengeance
 - 2) (61:4-9) The Mission of Messiah Transforms Israel’s Status Among the Nations --- Distinct Roles for Both Gentile Nations and Israel in the Redeemer’s Mission
 - 3) (61:10-11) The Mission of Messiah Brings Great Joy for its Righteousness and Fruitfulness
 - d. (62:1-12) The Lord Swears He Will Bring Salvation and Righteousness to His Holy City Jerusalem
 - 1) (62:1-5) Promise of Fulfillment
 - 2) (65:6-9) Two Guarantees of Fulfillment
 - 3) (65:10-12) Anticipation of Fulfillment
 - e. (63:1-6) The Messiah-Warrior Stained With Blood Comes to Execute Divine Vengeance
 - 1) (63:1) Who is Coming to Execute Divine Vengeance?
 - 2) (63:2-6) Why Does He Look Like He Does = Garments Stained With Red Blood?
 3. (63:7 – 65:16) The Petition for Salvation

- a. (63:7 – 64:12) Appealing to the Lord’s Lovingkindness for Mercy and Deliverance
 - 1) (63:7-14) Remembering God’s Faithful Love
 - 2) (63:15 – 64:12) Reaching Out to God for Mercy and Deliverance
 - b. (65:1-16) Provoking God by False Worship Brings Divine Retribution in Contrast to Salvation
 - 1) (65:1-7) Divine Retribution for False Worship
 - 2) (65:8-16) Two Contrasts Between Those Who are Blessed and Those Who are Cursed
4. (65:17 – 66:24) The Realization of Salvation
- a. (65:17-25) Rejoicing in Anticipation of Millennial Blessings
 - 1) (65:17-19a) Creation of New Heavens and New Earth / Millennial Environment
 - 2) (65:19b-25) Characteristics of New Heavens and New Earth / Millennial Blessings
 - b. (66:1-24) Final Contrasts – False and True Worship / Eschatological Judgment and Salvation
 - 1) (66:1-6) Our Attitude Towards the Word of God Determines the Legitimacy of our Worship
 - 2) (66:7-14) Reborn Jerusalem Will Provide Ample Sustenance to God’s People
 - 3) (66:15-25) Culmination of Judgment and Salvation in the End Times – When things come to an end they will continue on forever
 - a. (:15-18a) The Eschatological Judgment of the Lord is Determined, Devastating and Deserved
 - b. (:18b-23) The Eschatological Salvation of God’s People is Determined, Glorious and Gracious
 - c. (:24) The Eschatological Judgment of the Lord is Determined, Devastating and Deserved – and Unending and Repulsive

TEXT: Isaiah 1:1-9

TITLE: SPIRITUAL REBELLION INDICTED AS SHOCKING AND HURTFUL

BIG IDEA:

SPIRITUAL REBELLION BREAKS BOTH THE HEALTH OF THE SINNER AND THE HEART OF THE SOVEREIGN

INTRODUCTION:

As we begin our study of the book of Isaiah, we can feel overwhelmed. This is such a huge undertaking. There is so much background material that is relevant to Isaiah's message – both the political and historical situation within the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel (remember we are now at the point of the Divided Monarchy) as well as the situation externally in terms of the surrounding nations (Syria with its capital in Damascus, Assyria with its capital in Nineveh and Babylon with its famous leader Nebuchadnezzar).

I want to keep our focus on the **practical lessons** that we can learn from the warnings which Isaiah gave in his day. Our hearts have the same tendency towards spiritual complacency, towards ingratitude, towards idolatry, towards rebellion as the people to whom Isaiah ministered. We so easily try to substitute external religious trappings for the inner requirements of God's righteousness. We so easily become hypocritical and superficial in our worship and service of the one true God. So at the risk of being accused of giving short shrift to the background information, I am going to dive right into the text and cover some of this ancillary material in the places where it is relevant and helps us to understand the text. You should do some reading in your Bible dictionaries and study Bibles to review some of the associated historical information.

Our concern today is with the sad reality of **Spiritual Rebellion**. Isaiah begins his book with an indictment of spiritual rebellion as both **shocking** and **hurtful** – **Shocking** when you consider that the one being sinned against is the Sovereign of the Universe, the Covenant God who has loved and nurtured His people and expects to find good fruit from the vine He has planted and so carefully tended; **Hurtful** in the sense that sin has harmful consequences of judgment that impact the sinner and all those around him – tearing down the very fabric of the overall culture; **Hurtful** as well in the sense that sin grieves the heart of God who has called us to a life of holiness. Any parent knows the pain of being impacted by children who choose to rebel and go their own way. There is heartbreak involved for however long that behavior persists.

SPIRITUAL REBELLION BREAKS BOTH THE HEALTH OF THE SINNER AND THE HEART OF THE SOVEREIGN

(:1) BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK

A. The Genre

“The vision . . . which he saw”

Supernatural origin of the entire book of prophecy; comes to Isaiah by direct revelation from God – some of it in the form of pictures and images and much of it in the form of content and substance – but all of it from the mind of God so that we can have assurance as to the validity and the importance of Isaiah's message – this is divinely inspired Scripture

Two major sections to the prophecy – aligned with the 66 books of the bible:

I. Condemnation – chapters 1-39 – emphasizing the failure of the people to keep God’s covenant requirements, thus placing themselves under the promised judgments and discipline set forth in Deuteronomy

II. Consolation or Comfort – chapters 40-66 – the largely Messianic section dealing with restoration and kingdom blessings

Amazing prophecies of future events abound throughout the book

Wiersbe: Sir Winston Churchill was once asked to give the qualifications a person needed in order to succeed in politics, and he replied: “It is the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month, and next year and to have the ability afterwards to explain why it didn’t happen.”

Not so with the precise accuracy in the fulfillment of these prophecies

Important issue theologically of whether the prophecies related to kingdom restoration and blessing are to be interpreted literally and applied to the nation of Israel = the dispensational position; or interpreted spiritually and applied to the church which essentially takes over now as the ongoing people of God with no more national program for physical Israel = amillennial position;

When you look at how the prophecies related to the first coming of Christ are literally fulfilled, it makes sense to follow that same pattern for those related to the Second Coming – even though there is this telescoping effect where events are viewed without the intervening span of years – like looking at 2 mountaintops and not seeing the valley in between

B. The Author

“of Isaiah the son of Amoz,”

Meaning of **his name** = *“The Lord is salvation”* – the source of salvation

His father = Not a reference to Amos the prophet but tradition says that this Amoz was the brother of Amaziah, the father of Uzziah – royal lineage, access to the kings

Significance in terms of **NT quotations** – quoted directly in the NT more than 65 times; certainly Christ was of the opinion that Isaiah authored this book – we are not going to get into the modern critical analysis of plural authorship and compilation from a variety of sources; there is ample internal and external evidence to support the authorship of Isaiah

Constable: As a writer, Isaiah is without a peer among the Old Testament prophets.

He was a poetic artist who employed a large vocabulary and many literary devices to express his thoughts beautifully and powerfully. Most of his prophecies appear to have been messages that he delivered, so he was probably also a powerful orator. . .

According to Jewish tradition Isaiah's father, Amoz (not the prophet Amos), was the brother of King Amaziah, Uzziah's father, which would have made Isaiah King Uzziah's cousin.

Baxter: Jewish tradition says that he lived into the reign of Manasseh, under whom he suffered a horrible martyrdom for resisting that wicked king’s doings, being placed in the hollowed trunk of a tree, and then *“sawn asunder.”* It is thought that **Hebrews xi. 37** alludes to this. . .

His qualities: Boldness, patriotism, tenderness, broad sympathy, stormy indignation at hypocrisy, with deep spirituality and a profound sense of the Divine majesty

C. The Focus

“concerning Judah and Jerusalem”

Edward J. Young: The first chapter is an introduction to the entire book, containing the basic themes of Isaiah’s ministry, namely, the sinfulness of Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 3-8), the tender appeals of the Lord (vv. 16-19), the certainty of the coming judgment (vv. 24, 25, 29-31), and the blessedness of the salvation to come (vv. 26, 27).

D. The Timeframe – Here is where the historical background and chronology becomes important – Theology is based in history and history is rooted in specific events occurring at specific times – we are not dealing with myths or just nice stories

“during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.”

1. Contemporary Kings in Judah = Southern Kingdom – span about 90 years

a. Uzziah – started well but ended with offering incense presumptuously in the Holy Place; judged with leprosy

Thomas Constable: Isaiah received his call to prophetic ministry in the year that King Uzziah died (740 B.C.; ch. 6:1). He responded enthusiastically to this privilege, even though he knew from the outset that his ministry would prove fruitless and discouraging (6:9-13).

b. Jotham – credited with a steadfast loyalty to the Lord; but local sacrifices were still permitted; he was the fourth successive God-approved king of Judah; continued to experience blessing in his reign; but prosperity often leads to religious neglect – **Leon Wood**

c. Ahaz – the worst of the lot – all sorts of problems

d. Hezekiah – the best of the lot – so more attention seems to be given to these latter two kings

Van Parunak:

	Uzziah, 787-735	Jotham, 749-734	Ahaz, 741-722	Hezekiah, 726-697
2 Kings	15:1-7 (called Azariah)	15:32-38	16:1-20	18:1-37; 19:1-37; 20:1-21
2 Chron	26:1-23	27:1-9	28:1-27	29:1-36; 30:1-27; 31:1-21; 32:1-33

	Uzziah, 787-735	Jotham, 749-734	Ahaz, 741-722	Hezekiah, 726-697
Character	2C26:4 he did <i>that which</i> was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did.	2K15:34 he did <i>that which</i> was right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.	2C28:1 he did not <i>that which</i> was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father:	1K18:3 he did <i>that which</i> was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.
Religious Conduct	2K15:4 the high places were not removed : the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places. 2C26:16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to <i>his</i> destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.	2K15:35 Howbeit the high places were not removed : the people sacrificed and burnt incense still in the high places. 2C27:2 howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly.	2C28:2 he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. 3 Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. 4 He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places , and on the hills, and under every green tree.	1K18:4 He removed the high places , and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor <i>any</i> that were before him. 6 For he clave to the LORD, <i>and</i> departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.
Counselor	2C26:5 he sought God in the days of Zechariah , who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper. 2C26:17-18 Azariah the priest ... and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, <i>that were</i> valiant men 18 ... withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, ... thou hast trespassed;		2K16:10 king Ahaz ... saw an altar that was at Damascus: and ... sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, 11 And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: 16 Thus did Urijah the priest , according to all that king Ahaz commanded.	2K19:2 he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.
Military	2C26:6 he ... warred against the Philistines , and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines. 7 And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians ..., and the Mehunims . 8 And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad <i>even</i> to the entering in of Egypt ; for he strengthened <i>himself</i> exceedingly.	2C27:5 He fought also with the king of the Ammonites , and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley.	2C28:5 the LORD ... delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria ; and they smote him, ... And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel , who smote him with a great slaughter. ... 16 At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. 17 For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives. 18 The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah,....	1K18:7 he rebelled against the king of Assyria , and served him not. 8 He smote the Philistines , <i>even</i> unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

2. Contemporary External Political Landscape

a. In Israel = Northern Kingdom

b. Outside of Israel

You always have to have in view the **two major historical events** impacting the peace and security of the nation of Israel: northern kingdom conquered by Assyria in 722 BC and southern kingdom taken into captivity at different points to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar; Isaiah is prophesying in the midst of these events – warning the people of what is about to take place because of their sin and rebellion

Van Parunak: Overview: This chapter is set off as a unit by the introductory formulae at 1:1 and 2:1. Internally, there is a division between v. 20 and v. 21.

- “The Lord hath spoken” in 2a is closed off in v. 20, “for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken.” . . .
- 2-20 pictures the nation as a whole judged, and only “*the daughter Zion,*” the city of Jerusalem, escapes. This section anticipates the first 37 chapters, dealing with the Assyrian threat that culminates in the destruction of the northern kingdom and the narrow escape of Jerusalem.
- In 21-31, the “faithful city,” Jerusalem, itself is judged and then restored. It is not the remnant as in 2-20, but rather the object of judgment from which a remnant is preserved. This section anticipates chapters 38-66, describing the Babylonian captivity and subsequent restoration.

Baxter: Against the fierce menace of the Assyrian emperor, Tiglath-Pileser II, effort was made among the nations of Palestine and Syria to form a confederacy under the leadership of Damascus, capital of Syria . . . Ahaz, king of Judah, would not join this confederacy. So Syria

and Israel invaded Judah, to coerce Ahaz, and dealt heavy blows (2 Kings xvi.; 2 Chron. xxviii.). Ahaz then humbly craved the aid of the great Assyrian, who marched forth a great army which overthrew Syria and Israel; but Judah thereby became vassal to Assyria. A little later, Tiglath-Pileser's successor, Shalmaneser IV, determined on the final destruction of Israel. After a three years' siege Samaria fell (2 Kings xvii. 4-6). Israel was "carried away into Assyria," and the ten-tribes were distributed through "the cities of the Medes." Isaiah would then be between fifty and sixty years old.

3. Contemporary Prophets

a. Message of Hosea

Title: *MARITAL UNFAITHFULNESS BREAKS THE HEART OF GOD'S LOYAL LOVE*

Big Idea: **GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS LOYAL LOVE THROUGHOUT THE REPEATED CYCLES OF UNFAITHFULNESS, DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION**

Key Verse: "*I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from them.*" (14:4)

b. Message of Micah

Title: *WHO IS A GOD LIKE YAHWEH?*

Big Idea: **DESPITE PERVASIVE COVENANT DISLOYALTY WHICH BRINGS NECESSARY JUDGMENT, YAHWEH STANDS ALONE AS A GOD OF FORGIVENESS AND LOYAL LOVE WHO WILL YET DELIVER HIS PEOPLE AND PROVIDE THE SHEPHERD-KING TO REIGN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE**

Key Verse: "*Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?*" (7:18)

I. (:2-4) INDICTMENT OF REBELLION – SHOCKING AND HURTFUL

(:2a) The Cosmic Call to Attention

"Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks,"

Young: Cf. **Deut. 32:1** – same type of majestic call to attention; **Delitzsch** with respect to the song of Moses: The song deals with the greatness of God and His choosing Israel to be His people, Israel's faithlessness and rebellion, and God's sovereignty over Israel and all nations. Thus, in summary fashion, it contains the theme of Old Testament prophecy generally.

Calls upon heaven and earth not just as listeners but as **witnesses** to all that has transpired in Israel's history and the events that are not being prophesied for the future; courtroom setting for this indictment that is delivered

The **Creator** of the heavens and the earth is the only one with the authority to govern them and command our attention.

The Lord has spoken to us in 66 books – have we been listening and obeying?

How gracious is the Lord to speak to such rebels and not to just be silent

Cf. reaction when E.F. Hutton speaks

Like a courtroom scene where the verdict is about to be delivered . . . what is the Lord going to do about all of the wickedness that has been so pervasive?

"*the Lord*" = the covenant name for the God of His elect people; names of God will be important throughout this book

A. (:2b-3) Rebellion is Shocking Because it is So Unnatural – Dumber Than an Ass

“Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me. An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, But Israel does not know, My people do not understand.”

Heart of a grieving parent = starts with this reference to the Fatherhood of God over His people; remember we are commanded not to Grieve the Holy Spirit

Sin of **Ingratitude** is especially disturbing – **Rom. 1:21** – *“they did not honor Him as God or give Him thanks”*

A lot of sacrifice and hopes are poured into nurturing sons

Cf. passages describing Israel as a choice vine planted by the Lord and carefully tended; but when He looked for it to produce rich fruit there was nothing

Not very flattering to be compared unfavorably to an ox or a donkey – those of us created in the image of God; no animal is pictured as more dull and plodding than the ox; yet even the dumb ox knows who feeds him and takes care of him each day

Lack of spiritual knowledge and understanding so that they are characterized as the fool is described in the book of Proverbs

No fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom

No love for the Lord which would be reflected in obedience

“revolted” – used for nation seceding from a kingdom like the splitting of the northern and southern kingdoms

Young: Does not engage in conscious reflection either upon its own true interests or upon its immense obligations.

**B. (:4a) Rebellion is Hurtful Because it Yields Destructive Consequences –
Guilty Nation in Bondage to Sin and
Corrupt Culture Reproducing its Evil**

Two groups of two nouns: *nation* and *people* / *offspring* and *sons*

All 4 of these nouns are used elsewhere in the OT to speak of Israel's place of privilege and blessing in God's economy – the reversal because of perversion and corruption and rebellion just intensifies the guilt and shame

1. Guilty Nation in Bondage to Sin

*“Alas, sinful nation,
People weighed down with iniquity,”*

Young: *“Alas”* – (21 times in the book) includes the thought of pain pity, wonder and deep abhorrence at the unbelievable ingratitude of the nation.

Van Parunak: 1 Kings 13:30 = first instance; young prophet respected age more than word of the Lord; funeral lament over young prophet begins with this *“Alas”* – cry of mourning at funeral; Isaiah here finds himself at a funeral;

Intended to be *“a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”* – **Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9**

God designed us for freedom, not bondage

Matt. 11:16-30 foreshadowing here of the rejection of the Messiah by those He came to save –

comparison to the guilt of Sodom and Gomorrah

Heb. 12:1 exhorted to “*lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us*”
Sin is a weight, an obstruction

2. Corrupt Culture Reproducing its Evil

*“Offspring of evildoers,
Sons who act corruptly!”*

God had chosen them to be the seed of Abraham

The fruit is like the tree; either offspring of Satan or children of God – membership in one of these families; that is why we all need to be born again

John 8:39-47 Jesus exposes the unbelieving Jews who prided themselves of being the seed of Abraham as actually being of their father the devil – quite a shocking charge

C. (:4b) Rebellion is Shocking and Hurtful Because it is Directed Against the Sovereign of the Universe – 3 Powerful Verbs used here

1. Abandoning the Lord instead of Embracing

*“They have **abandoned** the LORD,”*

To leave, loose – comprehensive term for apostasy; forsaken the Lord

1 Kings 9:9 *“Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them, therefore the Lord has brought all this adversity on them.”*

Prov. 9:6 *“Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding.”*

Hos. 4:10 *“they have stopped giving heed to the Lord”*

2. Despising the Holy One of Israel instead of Respecting and Honoring

*“They have **despised** the Holy One of Israel,”*

[Or: *“provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger”*]

To spurn, to scorn, to mock – holding a contemptuous view of God

Num. 16:30 *“But if the Lord brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the Lord.”*

1 Sam. 2:17 worthless sons of Eli described as those who *“despised the offering of the Lord”* – stealing from God

Ps. 74:18 *“a foolish people has spurned Your name”*

Ps. 107:11 *“Because they had rebelled against the words of God and spurned the counsel of the Most High”*

Prov. 1:30 *“They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof.”*

Is. 5:24 *“For they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel”*

“Holy One of Israel” – 26 times in the book; this Holy One was the one Isaiah saw in his famous vision of chap. 6

Archer: the transcendent God, who is wholly separate from the frailty and finiteness of Creation (His majesty-holiness), and wholly separate from the sinfulness and defilement of man (His purity-holiness).

3. Turning Away instead of Drawing Near
“They have *turned away* from Him.”

Turn away from, make yourself a stranger to, alienate yourself; estranged backwards

II. (:5-9) INFECTION OF REBELLION – ALL ENCOMPASSING EXCEPT FOR A DIVINELY PRESERVED REMNANT

(:5a) The Futility of Persisting in Rebellion

“Where will you be stricken again, As you continue in your rebellion?”

Van Parunak: The adverb can have the meaning “where” as well as “why” (2 Chr 32:10; Job 38:6), and here this gives an excellent sense. He is about to describe how completely the body has been beaten. He introduces this description by saying, “Where can you still be beaten, that you continue in your revolt? Is there still some square centimeter of healthy flesh to which you are trying to attract my rod?” The rest of vv. 5-6 then answer this question in the negative.

Young: to what purpose will ye further be stricken? Your continued state of apostasy and rebellion simply brings additional chastisements; why then are ye so foolish as to continue therein? If you would repent the punishment would cease.

Grogan: Their continuance in sin, like all rebellion against God, was utterly irrational.

A. (:5b-6) Rebellion is Hurtful and Untreatable

1. Three Descriptions of Pervasiveness of Perverseness

“The whole head is sick,”

“And the whole heart is faint.”

“From the sole of the foot even to the head There is nothing sound in it,”

2. Three Images of Infection (Deut. 28:35) cf. picture of Christ in Isa. 52-53

“Only bruises,”

“welts,”

“and raw wounds,”

3. Three Denials of Treatment

“Not pressed out”

“or bandaged,”

“Nor softened with oil.”

Vine: The remedies are mentioned in almost the opposite order to that of the evils (thus forming a sort of chiasm, or reverse order, for the purpose of vividness or emphasis).

Young: the festering pus has been allowed to remain in the wounds and has not been pressed out to cleanse the wound and to free it of impurities

B. (:7-8) Rebellion is Shocking in its Devastation and Vulnerability

1. Three Descriptions of Devastation

“Your land is desolate,”

“Your cities are burned with fire,”

“Your fields-- strangers are devouring them in your presence; It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers.”

“*overthrown of strangers*” – either subjective genitive = overthrown by strangers or objective genitive = overthrown of strangers – comparison to destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Young: Judah had refused to serve God, the Owner; she now must serve unjust and usurping strangers who have no right to the land

Fitch: At least three invasions of the sacred soil of Judah took place during the lifetime of Isaiah. One of them was by the combined forces of Israel and Syria about 734 B.C., and the others by the forces of the Assyrians, the first under Sargon in 712 B.C. and the other under Sennacherib in 701 B.C. The Syrian attack is referred to in chapter vii, and the others in chapters xxii and xxvi.

2. Three Images of Vulnerability and Solitary Isolation

“And the daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard,”

“Like a watchman's hut in a cucumber field,”

“like a besieged city.”

Martin: Those were temporary structures built to shade from the sun persons who guarded the crops against thieves and animals. Such huts were usually “alone” and easily attacked.

Constable: Isaiah moved from describing Israel as a sick and injured body to a desolate, conquered land (vv. 7-9; cf. Lev. 26; Deut. 28—29). The description “*daughter of Zion*” (v. 8) emphasizes that God feels about His wayward people as a father feels about his daughter. He loves her, has committed himself to protecting her, and takes pains to guard her from all evil and danger. Many Israelite families lived in villages but built little shelters in their fields and camped there during the harvest season. After the harvest these little shacks looked pitiful, abandoned, useless, and deteriorating.

C. (:9) Divine Heart of Compassion Preserves a Small Remnant

“Unless the LORD of hosts had left us a few survivors, We would be like Sodom, We would be like Gomorrah.”

First insight into the grace and compassion of God

Ultimate picture of divine wrath and judgment

“*Lord of hosts*” – all powerful God

Fitch: The divine promise that reaches down from the ages past is of the continuity of the chosen race and of the One who would come forth from the midst of the people of Israel. The emphasis is upon the sovereignty of the purpose of God.

CONCLUSION:

Why persist in Rebellion?? It makes no sense; thank the Lord for His grace in preserving a remnant

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why didn't Judah and the southern kingdom repent after they saw what types of judgments were experienced by the northern kingdom being conquered by the Assyrians?
- 2) Notice the parallel theme from our studies in Judges – that the Lord remains faithful and continues to show covenant love despite the repeated rebellion and idolatry of His people. How are we presuming against the grace of God in how we are living?
- 3) In what ways have we become spiritually complacent and need to repent and make sure our hearts are right before God? How has our rebellion hurt ourselves and others?
- 4) The Good Shepherd knows each sheep by name; are we giving full attention to knowing the Good Shepherd and appreciating His pastoral care over us and His provision for all of our needs?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Charles H. Dyer: in The Old Testament Explorer, p. 527.

Stated briefly, the purpose of Isaiah is to display God's glory and holiness through His judgment of sin and His deliverance and blessing of a righteous remnant.

Constable: Sin is rebellion, for Isaiah, that springs from pride. The book begins and ends on this note (1:2; 66:24). All the evil in the world results from man's refusal to accept Yahweh's Lordship. The prophet repeatedly showed how foolish such rebellion is. It not only affects man himself but also his environment. God's response to sin is judgment if people continue to rebel against Him, but He responds with redemption if they abandon self-trust and depend on Him. Sin calls for repentance, and forgiveness for the penitent is available.

Grogan: quoting **Whedbee** – Coming on the heels of the opening call to heaven and earth, the two indictments of vv. 2b and 3 show the complexity of Isaiah's language. Here he skillfully places two different genres – legal complaint and didactic parable – and two different metaphors – father/son and ass/ox – in a back-to-back position; yet at the same time he implies an inner affinity between the two . . . The passage is an impressive example of the variety of language Isaiah can tap for his message.

John Martin: Isaiah was aware (from Deut. 28:49-50, 64-67) that Judah was destined for exile as had recently befallen the Northern Kingdom. His book, then, was directed to two groups of people: (a) those of his generation, who had strayed from the covenantal obligations given them in the Mosaic Law, and (b) those of a future generation who would be in exile. Isaiah was calling the first group back to holiness and obedience, and he was comforting the second group with the assurance that God would restore the nation to their land and would establish His kingdom of peace and prosperity. The theme of “*comfort*” is dominant in Isaiah 40-66. . .

These verses are in the form of a covenant lawsuit against Judah. In effect, it is a microcosm of chapters 1-39. The Lord, through His messenger Isaiah, indicted His covenant nation for her

breach of the Mosaic Covenant, and offered His complete forgiveness to those who would repent but judgment to those who continued to rebel. In 6:9-13 God pointed out to Isaiah that most of the nation, however, would not repent.

Van Parunak: Verse 1 is introduction to the book as a whole. Chapter 1 stands as a unit as you can see from 2:1. Significant break in chapter 1 after vs. 20. Tight chiasm in end of chapter 1. Important thematic shift as well; second half he speaks to the faithless city and Jerusalem falls under judgment. 2 great Intl events:

- Assyrian conquest of northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and sparing of the South is in view in vv. 2-20; chaps. 1-37 deal with this; **(1:2-20)** – judgment on the nation as a whole
- begins in chap. 38-66 with illness of Hezekiah and Babylonian judgment against southern kingdom **(1:21-31)** 606, 597, 586 B.C. captivities

vs. 2 – looking back at the nation’s sin and judgment that came as a result; strange to be addressing the heavens and the earth instead of people; these are cosmic witnesses; not uncommon in the OT; Ps. 50; Deut 4:26; 30:19; last longer than the nations; picture of stability; vv.2-4 describes their sin – imagery of parents and thankless children and livestock

children require a lot of attention; can’t take care of themselves; owe their parents honor and respect; Lord cared for Israel from their infancy – chose them as a single family; guided them and nourished them; gave them a land to live in; drove out their enemies

vv. 4-8 describes their coming punishment

even dumb animals know where to go to find dinner at the end of the day; “crib” = feeding trough; should be smart enough to know which side their bread is buttered on; “Bless the Lord all my soul and forget not all His benefits”; took blessings for granted; Isaiah = prophet of “*Woe*” –

Character described: nation, people, seed, children – focus on 4 nouns

Conduct described: forsaken, provoked, gone away backward

Their character is paradoxical – all 4 of these nouns used to describe the privileges that Israel enjoyed as God’s elect – but they have perverted that special position

Sinning = miss the mark; not like the slingers of Benjamin who hit the target every time;

Iniquity emphasizes character more than conduct

Their mark of distinction = being “*seed of Abraham*” – no longer the seed of the righteous; John 8 – “*You are of your father the devil*”;

Deut. 14:1 – position of sonship should lead to purity rather than pagan practices;

If you forsake something you are abandoning a responsibility; their tolerance for other gods is an affront to God’s holiness; not focusing on specific sins but on the significance of their sins; the bad thing about sin is that it is a rejection of God’s authority; a humanistic world has no absolute morality; human defined morality can change (like acceptance of slavery);

Vs. 5 – the punishment – shift from third person to second person; no longer describing Israel but is speaking to Israel; begins with an image and then explains it; a person who has been badly beaten – perhaps stoned; this person is battered all over – Where else can you find a piece of skin that is not already not uninjured – How could I hurt you anymore; yet you continue to sin against me; should I beat you somewhere else?? Goes into great detail to describe the wounds; oozing, open sores; nothing has been done to lessen his suffering; cf. Is. 52:13-chap 53 – same awful punishment falling on the Suffering Servant who has taken our punishment on Himself; cf. parallel of Hebrew words used;

You have to start by understanding your sin or you will never appreciate your Redeemer

Vs. 7 – Physical invasion -- now he describes the actual punishment that has fallen on the nation Israel; worse than a wilderness; this is what you get after a war when trees have been burned

down and everything is ruined; the enemies can't take the houses with them so they burn them down so you can't enjoy them; picture of nation invaded by foreign army – eat all your food, take everything of value; “overthrown of strangers: = overthrown by strangers (subjective genitive) ... or overthrown that strangers have suffered (objective genitive) – recollection of Sodom and Gomorrah in other contexts; your land is like a land where strangers have been overthrown

“daughter of Zion” refers to the city itself – helpless, defenseless city in the midst of this invasion; crop stealing was a problem in their culture; would build a simple structure where they would live in harvest time to protect their crop; little garden shed; not going to be a majestic city; Vs. 8 – sets Jerusalem apart from the judgment described above – describing the Assyrian invasion upon the northern kingdom; all that was left was Jerusalem – mercifully spared by God's intervention

Vs. 9 – now the prophet speaks; “That was close!” It almost hit me if the Lord had not intervened to spare us;

Summary: What is Isaiah All About?

The importance of Isaiah is that it forms the bridge between the OT and the NT.

- Up to this point in Israel's history, we might very well expect that God would continue to expand his earthly rule through his royal nation.
- Isaiah's ministry spans the occurrence of the Assyrian conquest of Israel, prophecies the Babylonian conquest of Judah, and anticipates the restoration of both of them. In other words, it recognizes that the era of the divine-image-as-royal-nation must come to an end..
- Along the way, it points repeatedly to the coming of one who is both God and Man, who will fulfill the promises to David. In fact, one major commentary (Motyer) sees the whole purpose of the book as detailing three facets of the Messiah—his role as king, as servant, and as the Anointed Conqueror.

History has two facets: recording events, and explaining them. The events of the seventh and eighth century BC, the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, were God's way of bringing to an end the wave of divine-image-as-royal-nation and thus preparing for the coming of the true Messiah. Isaiah's role is to interpret these events as they were unfolding. He has to explain to the people that

- their sin means they must forfeit their role as God's representative ruler over the earth,
- Assyria and Babylon are God's tools to bring their tenure to an end,
- but there will be another, final wave, in which the purpose of Gen 1:26-28 will finally be realized in the personal Messiah.

<http://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/isaiah/index.html>

Baxter: As the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament are mainly occupied with the Law, and the judgment which comes on those who disobey it, so the first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah are mainly occupied with the thought of judgment on the covenant people because of their disobedience to the Law; and as the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are mainly occupied with the message of Divine grace, and the salvation which it brings, so the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah are a message of Divine grace and comfort, and of coming salvation. Thus, the Book of Isaiah is a kind of Bible all in itself.

TEXT: Isaiah 1:10-20

TITLE: THE KEY TO A WHITE CHRISTMAS

BIG IDEA:

THE CARCASS OF HYPOCRITICAL RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY STINKS TO HIGH HEAVEN

INTRODUCTION:

We know that God seeks worshippers – but only those who worship Him *in spirit and in truth*. He rejects the worship of religious hypocrites – despite their multiplied religious activities and outward attempts to look like Christians. Isn't it sad to hear the results of different surveys that give out the statistics of how many people attend church every Sunday; how many claim to pray daily and to read their bible on a somewhat consistent basis, etc., etc, etc. – and yet we see so little holiness and concern for God's righteousness. God is fed up with **religious frauds**.

Our nation is full of religious hypocrites. We have a huge population of self righteous people who refuse to acknowledge that their hands are stained with blood. They think that somehow their prayers of meaningless repetition and their distracted attendance at church services will earn them favor in God's sight. **Christmas** is the best season for religious hypocrites. They come out of the woodwork and like to identify themselves with the baby in the manger. They use their musical talents to sing the famous carols on TV specials. They attend Christmas Eve services with their families, even though they are MIA the rest of the year.

God is not mocked. He looks at the heart and the motives rather than just the external religious practices. Remember a couple of other key parallel passages:

Psalm 51:17

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart."

Micah 6:6-8

"With what shall I come to the Lord and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Is God nullifying the requirements of the Mosaic law with its very specific instructions about the sacrificial system? Certainly not. But He is rejecting any form of religious worship that is disconnected from the heart reality.

THE CARCASS OF HYPOCRITICAL RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY STINKS TO HIGH HEAVEN

Contrast between Religious Ritual and Reformation Reality

I. (:10-15) REJECTION OF HYPOCRITICAL RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

(:10) Derisive Call to Attention [cf. vs. 20 – brackets this section]

“Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the instruction of our God, You people of Gomorrah.”

Same verbs used in vs 2 to call heaven and earth to attention

Addresses both the **leaders** who bear the greatest culpability and then the **general population** who must assume their responsibility as well

What an insulting shot across the bow of Isaiah’s proud Jews! Just as their spiritual rebellion was shocking and hurtful to the Holy One of Israel – this response was intended to shock sinners out of their complacency.

Sodom = place where sin abounds with no shame or restraint; sin is the openly affirmed lifestyle; practiced out in the open and celebrated

God has spared a **remnant** – vs.9

Young: If a milder outcome has been granted to Jerusalem than to the cities of the plain, it is not due to any merit found in Jerusalem, for she was a city of hypocrites, but only to the wholly unmerited favor of the sovereign God in whose hands lie the destinies of cities and nations. In His own good pleasure God had chosen not to destroy Jerusalem utterly.

Oswalt: Isaiah is saying that the **instruction** which God gave Moses did not have chiefly to do with cultic prescription and legalistic righteousness. Rather, God’s *tora* has to do with character and attitudes and relationships, all of which may be symbolized in the ceremonies but which are not to be replaced by the ceremonies.

A. (:11-12) Rejection of Hypocritical Sacrifices and Burnt Offerings

1. God Rejects Quantity that Lacks Quality

“What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?’ Says the LORD.”

People may have tried to argue that they have continued to engage in the prescribed religious activities; Isaiah exposes their religious formalism and hypocrisy; he is not denigrating the commanded performance of animal sacrifices as if God wanted them done away with; instead, he condemns their disconnect between sinful hearts and lives and outward religious observances

Look at how much I give ... Look at how much I pray ... Look at how much I do (all my religious activities)

2. God is Fed up with Hypocrisy

“I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, And the fat of fed cattle.”

Tone of exasperation

Motyer: [summarizes this section] These sins mean nothing to the Lord; add nothing and do nothing

3. God Takes No Pleasure in Such Worship

“And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats.”

1 Sam. 15:22 *“Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.”*

Prov 15:8 *“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD”*

Jer. 6:20 *“For what purpose does frankincense come to Me from Sheba and the sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable and your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me.”*

Hos. 6:6-7 *“For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant, there they have dealt treacherously against Me.”*

Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mount – Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of their religious activity
“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them”

4. God Only Accepts the Worship He Has Ordained

“When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?”

3 times a year, the males in Israel were required to come and appear before God: **Ex 23:17; 34:23; Deut 16:16**

Preceptaustin.org: Isaiah seems to be painting the image of a trampling by a herd of animals mindlessly meandering through and muddying up God's holy courts. Quite a disgusting image indeed, but a picture of God's opinion of worship without righteousness and mere formalism and ritual with inner genuine commitment

J. Vernon McGee: God specifies His charges against His people. He has put His hand upon a definite thing, and He is going to prove that particular point in which they are wrong. He puts His finger on the best thing in Judah, not the worst. He shows them what is exceedingly wrong. Israel has a God-given religion and a God-appointed ritual in a God-constructed temple, but they are wrong in that which represented the best. They are bringing sacrifices and going through the ritual according to the letter of the Law, but their hearts are in rebellion against God. Their religion is not affecting their conduct. Frankly, that is a problem among believers today. A great many of us have reached the place where we have a form of godliness, but we deny the power thereof (**2Ti 3:5**).

“Who requires you” -- A particular **challenge for the children of believers** – we almost pressure them into a form of hypocrisy – requiring their outward allegiance when their heart may not yet belong to the Lord; we need to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ... but we must encourage **honesty** in their own relationship with the Lord

B. (:13-14) Rejection of Hypocritical Offerings and Holy Days and Religious Festivals

1. Rejected as Worthless [very strong expressions used in these 2 verses]

“Bring your worthless offerings no longer,”

Emptiness, nothingness, vanity

Psalm 119:37 "Turn my eyes away from what is **worthless!** Revive me with your word!" (NET)

Lamentations 2:14 "Your prophets saw visions for you that were **worthless** lies. They failed to expose your sin so as to restore your fortunes. They saw oracles for you that were worthless lies". (NET)

Jonah 2:8 "Those who worship **worthless** idols forfeit the mercy that could be theirs." (NET)

2. Rejected as an Abomination

"Incense is an abomination to Me."

Detestable, Disgusting

Leviticus 18:22 "You must not have sexual intercourse with a male as one has sexual intercourse with a woman; it is a **detestable** act." (NET)

Deuteronomy 7:26 "You must not bring any **abhorrent** thing into your house and thereby become an object of divine wrath along with it. You must absolutely detest and abhor it, for it is an object of divine wrath." (NET)

Proverbs 21:27 "The wicked person's sacrifice is an **abomination**; how much more when he brings it with evil intent!" (NET)

Proverbs 28:9 "The one who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an **abomination.**" (NET)

Isaiah 41:24 "Look, you are nothing, and your accomplishments are nonexistent; the one who chooses to worship you is **disgusting.**" (NET)

3. Rejected as Unbearable

"New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies-- I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly."

[New moons – Num. 28:11-14]

Bad combination: Sin and the solemn assembly – these 2 don't go together; a mismatch

4. Rejected as Hateful

"I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts,"

Amos 5:21-24 "I absolutely despise your festivals! I get no pleasure from your religious assemblies! Even if you offer me burnt and grain offerings, I will not be satisfied; I will not look with favor on your peace offerings of fattened calves. Take away from me your noisy songs; I don't want to hear the music of your stringed instruments. Justice must flow like torrents of water, righteous actions like a stream that never dries up." (NET)

5. Rejected as Burdensome and Wearisome

"They have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them."

Grogan: The people have been shown as burdened with guilt (v. 4); but here God is shown as

burdened with their sacrifices.

Motyer: It is strong language to describe their temple worship as meaningless, detestable and unbearable!

C. (:15a) Rejection of Hypocritical Prayers and Appeals for Deliverance

“So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen.”

“spread out your hands” = asking for help 1 Kings 8:22; Lam. 1:17

One reason for Unanswered Prayer = our own sinfulness and hypocrisy – especially here of those who are not even in the family of God – what right do they have to access to God in prayer?

Motyer: “hide my eyes” denotes the opposite of the Lord letting his face shine on them (Nu. 6:25; Ps. 4:6-7).

You can offer up as many “Hail Marys” as you please – they fall on deaf ears

D. (:15b) Root Problem Remains

“Your hands are covered with blood.”

Wiersbe: Instead of lifting up “holy hands” in prayer (1 Tim. 2:8), their hands were stained with blood because of their many sins (Isa. 59:3; Ezek. 7:23).

Not speaking here of hands covered with blood because of the animal sacrifices they were offering; this is much stronger imagery of men of violence and bloodshed

Oswalt: see the charge as hyperbolic. Whatever the worshipers’ personal involvement in violence and injustice, they are certainly implicated in the excesses of their society.

Look at the blood of abortions in our land today

II. (:16-20) CALL FOR REPENTANCE AND REFORMATION

A. (:16-17) Call for Cleansing and Reformation

1. Cleanse Your Guilt

*“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;
Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight.”*

Simplicity of these imperatives – sacrificial and worship system might seem complex in terms of God’s detailed instructions .. but look at the simplicity of the heart attitudes and root character that God affirms

Constable: Washing (v. 16) is symbolic of repenting (cf. **Acts 2:38; 13:24; Titus 3:5**).

First step in Repentance is the admitting of sin and guilt; you need to see the filthiness of your depravity; need to take sin seriously

What can wash my sins away? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

2. Reform Your Conduct

“Cease to do evil, Learn to do good;”

Familiar metaphor of putting off and putting on; requires a learning process

Oswalt: to do good is to learn to value persons as the Creator does

3. Pursue Justice and Righteousness

“Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless;”

Not just seek justice in your thoughts .. but take action; get involved; make a difference

4. Advocate for the Defenseless

“Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.”

Van Parunak: These are two of the three prototypes of helpless people in ancient Israel, the third being the foreigner (18x in the OT, 11 in Deuteronomy). The Lord omits the foreigner in this verse, not because kindness to the foreigner isn't important, but because they need to start with the basics of caring for their own.

Encouragement for Solid Rock: our support of orphanage in India – group of young boys growing up under program of Christian discipleship

B. (:18) Offer of Forgiveness and Justification

*“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD,
‘Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.’”*

Wiersbe: The word translated “reason” in verse 18 means “to decide a case in court,” but instead of pronouncing judgment, the Judge offered pardon!

Beall: “Reasoning” with the Lord means thinking His thoughts after Him, not bargaining with Him.

You cannot get imagery that speaks more graphically of indelible stains; yet the removal of the stains produces a pristine condition of holiness and purity

Larry Richards: Scarlet and crimson were shades of red drawn from the same source, the crushed body of an insect. Isaiah chose the image not because of the color, but because this was **the most securely fixed dye then known**. No launderer could remove that color from cloth. Isaiah thus says God can do the impossible and cleanse sinners, even though the stain of sin is fixed as firmly as crimson in the sinner’s soul. (The Bible Readers Companion. Wheaton: Victor Books)

Oswalt: There is a delicate balance to be maintained here between human freedom and divine sovereignty. On the one hand, it ought not to be said that obedience produces forgiveness. God forgives and cleanses not because he must, but because he wishes to and has made a way for that to be done through the death and resurrection of Christ. But, on the other hand, it is also plain

that God does not proclaim forgiveness to those who are unwilling to obey. All the rhetorical language of the prophets, urging people to obey, is in opposition to any position that God's forgiveness can ever be experienced apart from a disposition to obey him.

Illustration: The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne – set in seventeenth century Puritan Boston; Hester Prynne has a child out of wedlock – an obvious instance of adultery – she displays a Red Letter “A” on her breast and is shamed and shunned by the sanctimonious town residents – lots of intrigue between her real husband and her hidden lover ... but she cannot get rid of that stain

C. (:19-20a) Call for Commitment -- Covenant Obedience and Faithfulness

1. (:19) Promise of Blessing for Covenant Obedience – Repent and Eat

“If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land;”

This was a land that was characterized in the promise of God as flowing with milk and honey; yet it was a land that had experienced numerous famines and the devastation of invaders pillaging their crops

2. (:20a) Curse of Destruction for Stubborn Rebellion – Rebel and be Eaten

“But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword.”

Beall: obey, and you will eat (תֹּאכְלֶנּוּ) the fruit of the land; but rebel, and you will be consumed (תִּאכְלֶנּוּ) by the sword. Again, note the word play here, as Isaiah uses two different stems of the same verb to indicate the result of Israel's action.

Oswalt: The verb tenses in the conditional sentences suggest disposition and act. In each case the first verb of the pair is in the imperfect, suggesting ongoing, not-yet-completed activity, whereas the second verb is, in both cases, in the perfect tense, suggesting momentary, completed action. Thus the sense is something like “If you are disposed to be willing and so obey” . . .”if you are disposed to refuse and so rebel . . .” The primary emphasis in Scripture is upon act. It is not how one feels but what one does that is of primary importance (note Jesus' parable expressing this point of view, Matt. 21:28-32). But at the same time, unless the disposition is fundamentally changed, the spring of action will always be unsteady and insecure.

(:20b) Closing Affirmation of Divine Inspiration

“Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

CONCLUSION:

There is only one way to have a truly White Christmas this season. That is to respond to the Lord's plea for repentance and reformation. Only the blood of Jesus can wash away the scarlet stain of sin.

The substance of all of our religious activity is irrelevant if the attitude of the heart is not correct.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where are you just going through the motions in terms of religious activity but your heart is far from God?
- 2) What examples of religious hypocrisy do you see during this Christmas season?
- 3) Are we effectively communicating the grace of the gospel or just the frustration of the severe requirements of the law?
- 4) Is our Christian experience characterized as eating of the best of the land?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: Repeatedly in Israel's history, degeneration of their spiritual condition is associated with an increase in their confidence in the formalities of religion.

- In our race's earliest days, Cain's attempt to offer a sacrifice was not accepted (Gen 4:3-5) because it did not reflect the faith of his brother Abel (Heb 11:4).
- In an era when Eli's sons had completely corrupted the worship at the tabernacle in Shiloh, the nation insisted on taking the Ark into the battle of Aphek in the hopes that it would guarantee victory (1 Sam 4).
- Saul thought that the motive of sacrifice justified disobedience to the Lord's explicit command (1 Sam 15:20-23).
- In Jeremiah's day, as Judah tottered toward collapse, the people were confident that God would never allow his temple to be destroyed (Jer 7).
- In Isaiah's age, the people were preoccupied with the various aspects of their worship in the temple.

David Silversides: Worship as God Requires

Chapter 1 introduces the major themes of the entire book

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| :1-9 | The sin and the judgments of God on Judah and Jerusalem |
| :10-15 | The unacceptableness of their worship |
| :16-20 | The exhortation to repentance |
| :21-25, 28-31 | The certainty of coming judgment |
| :26-27 | The deliverance to come; the Redeemed of the Lord |

This surviving remnant contained a godly seed, even though it still was mixed with hypocrites; **Is. 6:13** – Judah like a tree reduced to a stump – yet there is life in it and it will grow again and once again develop and prosper; **Is. 65:8-9** – a surviving remnant containing an elect and godly seed within it

Judah like Sodom and Gomorrah in 2 respects: their great wickedness (especially in light of greater truth); and devastation and judgment falling upon them; but different in 2 respects: a holy seed was preserved and there was a remnant continuing in Judah

1. Only God's required worship is acceptable to God

He is the only being who can tell us how to worship God; this is obvious and yet strangely ignored; Ask the question: “*Who has required this ...*” **Ex. 20:25** -- here initiative and inventiveness and creativity and imagination and having our own vision of what worship should be like is condemned; **Ex. 25:40** – instructions regarding the furniture of the tabernacle; **Lev. 10:1-3** – don’t offer strange fire; **Deut. 12:32** – don’t add or diminish from God’s requirements; **Jer. 7:31** – “*which I commanded them not*” – no doubt they thought this was a high expression of devotion – condemned not on the basis of exclusion but it had not been commanded; **Matt. 15:6-9** traditions of men must not be substituted for commandments of God; **Is. 29:13** quoted; Great Commission – teach people what Jesus has commanded us; **Col. 2:20ff**; we cannot invent our own ordinances of worship; we cannot argue that if our hearts are right it does not matter what form our worship takes; instead we are instructed that if our hearts are right outward worship will conform to God’s commandments and instructions; can’t ignore the Word of God; not a case of either/or; conform in heart and in action; many have not been taught the truth; many are following just traditions; innovations came because people were bored with the truth of God and with biblical truth; if you are not satisfied with biblical worship, the problem is with you

2. The Lord appoints the required state of heart as well as the outward actions

Much of what the Jews did may have been outwardly correct; that is never enough; they thought that God should be impressed with their worship; complacent, unrepentant, self righteous sinners whose hands were full of blood; violent men; but their religion was full of activity; God couldn’t stomach any more of their hypocrisy; nauseated; trying to impress God and convince Him to deliver them from their enemies; highly offended if God was not impressed; even their prayers were unacceptable

3. The Root Problem was Unbelief

All of these ordinances were appointed by God to be the expression of a people trusting in a Savior to come to whom all the types pointed; **Ps. 130:4** “*there is forgiveness with Thee*”; they were trying to serve and worship in order to be forgiven; did not depend on promises of mercy of God; trying to earn acceptance with God; **Heb. 11:6** “*without faith it is impossible to please Him*,” attempts at self righteousness are offensive to God; they thought that God owed them something; they were doing God a favor to offer such worship; apart from Christ, nothing you do is acceptable to God; they use the ordinance of the Lord’s Savior to try to earn their salvation; **Is. 55:7-9** – forsake your ways and thoughts; **Rom. 10:2**; the regulative principle of worship – the gospel; **Phil. 3:4**;

Preceptaustin.org: Revival

I. WE NEED REVIVAL WHEN:

- A. OUR ACTIONS REMIND GOD OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH - Isa 1:10
For a list of the sins of Sodom see Ezekiel 16:49.
- B. THERE ARE MANY SACRIFICES, BUT A GOD WHO IS FED UP - Isa 1:11
- C. THERE IS FREQUENT ATTENDANCE, BUT A GOD WHO IS INDIFFERENT -
Isa 1:12
- D. THERE ARE MANY ATTEMPTS AT WORSHIP, BUT A GOD WHO IS
GRIEVED - Isa 1:13-14

E. THERE ARE MANY PRAYERS, BUT A GOD WHO WILL NOT HEAR - Isa 1:15

II. WE HAVE REVIVAL WHEN:

A. WE HEED GOD'S CALL TO REPENTANCE

1. Confess (Wash you, and make you clean) - Isa 1:16, 1 John 1:9
2. Forsake (...Put away the evil of your doings...) - Isa 1:16
3. Learn (...to do good...) - Isa 1:17

B. WE ACCEPT GOD'S INVITATION FOR CLEANSING - Isa 1:18, 19, 20

1. The Work of God - Isa 1:18
2. The Response of Man (If ye be willing and obedient...) - Isa 1:19, 20

John Piper: An act which is good in itself can become displeasing to God when it is done with the wrong inner disposition. An outward act that looks pious to us can look horrible in God's eyes because the pious act comes from a heart that is wrong. There seems to be a principle implied here that would go something like this: in God's eyes the beauty (and hence enjoyableness) of an act is the outworking of inward beauty, and the ugliness of an act is the outworking of an inward ugliness. Since God always looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7), he always sees our outward acts not as man sees them, but as extensions of what he sees on the inside. Whether our acts are immoral, like stealing and lying and adultery, or whether our acts are moral like church attendance and community service, both may be abominable in God's eyes if the heart is not right. Paul teaches the same thing when he says in Ro 14:23, "Whatever is not from faith is sin." The inner beauty of hoping in God, of trusting him for help and guidance, makes the external act beautiful. And if this faith is not there motivating the act, the act is not pleasing to the Lord; it is sin. Hebrews 11:6 (note) teaches this when it says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Mere external righteousness does not please God. In fact, we will see that it is not righteousness at all if it does not come from faith. In the near context of Hebrews 11:6 the very same issue of sacrifices is addressed that we have here in Proverbs 15:8. Hebrews 11:4 (note) says, "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain." Why was Abel's sacrifice pleasing to God and not Cain's? The reason is that Abel's sacrifice was offered by faith, but Cain's wasn't; and without faith it is impossible to please God. (Piper, J. *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God's Delight in Being God*. . Sisters, Or.: Multnomah Publishers. 2000)

TEXT: Isaiah 1:21-31

TITLE: *IT'S ALL ABOUT THE END GAME – RESTORATION OF JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS*

BIG IDEA:

DESPITE SPIRITUAL HARLOTRY, PURIFIED JERUSALEM PROMISED A FUTURE OF JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most exciting and challenging aspects of studying the book of Isaiah is the prophetic emphasis on end time events. The prophet writes over 700 years before the first coming of Christ and yet offers significant details of both the First and Second Coming of the **Righteous, Suffering Servant** and the **Glorious, Reigning King**. It is sad to see how those commentators from the amillennial perspective (they don't believe God still has a future for national Israel that includes a 1000 year reign here on the earth) gloss over such details and make very general applications to either the spiritual blessings enjoyed by the church of God today or the eternal state in heaven. They are missing out big time because God is giving us insight into dramatic ways He is going to demonstrate His covenant loyalty to His unfaithful chosen nation, Israel.

Listen to how **Edward J. Young** in his classic 3 volume commentary dismisses the dispensational perspective we will be adopting in our study of these 66 chapters:

The Scofield Bible [with its famous study notes] applies the present verse [:26] to the millennium which it identifies as the "kingdom," and then maintains that during this kingdom the ancient method of administering the government over Israel will be restored. In this view the return to the city's pristine faithfulness will be accomplished not immediately after the judgment of purgation [referencing the return from Babylon], but only after the intervening of the exile, the first advent and the entire age of the church. The, when Christ has come for His saints, and the seventieth seven of Daniel has run its course, Christ will return with His saints to set up a kingdom of a thousand years' duration. It is during this time according to Scofield, that God is to restore the nation's judges. Such an interpretation, however, divests the passage of its force and renders it almost pointless. Of what comfort could such a promise have been to the sinful Judah of Isaiah's day?

On the basis of that argument = how much time must intervene before the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy – you could dismiss all messages of hope relating to either the first or second advent. He goes on to apply the ultimate fulfillment to some generic future Messianic Age which has no connection to any 1,000 year rule on earth. Young has amazing insights ... but in this very important aspect he guts Isaiah's prophecy of much of its intended benefit. One must keep in mind that many prophecies have both a near and an ultimate fulfillment = this telescoping effect we have discussed previously. The scope of the language used and the details revealed have immediate impact but only as a foretaste or type of that ultimate fulfillment in the end times.

For God, it's all about **the End Game**. The biblical view of history is based on history heading to the end that God has predetermined and sovereignly directs. History is not meaningless or

cyclical; history is purposeful because God is sovereign and will execute His kingdom plans in victory over the opposing forces led by Satan. God has not given up on the nation of Israel even though many biblical commentators have. He has not thrown them off because of their unfaithfulness and replaced them with the church. His righteous king will rule in justice and righteousness from the throne of David in Jerusalem.

When I think about the End Game, I think in terms of the **game of chess**. Every move you make in the opening and in the middle of the game is designed to give you just that very slight edge in the end game that you can leverage to eventually checkmate your opponent. You are trying to get a passed pawn that you can promote to a Queen; you want the better pawn structure; you want the advantage of a bishop vs a knight in terms of mobility in the end game. Things happen that are very subtle and may not seem important at that particular juncture of the game, but you end up with an advantage that makes all of the difference in the end.

Douglas Van Dorn: History for God is never divorced from eschatology.

Review:

:1-9 Spiritual Rebellion breaks both the health of the sinner and the heart of the Sovereign

:10-20 The carcass of hypocritical religious activity stinks to high heaven – leading to a call for repentance and reformation

DESPITE SPIRITUAL HARLOTRY, PURIFIED JERUSALEM PROMISED A FUTURE OF JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

[Structure: chiasm in :21-26)

I. (:21-23) TRAGIC LAMENT – **JERUSALEM FAILS THE TEST OF COVENANT FAITHFULNESS –** **FAITHFUL CITY BECOMES A HARLOT –** **LOOKING AT THE PRESENT**

A. (:21a) Reversal From Spiritual Faithfulness to Harlotry – Overall Characterization

“How the faithful city has become a harlot,”

Van Parunak: *How.*--The word is often used (Jer 48:17; Lam 1:1; 2:1; 4:1,2) to introduce a lament, a formalized cry of despair and mourning. . . but now *murderers.*--The verb form (Piel) implies repeated activity. These are people for whom murder is a way of life, armed highwaymen, “a den of thieves.”

Young: the word “harlot” is emphatic – *“how has become a harlot . . . the faithful city”*

Jer. 2:20 *“For long ago I broke your yoke and tore off your bonds; but you said, ‘I will not serve!’ For on every high hill and under every green tree you have lain down as a harlot.”* – speaking of their idolatry

Hos. 2:2 *“Contend with your mother, contend. For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband; and let her put away her harlotry from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts.”*

Ezek. 16:15-37

An amazing and shocking situation; what is true of the capital city is true of the entire nation

Did not live up to their high calling; had been called to a life of holiness and covenant keeping;
cf. the covenant involved in a marriage relationship

B. (:21b) Reversal From Justice and Righteousness to Violence and Exploitation

1. Justice and Righteousness

“She who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her,”

Probably at the time of David and Solomon and even under **Jehoshaphat** and his reforms:
2 Chron. 19:5-7 *“He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city. He said to the judges, ‘Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the Lord who is with you when you render judgment. Now then let the fear of the Lord be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the Lord our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe.’”*

How we treat others is important to God; think how frustrating it is when justice is denied; when a wrong has been committed and there is no resolution; we console ourselves by saying “nobody ever promised that life would be fair” – we look to eternity to square the accounts and make things right ...

But God’s plan has always been for an administration of justice and righteousness here on this earth; He will accomplish that during the millennial kingdom

Young: the righteous administration of the righteous and just will of God

Prov. 29:27 *“An unjust man is abominable to the righteous, and he who is upright in the way is abominable to the wicked.”*

2. Violence and Exploitation

“But now murderers.”

How shocking it must have been for these fellow Jews to be labeled “murderers” by Isaiah!
Yet here in God’s holy city Jerusalem, the prophet labels the people as murderers.

Our country has certainly had its heart broken this past week over the tragic events in Newtown CT. The evil in the heart of man that evidences itself most vividly in the murder of innocent small children horrifies all of us. But think of what an affront it is to the holy God who is the Creator of all life. Why isn’t our culture horrified at the thousands of abortions that murder innocent babies (much younger than ages 5-7 and much more vulnerable) that are still in the supposed protective womb of their mothers? We have become a nation of murderers. Our heart should be broken every day.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus amplifies the heart condition that God condemns here:

Matt. 5:21-26 this is the fundamental sin we saw right from the beginning of time where Cain was jealous of his brother Abel and murdered him;

1 John 3:15 *“Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”*

John 8:44 *“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He*

was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.”

If your society tolerates murderers ... certainly all lesser evils find comfortable lodging there as well

C. (:22) Two Images of Adulteration

1. Silver Perverted into Dross

“Your silver has become dross,”

As **Alexander** observes, the figure changes from adultery to adulteration.

Young: silver represents all that is noble and pure

Vine: The pure silver of righteousness had become dross, an amalgam of formal religion and vileness. The wine of divinely imparted wisdom (Pr 9:5) was diluted with the water of mere tradition.

Not just contaminated but its very nature has been changed into the very opposite = that which is worthless and ugly

2. Wine Diluted with Water

“Your drink diluted with water.”

Bob Utley: This is not the normal term for wine. This singular feminine occurs only here. Because of the related cognate root in Akkadian, it may refer to beer, beer that has been diluted (i.e., ruined) by water.

leavening effects of sin (**1Co 5:6**), which when it enters contaminates every part of a person

How could this have happened? For the answer, the Lord looks to their failed leaders:

D. (:23) Indictment of Unfaithful Rulers

1. Heart Orientation = Rebellion

“Your rulers are rebels,”

Van Parunak: **Ex. 18:13-27** advice Jethro gave to Moses about burden of rendering judgment all by himself; pick men that hate covetousness so that you won't be able to buy them off; “rulers” = “princes” of Jerusalem – talking about people responsible for the daily adjudication of disputes among the people

Vs. 21 *“Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain”*

Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely

Rulers should recognize that their power is delegated to them by God and they should be the most submissive to His rule – not rebels

2. Value System = Revealed by the company you keep

“And companions of thieves;”

Charge leveled by Jesus when He forcefully cleansed the temple:

Matt. 21:13 *“It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a robbers den.’”*

You take what you want by exploiting others – motivated by greed and covetousness

3. Root Problem = Greed and Covetousness

a. Desiring prosperity without integrity

- 1) Taking bribes
“Everyone loves a bribe,”

- 2) Feathering their own nest
“And chases after rewards.”

This is why a requirement for elders in the church is that they not be greedy or pursuing sordid gain because leadership gives people the potential to abuse their power and exploit people rather than to serve their needs

Deut. 10:17-18 – how unlike their God the people have become

“For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.”

Beall: Note the word play in v. 23b: instead of pursuing peace (שָׁלוֹם) the rulers are eagerly pursuing bribes (שֹׁלְמָנִים). (Note the order of events—one must first get right with the Lord, and then social change will take place. Social change apart from a proper relationship with the Lord is meaningless.)

b. Disregarding their fundamental calling

- 1) No concern for the helpless orphans
“They do not defend the orphan,”

1:17 *“Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.”*

What can we do as a church to identify orphans in our community and undertake to provide for them?

- 2) No concern for the defenseless widows
“Nor does the widow's plea come before them.”

Motyer: everything is subordinate to self-interest so that those who bring needs rather than gifts are dismissed without thought.

These individuals cannot pay you back – we are most like God when we are demonstrating mercy and compassion to those who have nothing to offer us in return; no great good work to have your friends over for dinner ... what are you doing to show love to strangers ... or even better – to love your enemies??

**II. (:24-26) TOUGH LOVE –
JEHOVAH PROMISES TO REFINE AND RESTORE HIS CITY –
HARLOT BECOMES A FAITHFUL CITY –
LOOKING AT THE PROCESS**

D. (:24a) Indictment Issued by the Sovereign, All Powerful Ruler

3 Names of God piled up here for effect:

1. Sovereign and All Powerful in Relation to All Creation

“*Therefore the Lord*”

Oswalt: The term *adon*, Sovereign (or Lord), as applied to god, is almost peculiar to Isaiah (only elsewhere in Exod. 23:17; Mal. 3:1). In Isaiah it occurs exclusively in threats (3:1; 10:16, 33; 19:4) in conjunction with the following phrase, *Lord of hosts*. The combined effect of the two phrases is one of complete mastery, of total dominance. Who would be so foolish as to defy the Lord, Yahweh of Hosts? The effect is only heightened by the addition of *the Mighty One of Israel*, a phrase [actually “*mighty One of Jacob*” elsewhere] which elsewhere (Gen. 49:24; Isa. 49:26; 60:16; Ps. 132:2, 5) has positive connotations. But he who is mighty to save can also be mighty to destroy . . .

2. Sovereign and All Powerful in a Military Context Over All Nations

“*God Of hosts*” = of heavenly armies

Armies of Assyria and Babylon no longer considered so fearful when you realize that your Commander in Chief is the Lord of hosts

3. Sovereign and All Powerful in Relation to Israel

“*The Mighty One of Israel declares,*” [only OT usage]

Preceptaustin.org: The Hebrew word for might (*'abiy*) is used only of the name of God in all 6 OT uses [=“*Mighty One of Jacob*”
Suggestive of bull-like strength

C. (:24b-25) Two Images of Coming Judgment and Discipline

1. Casting off the Burden of Enemies

“*Ah, I will be relieved of My adversaries, And avenge Myself on My foes.*”

Who is in view here . . . and **when** will God perform this avenging? Is this a prophetic passage that has final consummation in the events preceding the establishment of the Millennial kingdom?

Two possibilities:

- **Reference is to the Israelites themselves** = all the commentators take this because of the immediate context speaking of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem

Beall: The saddest part of v. 24 is that the enemies referred to are the Israelites themselves.

Ezekiel 5 = strongest parallel passage to indicate that the Lord is here referring to His own people as adversaries and foes = very strong language

- **Reference is to the other nations** like Assyria and Babylon which God would use as

instruments of discipline but then would punish them as well
“*avenged*” – only other usage:

Judges 16:28 “*Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."*

Is. 59:18 – referring to other wicked nations; **Is. 64:2**

Nah. 1:2 “*A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies.*” – oracle against Nineveh, the capital of Assyria

Motyer: The Lord will get relief (*naham*) and avenge (*naqam*) himself. The former term, with its root idea of ‘comfort’, points to soothing the hurt given to God; the latter to the objective requital merited. Any facile statement that God always hates the sin but loves the sinner needs to be countered by Isaiah’s insistence that those who transgress are *my foes* and *my enemies*.

Keil and Delitzsch: Jehovah would procure Himself relief from His enemies by letting out upon them the wrath with which He had hitherto been burdened.

2. Purifying God’s Chosen Nation via the Hand of Discipline

“I will also turn My hand against you, And will smelt away your dross as with lye, And will remove all your alloy.”

Preceptaustin.org: This prophecy most likely has a near and far fulfillment. The near fulfillment is when Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem and eventually destroyed the Holy Temple in 586BC, but in context with the description in the following verse (Isa 1:26), the ultimate fulfillment will be in the last days in the time of Jacob's distress (Jer 30:6, 7), which Jesus designated as the Great Tribulation (Mt 24:15, 21, 30). . . It is only after Messiah returns at the end of the last half of Daniel's Seventieth Week, at the end of the 3.5 year period (the Great Tribulation) that Jerusalem will be called the city of righteousness, and be a faithful city (Isa 1:26). At that time Messiah, the Righteous One, will reign in Jerusalem, and He is ultimately the reason it will be righteous and faithful.

B. (:26a) Restoration of Justice and Righteousness at the Leadership Level

1. Restoration of Justice

“Then I will restore your judges as at the first, And your counselors as at the beginning;”

2. Restoration of Righteousness

“After that you will be called the city of righteousness,”

(Is 1:21; 60:21; 62:1; Je 31:23; Zeph 3:9,13; Zech 8:8; Re 21:27)

A. (:26b) Restoration of Faithfulness as Overall Characterization

“A faithful city.”

MacArthur: They were subsequently restored from the Babylonian captivity (Jer 29:10), but this

promise has in view a greater and more lasting restoration. It anticipates a complete and permanent restoration, which will make Jerusalem supreme among the nations (Jer 3:17; Eze 5:5; Mic 4:2; Zec 8:22; 14:16). The only such purging and restoration in Scripture is that spoken of in conjunction with the yet future “*time of Jacob’s distress*” (Jer 30:6,7); i.e., Daniel’s 70th week, cf. Da 9:24-27) and the second advent of the Messiah (Zec 14:4).

III. (:27-31) TRANSFORMED LEGACY VS. TERMINAL LEGACY – REDEMPTION FOR THE REPENTANT -- JUDGMENT WILL CONSUME ALL TRANSGRESSORS – LOOKING AT GOD’S PROMISES

A. (:27) Transformed Legacy – Redemption for the Repentant

How will things end for the city of Jerusalem?

This verse both concludes the preceding section and stands in contrast to what comes after = a **hinge** = what holds the door and the house together -- **Van Parunak**

1. The Process

- a. God’s Work = Redemption
“*Zion will be redeemed,*”

Zion was originally a designation for the hill Ophel, this name became a synonym for the entire city of Jerusalem. Isaiah always uses it that way.\

- b. Man’s Response = Repentance
“*And her repentant ones*”

Motyer: Human repentance is not a meritorious work offered to God to excite his pleasure but a response to the fact that his righteous claims have been met.

2. The Product

- a. Justice
“*with justice,*”
- b. Righteousness
“*with righteousness.*”

B. (:28-31) Terminal Legacy – Judgment will Consume All Transgressors

1. (:28) Certain Destruction Based on Rebellion and Harlotry

- a. Crushed
“*But transgressors and sinners will be crushed together,*”

Transgressors break the law; sins of commission

Sinners fall short of the mark = failing to do what God requires of us

- b. Come to an End
“*And those who forsake the LORD shall come to an end.*”

Surprising that the Lord does not forsake His covenant people; does not void all of His promises for their future blessing and prosperity – that is what many evangelicals believe today about the

OT promises made to national Israel

Abandoned the Lord to go after false idols (trees and gardens)
Compromise with pagan religions

* * * * *

Van Parunak: *shall be consumed*.--They will be finished. Just what does this mean? Verses like this are often quoted by annihilationists, those who hold that the wicked do not suffer eternally but are destroyed. The view is traditional with the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day adventists, but over the past 50 years has been espoused by a number of prominent evangelicals (e.g., John Stott, Clark Pinnock, Philip E. Hughes, John Wenham). **J.I. Packer** http://www.thehighway.com/annihilationism_Packer.html and **Benjamin Warfield** <http://www.thehighway.com/articleJuly04.html> have prepared reviews, Packer with detailed discussion.

It would not help our understanding of Isaiah to divert into a detailed discussion of annihilationism, but three observations are worthwhile.

1. The OT focuses on the outward, physical, earthly form of the people of God. It naturally uses language that suggests the eradication of the wicked from society, without conflicting with later revelation concerning the eternal destiny of the wicked (e.g., Rev 14:11).
2. Even in the OT there are glimpses of the eternal suffering of the wicked. Compare v. 31 of this chapter, and Dan 12:2, "*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*"
3. The words used do not denote absolute cessation of existence. "Destruction" is literally "smashing, breaking," rendering its object useless but not non-existent. "Consumed" is used of the human spirit in Ps 143:7, of the soul in Ps 84:2 and 119:81, and of the kidneys as the seat of the emotions in Job 19:27, to refer to great psychological pain and distress, not at all a cessation of consciousness, and this is most likely how the term is meant here, as we will see in the following verse. Similar examples can be multiplied of all the words that are held to refer to annihilation.

In addition, Isaiah goes on to amplify what he means by this description of their destiny, in very nonannihilationist terms

* * * * *

2. (:29-30) Frustrated Shame Over Futile Idolatry

- a. Image of Oaks – associated with anticipated strength – Objects of Idolatry
"Surely, you will be ashamed of the oaks which you have desired,"
"For you will be like an oak whose leaf fades away,"

Van Parunak: Kind of pistachio tree; called turpentine tree; grows very large; **Ezek. 6:13**; their name is actually a pun for name of God; environmentalists today talk about Mother Earth almost as if it were a god; tree-huggers with religious zeal for trees; trees also furnished material for the idols they crafted; Is. 44:13ff – mocking satire directed against man-made gods; **Psalm 1**

Oswalt: The use of trees here is a testimony to Isaiah's gift of imagery and to the multiple

allusions his images can sustain. Not only can the oak be used to conjure up the whole range of idolatry and the finally destructive results of idolatry, but it also can stand for those who are proud, dominating, and apparently self-sufficient, like a great tree.

Preceptaustin.org: refers to an oak or terebinth tree (or Terebinth), which was used in the sensuous, licentious, abominable, sexually charged atmosphere associated with pagan idol worship

- b. Image of Garden – associated with anticipated fertility – Places of Idolatry
“And you will be embarrassed at the gardens which you have chosen.”
“Or as a garden that has no water.”

Deut. 16:21 – don’t worship in the type of sanctuary revered by pagans

3. (:31) Judgment by All Consuming Fire

- a. Person and Works
“And the strong man will become tinder, His work also a spark.”
- b. No Hope of Rescue or Deliverance
“Thus they shall both burn together, And there will be none to quench them.”

The reference here is probably to the sacred groves of Baal and Ashtoreth. Justice and righteousness can only prevail where sin is judged and God’s wrath is satisfied

CONCLUSION:

Need to live for Eternity

What we do in the Opening ... in the Middle game ... impacts the End Game

What will our legacy be? Transformed or Terminal?

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What parallels can you draw between marital faithfulness/unfaithfulness and spiritual allegiance to the Lord?
- 2) Study other passages which link the concepts of justice and righteousness closely together. What insights can you glean from this study?
- 3) How would you interpret passages like this that speak of the restoration of Jerusalem and Israel apart from a premillennial perspective?
- 4) In what sense do we become like what we worship?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak:

2 Pet. 1:10 – Israel did not make their calling and election sure; they had a lofty calling;

Vs. 21 “*How*” – used in lamentations; How could this possibly have happened; an anguished cry; “faithful” city is obedient to the Lord; Israel has fallen short of her calling; faithful wife is true to her husband; opposite is a harlot = no loyalty to anyone

A series of reversals presented – that was the place you went to have difficult judgments rendered in a right sense; people knew the law of God and lived by it; usually night time is when bad things happen; murderers live there now; you have made my house a den of thieves;

Gives us a picture and then the interpretation; silver has become dross; lead oxide = the impurity mixed with silver ore; ugly messy stuff that you would burn off; Wine mixed with water; vs. 23 he gives the interpretation of these two pictures

We need a new vision of how fearful it will be for sinners to stand before the God of judgment; Lord of hosts is a military statement describing God as commanding the armies of heaven; “*the mighty one of Israel*” – emphasizes the power of God in the face of His adversaries; my enemies are a burden to me and I will take them off and cast them away; God experiences emotional relief over some inconsistency; motivation for judgment is to let the silver shine; to refine and purify; Heb. 12 is an exposition of this theme; Zion needs to be redeemed – not something she can do herself; means of redemption is with judgment and with righteousness; Is. 53 God’s Righteous Servant endures judgment on behalf of those who trust in Him; justifying helpless sinners; entry point to evangelism is the coming judgment of an angry God whom you have offended with your sin – not that God loves you

Douglas Van Dorn: The Smelting Furnace

Biblical history is going somewhere; life is not a matter of chance or karma but purpose and predetermination on the part of the sovereign God who will be victorious in His battle over Satan and his forces; History for God is never divorced from eschatology; His purpose is to redeem the past in the future – not looking back at what might have been in regret; humans go about corrupting the future by returning to the past because we have forgotten the past; God wants to redeem Eden; men also want Eden but with the knowledge of good and evil (from eating the forbidden fruit) but with no consequences; God’s judgment tempered with mercy and will purify the harlot to become a faithful city once again; we make our gardens and worship our trees just like Adam and Eve back in Eden while hoping that God will not find us; Upholding justice and righteousness in the land is the essence of faithfulness vs idolatry; In the church it is our lack of care for others that condemns us; poetic and pictorial presentation by the prophet; money has taken the place of God in their value system; we don’t think that we are idolatrous like Israel But they didn’t think they were either! Look at how mega churches have huge budget for the building and very little funds for helping the needy among them; we worship power and money and size = idolatry; God likens this to loving bribes and taking after rewards; Instead: look after orphans and widows and keep oneself from being polluted by the world; true religion is outward focused much more than inward focused in the Scripture; most of our emphasis is on personal relationship with Jesus rather than helping others; God is still a covenantal God and remembers His promises; you must see depths of your sin in order to appreciate God’s mercy; Picture of

purification of worthless content in the heat of a furnace; *dross* = scum that rises to the surface in the smelting process of oxidation to get the pure ore; *lye* = something they make soap out of; God brings justice out of nothing; Babylonian Captivity purified the people but looks forward to future time of purification

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TEXT: Isaiah 2:1-5

TITLE: LEARN AND LIVE THE LIGHT OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

THE GLORY OF THE COMING MESSIANIC KINGDOM WILL BE MANIFESTED IN THE UNIVERSAL INDOCTRINATION IN THE WORD OF GOD AND THE UNILATERAL IMPLEMENTATION OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

INTRODUCTION:

As we prepare to enter into a new year, why should we give so much attention to the Word of God? Does it get tiresome to turn back to the pages of the OT and read words that were written 700 years before the First Coming of Christ? Of what possible relevance could these prophecies be to the pressures I will face in this coming week? Why does God provide so many details about a future Messianic kingdom on earth that seems to have primary application to a Jewish nation that could care less about what God says? What type of interest do you have today for matters which are apparently dear to the heart and program of God? We are going to offer **Is. 2:5** as our verse for 2013. Does anyone remember our verse for 2012?

Some of your level of interest will be dictated by your view of the nature of this coming kingdom. Evangelicals are divided today into 3 major camps with a variety of minor alterations.

Gil Rugh: Views of the Prophesied Kingdom

3 basic views on this kingdom: (different from universal kingdom)

Millennium - thousand year period; derived from **Rev. 20:2-7**; that's the only place in Scripture referenced; look at what events come before and what come after; some people take Revelation as so highly symbolic that we should not take this number literally

1) Amillennialism = no literal, earthly millennium

Kingdom is spiritual and began with resurrection of Christ who rules spiritually right now; Roman Catholics, Luther, Presbyterians; hermeneutic: the NT reinterprets the OT [look at how NT quotes the OT in many places – answered by process of **revelation** – different from our efforts at interpretation]; prophecies relating to Israel fulfilled by God's people now who are the new Israel; But additional revelation cannot change earlier revelation – it can only add to it or clarify it; you cannot spiritualize the text; form of allegorizing; usually these people don't spend as much time on prophetic passages; we should be doing things associated with the kingdom = helping the poor; social justice programs; etc.

[Since they take the language as largely symbolic – they don't spend much time in these OT kingdom passages trying to agonize over the precise interpretation. They just speak in generalities of the type of peace and justice and righteousness that the reign of Christ can bring in our hearts. They don't spend much time with the details.]

WHAT IS THE POINT OF SO MUCH EMPHASIS ON PROPHETIC DETAILS?

Distinction continues to be made between people of the nation of Israel and people of all other nations; there will come a time when all Israel will be saved – doesn't make sense if that refers to the body of the church = they are already saved

2) Postmillennialism – through the work of God's people, things get better and better and then

we usher in the kingdom and then Christ returns at the end; the kingdom got started with the First Coming of Christ; almost died out with the World Wars; Charles Hodge, Shedd, Strong, Boettner are all in this camp; now we see a resurgence of this by reconstructionists and theonomists who want to see God's law reinstated in the culture; strong regarding social action and instituting change in all areas of our government and culture

WHY DOESN'T THE WORLD LOOK LIKE IT IS HEADING IN ANY TYPE OF POSITIVE DIRECTION?

3) Premillennialism – Christ returns first and establishes earthly kingdom;

- post-trib view = rapture after the tribulation period; covenant view – blend Israel and the church; who will populate the Millennium if all believers are raptured and get glorified bodies and return to earth; who then will be born in Millennium and rebel and be judged at end of Millennium

- pre-trib view; dispensational view; clear distinction between national Israel (physical descendants of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob) and the church; [just because 2 groups have much in common as the people of God, the people of faith does not make them identical without distinction] **Rom. 2:28** – being a physical Jew alone does not mean you will inherit the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants; you need a circumcised heart; that was always required (Deut. 30:6; etc.); consistent literal interpretation of Scripture (amills say OT was literally intended to be interpreted spiritually);

What kingdom was promised in these OT prophetic passages? Our view affects our practice as a church; what types of things should we focus on?? Not movements like the Moral Majority which is designed to change society = functioning as a postmill

Interesting that the apostles did not question Jesus about the nature of the kingdom – just the timing of it –

Acts 1:6 “*Is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?*” no teaching by the Lord about Israel being replaced in God's promises with the church – nature of the coming kingdom on earth not at issue – just the **timeframe**

Previously, the nature of the kingdom had been an issue – **Luke 17:21** “*kingdom is in your midst*” because the King is present – there is a spiritual aspect to the kingdom in which we participate right now

Jesus did not want His apostles to try to bring in the kingdom on basis of physical warfare; had them put up their swords and not put up a fight when He was arrested

1 Cor. 15:50 “*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*” – speaking of the eternal kingdom which requires a glorified body

You must look at the context

Overall chiastic structure of this section:

Van Parunak: In 4:2-6, Isaiah will return to the theme of Zion's restoration, but first he turns to the Day of the Lord, the great period of judgment that will culminate in this restoration. The intermediate section has two main divisions, each introduced by a command to his readers. The first introduces the theme of the Day of the Lord for the first time in Isaiah. (The concept is most discussed by Joel, and if his ministry antedates Isaiah, that may be the source for Isaiah's discussion.) In this first section, one might think that the judgment is to fall primarily on the Gentiles. But the second shows the effect of that day on the nation Israel.

Oswalt: proud, self-sufficient Israel can become the witness to the greatness of God only when

she has been reduced to helplessness by his just judgment and then restored to life by his unmerited grace.

Application: Isaiah wants the Jews of his day to look into the future – see the glorious kingdom that God will bring about and then reform their life today to Learn God’s Word and Live in harmony with the Light of God

(:1) PREAMBLE – connection back to **1:1**

“The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.”

1:1 introduced the entire prophecy of Isaiah; here the heading is repeated to introduce the first section of chaps. 2-4

Van Parunak: It seems unusual to us to “see” a “word.” We might expect him to see a vision or hear a word. But Hebrew *dabar* can mean “matter” or “thing” as well, and that appears to be the sense here.

I. (:2-3) THE UNIVERSAL INDOCTRINATION PROGRAM OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM – ACCOMPLISHED BY THE MESSIAH

A. Timeframe for the Messianic Kingdom

“Now it will come about that in the last days,”

Phrase refers to timeframe future to the speaker; context determines that reference is **eschatological**; *“in the afterward of these days”*

Emphasizes the **certainty** of Israel’s ultimate destiny

As we enter into new year, good to put our focus on the last days; we are living in the last days = the age introduced by the Messiah

Beall: Vv. 2-4 are nearly identical to **Mic 4:1-3**. Some argue that they are original with Micah, since they seem fit the context of Micah better. But **Motyer** thinks that Isaiah’s version “feels and is a tighter literary composition, and the variations in Micah could have arisen through quoting from memory” (p. 53). Or, perhaps Isaiah and Micah took the prophecy from a common, well-known source.

Grogan: The NT, making explicit the fact that the Messiah comes twice, applies the phrase both to the period of his first advent (e.g., Acts 2:17; Heb 1:2) and to his second (e.g., James 5:3; 1 Peter 1:5). The context of the oracle in Micah suggests that the first stage of its fulfillment took place in the return from Babylonia (Mic. 4:1-10), when ruined Jerusalem (Mic 3:12) would be rebuilt and her temple raised again.

Micah 4:1-2 *“And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. And many nations will come and say, ‘Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths.’ For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”* (Zech. 14:9-11)

Ezek 38:16 *“and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It will come about in the last days that I shall bring you against My land, in order that the nations may know Me when I shall be sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog.”*

Deuteronomy 4:30 *“When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.”*

Daniel 10:14 *“Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.”*

Hosea 3:5 *“Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.”*

B. Supremacy of the Messianic Kingdom

“The mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills;”

Van Parunak: the use of **poetic parallelism**, already evident in ch. 1, is here pervasive, and often provides an important clue for interpretation. Virtually every clause, every assertion is doubled. The importance of this stylistic feature was recognized by Bishop Lowth in 1754, well after the publication of the KJV in 1611, so sometimes they miss the parallelism.

Mountain – speaks of kingdom; and kingdom implies a king (**Dan. 2:35; Amos 4:1**)
The religion of Israel and the God of Israel will be exalted as exclusively true
Structure patterned after nation of Israel; not the church

Van Parunak: In its current situation, Mount Zion is actually lower than the nearby Mount of Olives; one looks down on Mount Zion from the top of the Mount of Olives. . . Isaiah may be describing a physical change in topography; earthquakes feature prominently in the culminations of each cycle in the Revelation. Zech 14 describes dramatic topographical changes in the coming “*day of the Lord*”

Isaiah 11:9 *“They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.”*

Zechariah 8:3 *“Thus says the LORD, ‘I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.’”*

“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

C. Gentile Discipleship in the Messianic Kingdom

“And all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways, And that we may walk in His paths.’”

Picture is of a river flowing uphill

Motyer: a supernatural magnetism is at work

1 Tim. 1:5 *“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith”*

Van Parunak: It was prophesied that Gentiles would come to worship the Lord. It was not previously revealed that in their worship, they would be on an equal footing with Jews.

Oswalt: Those who will not leave their own self-sufficiency and come to God cannot learn his . . . ways. But the learning is for the purpose of living. It is not an end in itself

2 Tim. 3:7 *“always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”*

Motyer: This is true knowledge: a grasp of truth issuing in redirection of life.

Aside: **Does the temple need to be rebuilt** as the center of worship in the Millennium Kingdom? Actually it needs to be rebuilt by the mid point of the Tribulation period because of the prophecies of the desecration of the temple by the Anti Christ

The abomination of desolation is referred to three times in the book of Daniel, (**Daniel 9:27, 11, 31; 12:11**). Each mention refers to the place of sacrifice being defiled.

The words of Paul refer to the defilement of the temple as well.

2 Thess. 2:3-4 *“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalt himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.”*

D. Dispensation of the Truth of God

“For the law will go forth from Zion, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

Beall: Gen 22:14, the prophetic name for the mount given by Abraham after God provided the sacrifice in place of his son Isaac

Young: Whenever and wherever in the church preaching the truth has been relegated to a secondary position, in that measure the church has been unfaithful to the will of God as expressed in this prophecy.

II. (:4) THE UNILATERAL IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM OF JUSTICE AND PEACE IN THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM – ACCOMPLISHED BY THE MESSIAH

“unilateral” = done or undertaken by one person or party

A. Implementation of Justice

“And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples;”

No International Court system run by world governments

B. Implementation of Peace

1. Destructive Implements of War Converted Into Productive Implements of Agriculture

“And they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.”

Not accomplished by the United Nations or by a consortium of world governments

United Nations statue: The United Nations garden contains several sculptures and statues that have been donated by different countries. This one is called "Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares" and was a gift from the then Soviet Union presented in 1959. Made by Evgeniy Vuchetich, the bronze statue represents the figure of a man holding a hammer in one hand and, in the other, a sword which he is making into a plowshare, symbolizing man's desire to put an end to war and convert the means of destruction into creative tools for the benefit of all mankind. <http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/untour/subswo.htm>

cf. bumper stickers: “World Peace” – what does that mean??

Why are weapons needed? For protection or attacking
Not a good idea for countries to lay down their weapons right now!

Look at **Joel 3:10** which advocates the exact opposite of this passage in preparation for final battle leading into the Millennial Kingdom

2. Cessation of Hostilities

“Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.”

No need for peace treaties
No return to former state
No need for huge defense budgets and standing armies and weapons of mass destruction
Can devote attention to learning the ways of the Lord

Motyer: the means of war, the practice of war, the mentality of war all alike disappear. The choice of agricultural implements is symbolic of the return to Eden (cf. 11:6-9)

(:5) APPLICATION: LEARN AND LIVE ACCORDING TO GOD’S WAYS

“Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.”

Gentile nations will be responding to God’s truth in the Messianic Kingdom; exhortation to Israel to respond now – motivating to holy jealousy

Oswalt: Is. 9:2, 18-25; 24:14-16; 42:10, 12; 60:1-3, 19; 66:18-21

Gleason Archer: In the light of God’s promises of pardon for repentant sinners, and in view of the glorious prospects for the future conversion of the Gentiles, the prophet urged his countrymen to walk in the light and live to please God, trusting Him to perform His word. They were to do this even though it meant running counter to the stream of the times and opposing current and fashionable trends.

Light vs Darkness – evil men hate the light and refuse to come to it
Jesus was the light that came into the world

Light associated with Life
Light brings blessing to the Gentiles

Parallel to the **Great Commission** – program of indoctrination and program of implementation
“teaching them to observe all that I commanded you”

CONCLUSION: Psalm 119:105-112

THE WORD OF GOD LIGHTS OUR PATHWAYS ON THE ROAD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

I. (:105) THESIS: "THY WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET, AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH."

Contrast of Light vs. Darkness very important throughout Scriptures

"God is Light"

We lose our bearings when we stray from the Word of God

God's Word provides practical direction in the path of obedience

II. (:106) RIGHTEOUSNESS MOTIVATES OUR COMMITMENT TO OBEDIENCE

"I have sworn, and I will confirm it, That I will keep Thy righteous ordinances."

A. Level of our Commitment -- How committed are you to obedience?

1. *"I have sworn"*
2. *"I will confirm it"*
3. *"I will keep"*

B. Value of God's Commands -- How righteous are they?

III. (:107-110) AFFLICTION THREATENS OUR PERSEVERANCE IN OBEDIENCE

A. Intensity of the Affliction

1. Its Depth -- *"I am exceedingly afflicted"*
2. Its Duration -- *"My life is continually in my hand"*
3. Its Danger -- *"The wicked have laid a snare for me"*

B. Passion for God's Word

1. Its Power to Revive -- *"Revive me, O Lord, according to Thy word"*
2. Its Helpfulness to Instruct -- *"teach me Thine ordinances"*

C. Attitude of Thankfulness -- *"O accept the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord"*

D. Perseverance in Obedience

1. Remaining focused -- *"Yet I do not forget Thy law"*
2. Remaining on track -- *"Yet I have not gone astray from Thy precepts"*

IV. (:111-112) THE ROAD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE ROAD TO ETERNITY

A. Righteousness is Our Eternal Joy

"I have inherited Thy testimonies forever, For they are the joy of my heart"

B. Righteousness is Our Eternal Pursuit

"I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes Forever, even to the end"

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How interested are you in OT prophecies related to the coming millennial kingdom?
- 2) What passion do you have right now for God's indoctrination program that dispenses the Word of His Truth to all who will receive it?
- 3) How does this passage impact to what extent the church today should make it a priority to engage in programs of social relief and social justice?
- 4) Is the goal of God's instruction in terms of its implementation of the pathway of light being realized in your life today?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Gil Rugh:

Dan. 12:11 – little horn comes to power at middle of tribulation period; 70th week of Daniel; you are not told here how all the resurrections play out in terms of timeline; Revelation lays out the chronology but doesn't change what was meant by the earlier prophecies; just gives added clarity; 360 days = prophetic year; time that sacrifice is abolished (abomination of desolation) happens in middle of tribulation; 1260 days left until return of Christ (Rev. 12-13); extra 30 days mentioned and then another 45 days past the return of Christ; we have the judgment of Israel and of the nations who are alive at this time; preparation of earth for the institution of the kingdom; whoever makes it to the end is blessed because they are entering the kingdom; all unbelievers will have been destroyed

OT Descriptions of the Kingdom:

Is. 2:2-4 mountain is a figure of speech (literal interpretation includes figures of speech) used to refer to a kingdom in the OT; other nations submit to this one ruling kingdom; inscribed on United Nations building; don't try to act this way today; that would be naïve; bumper sticker: "Nebraskans for Peace" – what does that mean?? Don't try to lay down your weapons now; wait until Christ comes to reign

Is. 9:1-7 first and second coming of Christ pictured together; literal fulfillment of prophecies related to First Coming; between vv.2-3 you have over a 2,000 year gap ... but still expect literal fulfillment; is it our responsibility to establish justice and righteousness on the earth?

Is. 11:1-10 Christ was literal descendant from David; import of the genealogies; don't spiritualize any of these promises

Is. 35:1-10 His glory will be displayed in its fullness; Why did Christ heal? To demonstrate He was the Messiah – He didn't heal everyone

Is. 65:17-25

Dan. 2:37-44 literal earthly kingdom ruled by an earthly king; what will replace Babylon? Other physical kingdoms: Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, then kingdom set up by God (vs. 35 used imagery of a mountain) – between Rome and its revival in (feet and toes) Tribulation Period is church age; God's later revelation did not change or invalidate earlier revelation

Dr. John Whitcomb: Isaiah and the Coming Kingdom

When Jesus came over 2000 years ago with His forerunner John the Baptist preaching "*Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand*", everybody in Israel understood what the kingdom was all about. Jesus taught for 40 days after His resurrection about the kingdom. Apostles asked Him the key question. He didn't say there wouldn't be a kingdom or a kingdom of a different nature ... the only question was When.

Kingdom Passages in Isaiah – Overview:

Is. 2:1-4 Mountain represents kingdom; raised up over all other kingdoms. Exclusive, God-honoring teaching will come from Jerusalem; Nations today still looking for peace.

Is. 4:2-6 – The holy remnant after the Tribulation when vast numbers of Jews and Gentiles will die; purging process; cleansing the world of all unbelief; in kingdom age nobody will ever be able to offer the weather as excuse for not going up to the house of the Lord to worship; wonderful canopy established over Jerusalem

Is. 11:6-16 What will happen to the animal kingdom? Doesn't mean the lamb is inside the wolf; wolf and lamb will dwell together peaceably; become plant eater again; Acts 3 – a restoration of all things spoken of by the prophets; everybody at the beginning of the kingdom will know the Lord = end of evangelism! Satan is gone in the kingdom; all Jews brought back to the Promised Land; all Jews part of united kingdom under Jesus; on other occasions, only a remnant went back (not total restoration) and there were no miracles

Is. 10:16-25 – Remember six day war of 1967 – Israeli armies defeated Egyptian armies; but Egypt not afraid right now; all Egyptians will worship the God of Israel; at beginning of Millennium they will wander around for 40 years before being restored as the least of all nations (Ezekiel); look at Egypt and Assyria – linked together in blessing with Israel (vs. 25) -- Amazing

Is. 24:21-23 God will cast Satan out of heaven to the earth in mid of Tribulation period; then you will have defeat of earthly enemies at Armageddon at end of Tribulation period; imprisoned for 1000 years and then punished; outline of kingdom events

Is. 25:6-9 Inaugural banquet at beginning of kingdom; Jesus said never again will I taste the fruit of the vine until I drink it with you in the kingdom at this banquet; great celebration; celebrating the coming of the Messiah to bring salvation

Is. 26:7-27:1 Every child born during the kingdom will have to make a choice; still the gate is narrow and few there be that find it; a minority of each generation puts their trust in God; millions of people born and grow during kingdom; no death – huge population explosion; lots of outward conformity of worship but still inward unbelief; vs. 19 = rare OT expression of bodily resurrection; millennium begins with resurrection of all OT saints and tribulation martyrs (church saints raised at rapture); shows destruction that will happen in last days of the Great Tribulation

Is. 43:5-7 Bringing Jews back to the Promised Land;

Is. 44:26-28 God's plan for the world; Isaiah knew nothing about the church; enormous difference between Israel and the church; Israel needs a worship center in Jerusalem; Zadokian priest system; program must be geographically centered in Jerusalem; shocking that in the church all our priests and our sacrifices are the praises from our heart; we have no Sabbath law;

church will not be on the earth in the kingdom; Muslims control ground for the temple now; but they can't do it until they have divinely empowered leader named Elijah = last verse of OT; cry on cross "Eli, Eli" (Aramaic) = Jews thought Jesus was calling for Elijah; empty chair set for Elijah at Passover Feast table = open the door and see if Elijah is here; cf. Moses and Elijah on Mt. of Transfiguration; Elijah will come and will restore all things in preparing Israel for the kingdom; both had supernatural departures from the world; nobody ever saw them die; John 3:13 – but they did die; they will come back and have a second life on earth like Lazarus did; first temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; second temple destroyed by Roman army in A.D. 70; third temple must be reestablished in Jerusalem

Is. 49:18-23 Unlikely today for all the Muslims to bow down to Israel and lick the dust; takes God's miraculous intervention

Is. 54:1-3; 56:6-8; 60:4-9, 13; 61:4-9; 65:8-10

Is. 65:17-25 on rare occasions in the kingdom, those who rebel against the King will die; he will be judged to be accursed; every person who enters the kingdom will outlive Methuselah

Is. 66:7-8 Before her pain of Great Tribulation she brought forth Jesus;

Overview of world history: from Fall to days of Noah; only one family survived; world transformed geologically and topographically; but fewer demons now; also modification of the curse; from now on the animal kingdom will be afraid of man; before the Flood terrifying animals made life almost impossible; How many hours have you spent running away from deadly animals? Whole world was full of violence and dinosaurs back them; During millennium all animals will be totally harmless just like in Garden of Eden; only problem that remains is not the govt, the climate, the animals, the education, the religion, but the human heart; after millennium God will inaugurate new heavens and new earth that will last forever; in every dispensation you have to make a choice to trust God

Sequence of End Time Events:

Jesus will descend from heaven

Resurrection of dead believers in Christ

Rapture of believers living on earth

Judgment seat of Christ = 7 years of examination of everything we did – not to determine salvation but crowns to cast at His feet;

Marriage feast in heaven with the Bride

Preparing Israel on the earth during these 7 years; Moses and Elijah appear and minister

All Israel will be saved; tremendous period of evangelism with Jewish missionaries; most will be martyred by Anti-Christ

Supernatural judgments from God pour out upon the earth

Middle of 70th Week things get complicated

Satan cast out of heaven and comes down to the earth; raises the Anti-Christ who is dead (killed by king of North); will set up abomination of desolations (image of himself) for worship in the temple; millions will believe that the Anti-Christ is God

Second Coming – Christ comes with His bride and defeats all opposition at Armageddon

30 day period of purging temple from abomination of desolation; additional 45 day period where he removes all opposition – it will be like the days of Noah – wicked taken away to judgment; survivors enter the millennium; inaugural banquet for the kingdom along with resurrected OT saints – spectacular event

Dr. Michael Barrett: Walking with the Light On

The tension between faith and experience exists on many levels; our personal interests have the

power to control all of our interests; they are the specific tests to our faith; larger issues than ourselves that add to that tension; we live in dark days; growing intolerance of truth; truth has fallen in the streets and is trampled underfoot; pluralism of religious freedom crying for toleration of every religion except true Christianity; anti-Christian philosophies gaining momentum; If we are on the winning side, how can so many battles seem to be lost and the war ultimately be won? Wickedness seems to be gaining the upper hand; seems that the forces of hell are advancing; Is God really in control? The Lord is slow to anger and great in patience; God has a plan and His purpose is working – we know this by faith; We need to walk in the light of the knowledge of God – this is counsel of Isaiah; that will put things in perspective; order our life to be in conformity to will of God; God is not worried

Look at our day from the perspective of the Light of God; background of Isaiah's ministry and this chapter; day of darkness and trouble; southern kingdom of Judah enduring constant terrorist raids from Israel and Syria; superstitions and religious perversions; materialism; time of military escalation; time of idolatry and apostasy; parallels to our dark days; labels have changed but the essence is the same; solution and word of encouragement remain relevant to us as well = prophecy that has yet to be fulfilled

Common prophetic theme about the day of the Lord; day of divine intervention; interrupts all of the affairs and circumstances of time to make His will unmistakably clear; as opposed to Providence of God which is the outworking of His normal control; this is extraordinary; Why is looking on the future the light that should be shed on our Now to give us hope and encouragement?

Purposes of Prophecy:

- God is glorified as He controls the future; one of the tests to identify true deity is the prediction of the future;
- Encouragement of the saints; the God who controls the future also controls our present
- Should intensify the desire for God's will to be done; it's not all about us; "*Let Thy kingdom come*"; expectancy and anticipation (not with resignation)
- Motivation for repentance and purity – we had best be ready

To walk in the light will highlight two things:

- **Truth will prevail** (How and timing of When we may disagree)
 - o Truth and true religion will be preeminent – topographical change not the emphasis here; may or may not be such a change
 - [He is a premill; but does not hold to restoration of temple and sacrifices]
 - The religion of the kingdom is ideal Christianity
 - o True religion will be universal – all nations involved; God's redemptive purpose has come to its ultimate manifestation; opposition all put down; defying gravity in the imagery; irresistibility of that truth
 - o True religion will be consequential – moral transformation and reformation; these people submit themselves to walking in the paths of God; universal peace; disarmament;
- **God will be Glorified**
 - o Time will come when it will not take any faith to see God's glory; day is coming when God will be glorified exclusively (2:11,17); today the one true

- and living God is profaned and devalued
- God will be glorified evidently –

Oswalt: The abruptness of the shift in mood from ch. 1 is very striking. There repentance was viewed as a hypothetical possibility and restoration as an end product of destruction. The main focus of attention was upon Israel's rebellion, hypocrisy, and injustice. Suddenly here, with no transition at all, the focus is upon Israel's glorious destiny as a lighthouse to the nations for truth and peace. One is tempted to ask, "What happened?" Will God merely forget Israel's sin? How can this Israel become *that* Israel?

Motyer: This section [2:5 – 4:1] is introduced and divided into two subsections by transitional verses (2:5, 22) each of which is, first, an exhortation arising from what has preceded and, secondly, further justified by what follows (both 2:6 and 3:1 open with "for"). 2:2-4 provides a paradigm. In the ideal city a true relationship with the Lord (2:2-3a) issues in a true society (2:3b-4). The actual Jerusalem is seen first in religious (2:6-21) and then in social (3:1 – 4:1) disorder.

Grogan: The whole of chapter 2 makes extensive use of the language of elevation and abasement to convey dignity and pride on the one hand and lowliness and humiliation on the other. . . . Even if the promised elevation of Mount Zion can be taken literally (the thought occurs elsewhere, viz., Ezek 40:2, Zech 14:10; cf. 68:15-18), its purpose, of course, is to underline its spiritual preeminence as the source of divine teaching for the nations.

Bill Lobbs: Learning the Ways of God

There are three things about learning God's ways we need to know.

1. To even begin to think of learning God's ways there is a challenging Scripture we must first come to grips with. We must consider **Psalms 119:128**, and make a decision about it. Do we believe it or do we not? "*I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right.*"

2. We need to know that as we learn the ways of God, divine precepts and principles of a heavenly origin are being brought into our lives. To our great joy, we discover that those precepts and principles are workable in the 'here and now' where they are needed and not in 'the sky when I die.'

3. We need to know that as we learn His ways, God begins a work in us that starts to produce some wonderful changes in our life. **Philippians 2:13**, "*For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.*"

Pat Damiani: Walking in the Light

To me, this is the most exciting aspect of the Millennium. We'll all be able to go up to Jerusalem and be taught directly by Jesus Himself. It seems likely that this will somehow be connected to the Feast of Booths, when as we saw a couple of weeks ago, all nations will be required to come to Jerusalem to take part in that feast. Can you imagine how exciting that will be to join together with other believers and sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to Him teach us directly?

Michael Stark: Life in the Millennium

The word "*millennium*" is derived from the Latin phrase *mille anum*, which means "thousand years." Those who believe there will be a Millennium are sometimes referred to as millennialists

or chiliasts (from the Greek term *chilia*, for one thousand). When people dismiss belief in the Millennium because they say that the term only occurs in Revelation 20, the appropriate response is that though the statement is true on the face, in that one passage there are six references to the thousand years. Moreover, the concept of Messiah reigning on earth occurs repeatedly throughout Scripture.

Why study this future period of God's dispensation on earth called the Millennium?

- Much attention given to this time period in Scripture prophecy; knowing the plan of God and the power of God encourages the people of God
- Knowing the righteousness that shall prevail, we do not lose heart before the wickedness of this present age.
- to witness the grace of God as He redeems lost mankind.
- to be reminded of the depravity of mankind.

David E. Thompson:

There will come a time when people will go to the temple (centralized place of worship) not to be entertained or to see their friends or to eat cookies, but to be taught the Word of God by the Lord Himself. At time of intense focus on the Word of God; God's people should presently want to understand the Word so that they can walk accordingly; not some mystical belief of utopia but something that will actually happen in the future; the temple is going to be rebuilt in Jerusalem

I. What is the History of the Temple in Jerusalem

- 1) King David made Jerusalem the capital and moved the ark of the covenant to this place; this place will reverence God's Word
- 2) King David desired to build the temple but informed that his son Solomon would actually build it
- 3) 990 B.C. King David purchased the site of 600 shekels of gold for the property; Israel legally owns the land; **1 Chron. 22:17ff** David got all of the things ready for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem; set your heart and soul on getting this project done
- 4) 950 B.C. Solomon followed through and built the first temple in Jerusalem; glorious temple
- 5) 586 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia invaded for third time and destroyed the temple because of Israel's disobedience to Word of God; God can remove a lampstand
- 6) 515 B.C. King Darius of Persia allowed Zerubbabel to return and rebuild the temple
- 7) King Herod oversaw project to modernize the second temple about 20 years before Christ; took 46 years; talked about in John 2
- 8) A.D. 29 -- Jesus came and was rejected; Jesus made prediction in Matt. 24:1ff of destruction of second temple
- 9) A.D. 70 -- Under Titus Roman general, the second temple was destroyed; only the western Wailing Wall remains and some underground tunnels; never once have the nations streamed to the temple at Jerusalem to learn the word of God; a third temple must be rebuilt

II. What are the indications that we are close to the time of the rebuilding of the third temple?

Third temple Not the same as new Jerusalem and new heavens and new earth in Rev. 21 -- created after millennium

16 important events that have happened recently in our lifetime:

- 1) June 8, 1967 during six day war, Israel recaptured the land for temple area; measured the dimensions
- 2) Feb 29, 1968 -- original entrance of temple discovered and tunnels discovered used by priests
- 3) Oct. 16, 1989 -- 2 priests dressed in priestly garments attempted to lay a cornerstone for third

temple; stopped due to protests; Time Magazine article on same day – “Time for a New Temple”; but must be able to complete the sacrifice requiring ashes from red heifer in pure blood line – do not have those ashes yet

4) Oct. 8., 1990 – 20,000 Jews assembled to lay cornerstone a second time; stopped by Arab protest

5) Sept. 24, 1991 Many Jews gathered for third time and stopped by Arab protest again

6) March 1992 – the exact location of temple discovered by temple mount excavation – making it feasible to perhaps rebuild the temple without removing the Dome of the Rock

7) Feb 11, 1996 – temple mount movement – poll of Jewish people all over the world; nearly 60% in favor of rebuilding new temple right now

8) 1997 more Jews have migrated to Jerusalem than any time in history; majority filed their immigration papers through the U.S. because they believe we are their friend and ally

9) detailed blueprints drawn up for design of temple by team of rabbinical researchers; computerized plans; as soon as they start the process, can complete in less than 2 years

10) March 1997 – Yassar Arafat shown with photograph of artist’s concept of rebuilt temple – said to Arab world “Get ready for the next battle”

11) 1997 -- red heifer born in Israel for first time in 2000 years; others born as well

12) Late 1990s Israeli skin divers discovered snail in Red sea that emits rich blue color dye needed for priestly garments of Ex. 28; young Israeli women weaving the necessary priestly garments because they anticipate the time is very near

13) Now possible to genetically establish ancestry of priestly line needed for temple worship – carry an aberration of the Y chromosome—connected to Aaron

14) Oct. 13, 2004 – new Sanhedrin ordained; specifically charged to rebuild the new temple

15) Jan 20. 2005 that new Sanhedrin met for that purpose; now training priests for responsibilities of temple services

16) Qumran cave #11 – clay vessel found that contained oil that had solidified into gelatin substance like molasses; scientific analysis of contents – formula Ex. 30 – oil needed for temple worship

Do you think these historical realities are just happening by chance?

Third temple just about to be rebuilt

Church age just about to end and rapture will take place

III. What exactly did Isaiah see in 2:2-4

1) Saw the mountain of the house of the Lord established as the chief of the mountains – chief place of world govt and temple mount; entire world esteeming this place in Jerusalem as most important place in the universe because that is where you could go to hear the Word of God – that is how the church should be viewed today – a place where people can be carefully and accurately taught the Scriptures

2) Saw that all the nations streamed to Jerusalem to be taught the Scriptures – I want to know and understand the Word of God; Jesus Christ will teach it; mindset for worship should be “I want to be taught the Scriptures”

3) Saw Jesus Christ judging between the nations – how the nations treat Israel will be primary point of judgment; very primitive weaponry; what about all the high tech stuff? During the tribulation period God will level proud man and take him back to very primitive existence; will change the face of this whole world; Is. 24:1 – distorts is surface; vs. 3 – earth completely changed; no more military schools like West Point;

Application: get serious about the Scriptures

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TEXT: Isaiah 2:6-22

TITLE: THE DAY OF THE LORD – HIS TERROR AND THE SPLENDOR OF HIS MAJESTY

BIG IDEA:

IN THE DAY OF RECKONING, SELF-ABSORBED ISRAEL WILL BE ABASED AND QUAKING BEFORE THE MAJESTIC PRESENCE OF THE EXALTED LORD

INTRODUCTION:

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31)

Just how fearful is it? Imagine the most terrifying storm or natural disaster you have been a part of or even witnessed on the TV news and then magnify that beyond imagination. That is what it will be like when God arises to put down the arrogance and pride and independence and rebellion of His sinful creation.

In our passage this morning we are going to witness God in action -- God who has had his fill of man's pride; God who is determined to re-establish visibly the splendor of His majesty and His rightful exalted position as the Preeminent one. He will not tolerate man's pride forever. There comes a point where the day of man is doomed and God will have His day. We are going to see here in Isaiah that the coming day of the Lord will demonstrate fully His terror and the splendor of His majesty in a fearsome sense to those who have an outward show of religion but have wrongly exalted themselves over God.

God's people had been called to a life of holiness; a life of separation; they were to be a peculiar people with a testimony that would bring light to the Gentile nations; yet they were living like the pagans around them. They didn't impact their culture for God. They were corrupted by the worldly value system around them. We are going to see many parallels between the situation of corrupt Jerusalem here (contrasted with the ideal Millennial age pictured in vv. 1-4) and the current situation of corrupt Christendom in our day. How is it that the church looks so much like the world? How is it that the church has become so man-centered rather than God-centered?

IN THE DAY OF RECKONING, SELF-ABSORBED ISRAEL WILL BE ABASED AND QUAKING BEFORE THE MAJESTIC PRESENCE OF THE EXALTED LORD

3 DESCRIPTIONS OF PROUD ISRAEL'S HUMILIATION

I. (:6-9) SELF-ABSORBED -- DESCRIPTION OF A LAND FILLED WITH INIQUITY

(:6a) Announcement of Impending Judgment -- Why has God determined to abandon His people?

“For Thou hast abandoned Thy people, the house of Jacob,”

“Abandoned” is a surprisingly strong term to use for God's relationship to His chosen people

- In the near term they will be delivered over to the Babylonian Captivity
- In the last days in the day of the Lord, the time of Jacob's trouble – they will be purged and judged before the glorious restoration of the Messianic Kingdom age

Young: For His name's sake, He will not abandon them utterly (1 Sam. 12:22 and Ps. 94:14).

Vs. 5 had called people to repentance and to walk in the light of the Lord in view of the upcoming kingdom of righteousness but also here in view of the impending judgment at the end of the Tribulation Period

Motyer: In a piece as rhythmic and compelling as anything he ever wrote, Isaiah opens with *abandoned* (6) and ends with *do not forgive* (9) – an iron band of hopelessness gripping the apostates of verses 7-9.

Why is this shocking judgment going to occur? God gives us His rationale

4 Reasons given: Characterized by 4 Fatal Flaws: (sounds like the United States in our day)

**A. (:6b) Self Help -- Because of Their Compromise with Foreign Influences –
Religious Practices; Political Alliances; Business Dealings**

*“Because they are filled with influences from the east,
And they are soothsayers like the Philistines,
And they strike bargains with the children of foreigners”*

Paragraph revolves around this key verb “*filled*”

Borrowed the pagan ways of both the east and the west – influenced by the pagan cultures around them instead of being a testimony of salt and light to them

Superstitious and religious practices of Babylonia and Assyria

Motyer: Maybe there is the idea of the east as the source of light, in contrast with *the light of the Lord*

Prohibition against soothsayers: Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10 manipulation of the gods through magic; claiming to know and control the future by the power of demons (sorcery) or by interpreting omens

“*clasp hands with*” = making alliances with foreigners; implies as well the embracing of their gods and value system – Who do you clasp hands with?

B. (:7a) Self Indulgence -- Because of Their Materialistic Excesses

*“Their land has also been filled with silver and gold,
And there is no end to their treasures;”*

Nothing wrong with material prosperity – God had promised material blessings in conjunction with keeping His covenant – but “*the Love of Money is a root of all sorts of evil*” (1 Tim. 6:10) We have already seen how they were condemned for taking bribes; for exploitation of the vulnerable instead of defense of the widows and orphans

They had set their heart and their value system on pursuing materialistic excesses; no contentment or thanksgiving or recognition that the power of God allowed them to gain whatever material blessings they enjoyed

Hos 2:8 *“For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil, and lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.”*

C. (:7b) Self Reliance -- Because of Their Reliance on Their Own Military Power

*“Their land has also been filled with horses,
And there is no end to their chariots.”*

Look at the parallel to what God had promised would happen when they relied on kings instead of on the Lord – **Deut. 17:17**

Psalm 20:7 *“Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God”*

D. (:8) Self Deception -- Because of Their Pervasive Idolatry

*“Their land has also been filled with idols;
They worship the work of their hands,
That which their fingers have made.”*

Major theme of all the prophets – sometimes hard for us to identify with
This is the climax of the charge against Israel – repeated emphasis in :18-20
God’s sarcasm and irony is never more biting than when He exposes the futility of the worship of idols

Beall: The word Isaiah uses here for idols, אֱלִילִים, “nothingness,” “worthlessness,” may well be a play on words with the real God, אֱלֹהִים. What a horrible substitute!

Word means “no gods” – not normal word used for idols
Work of their frail fingers – not even their hands

(:9) Transition: Call for Execution of Judgment

*“So the common man has been humbled, And the man of importance has been abased,
But do not forgive them.”*

Your station in life does not matter before God – whether you fall into the category with most of us as the common man or whether you are in that small minority of the man of importance ... all the same before the One who is uniquely High and Lifted up. The Almighty, the King of Creation

Prophet cries out *“Do not forgive them”* – there comes a point of no return ... we cannot say when or where that line is drawn ... but for the nation of Israel in the day of the Lord, it will come

Ex. 34:7

*“who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin;
yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”*

Motyer: The Hebrew imperative not only commands but is frequently used to express an inevitable result . . . Isaiah is not commanding the Lord not to forgive but saying that forgiveness

is unthinkable: “*and for sure you will not forgive them*”

Young: This is not a bowing performed out of adoration, but one which is brought about by compulsion. The people have lived in worldly glory and in utter contempt of the glory of the true God; they will, therefore, one day feel the weight of His punishment, and will be bowed down under it.

Van Parunak: they became infatuated with pagan cultures, they devoted their energies to self-enrichment, and bowed down before the work of their own hands. Such people cannot expect forgiveness from the Lord, but only his judgment.

Structure: look at repetition of same themed refrains:

vv. 9, 11, 17 Man humbled and abased while Lord is exalted

vv. 10, 19, 21 Enter the rock

II. (:10-17) ABASED -- DESCRIPTION OF ISRAEL ABASED AND THE LORD EXALTED

“Abased” = synonym for humiliated; lowered in prestige, esteem

A. (:10-12) Israel Abased and the Lord Exalted

“Enter the rock and hide in the dust From the terror of the LORD and from the splendor of His majesty. The proud look of man will be abased, And the loftiness of man will be humbled, And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning Against everyone who is proud and lofty, And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased.”

Van Parunak: Note the shift from addressing the Lord to addressing the people. Now Isaiah turns from their sin to the coming judgment. v. 10 corresponds chiasmatically to 18-21, 11 to 17, and in the middle is the announcement of the day of the Lord.

Does the exhortation to “*enter the rock*” contain some element of hope for deliverance and being spared judgment by finding refuge in God?? Probably not – the emphasis is on the certainty of impending doom

Young: The only way to run from God is to run to Him.

You can run but you can never hide!

Motyer: *Splendour* is glory visibly displayed and *majesty* is “exaltedness”.

Van Parunak: Here is the “*day*” of which the prophet speaks. We read of it 18 times in the prophets, five times in the short book of Joel. Everywhere we meet it, it describes the coming time when men are humbled and the Lord is exalted.

Isaiah is referring to that day, but his construction is a little different from that in most other places (except Ezek 30:3). Literally, he writes, “*The Lord of hosts has a day.*” This construction emphasizes his sovereign oversight of this day. It is not just the day that is associated with him, but the day that he has set according to his own good pleasure.

As we read these verses, it's worth remembering that the NT picks up the anticipation of the Day of the Lord, sometimes called simply “*the day of the Lord*” (1 Thes 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10),

sometimes “*the day of the Lord Jesus (Christ)*” (1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14), sometimes “*the day of Christ*” (Phil 1:10; 2:16; 2 Thes 2:2). To understand these references correctly, we must keep in mind the clear picture of human humbling and divine exaltation in the OT, which is the background against which the NT authors write.

Amos 5:18-20

“Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light; 19 As when a man flees from a lion, And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall, And a snake bites him. 20 Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?”

B. (:13-16) 4 Pictures of Pride Being Brought Low

1. (:13) Majestic Trees

“And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, Against all the oaks of Bashan,”

MacArthur: The cedars and oaks were objects of great admiration to people of OT times (Pss 92:12; 104:16; Eze 27:6; 31:3).

King David had contracted with Hiram to purchase the cedars of Lebanon for use in the construction of the temple – very valuable and impressive

Also men had used wood from these impressive trees to make their idols

Cf. **Micah 5:10-14**

2. (:14) Lofty Mountains

“Against all the lofty mountains, Against all the hills that are lifted up,”

Speaks of majesty and permanence – speaks of all of the mighty kingdoms of the nations over the centuries .. none of them end up standing before the Lord

3. (:15) Impressive Fortifications

“Against every high tower, Against every fortified wall,”

Cf. Tower of Babel – Gen. 11:1-9 – Independence and power of man represented here

Cf. walls of Jericho – could not protect that city

Cf. Edom’s pride described in **Obadiah 1:2-4**

“Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You are greatly despised. 3 "The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, You who live in the clefts of the rock, In the loftiness of your dwelling place, Who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to earth?' 4 "Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down," declares the LORD.”

4. (:16) Beautiful Ships

*“Against all the ships of Tarshish,
And against all the beautiful craft.”*

Motyer: Such ships represent humankind triumphant over environmental forces, creating great commercial empires (cf. **Ezek. 28:2-5**).

This represents the Wall Street of the ancient times

Young: “ships of pleasure”

So you have both ships of commerce and cruise ships of luxury and pleasure
Cf. the mighty unsinkable Titanic – one of man’s most prideful accomplishments

C. (:17) Israel Abased and the Lord Exalted

1. Israel Abased

*“And the pride of man will be humbled,
And the loftiness of men will be abased,”*

The Lord is in the business of abasing the pride of man; **Prov. 6:17** Lord hates haughty eyes = man trying to assert himself as the authority rather than submitting to God

My one experience as a juror – the haughty eyes and arrogance of the defendant – he viewed himself as the sovereign; man won’t maintain that arrogant look in the presence of the terror of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty

2. Lord Exalted

“And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.”

Oswalt: The section seems to say that true human greatness cannot appear until God's greatness is permitted to shine over all. Until that takes place, humanity's potential is zero.

Phil. 2:8-11

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

How can we humble ourselves before the Lord right now?

How can we give Him the preeminence in all things in practical ways right now?

III. (:18-21) QUAKING -- DESCRIPTION OF ISRAEL QUAKING BEFORE THE TERROR OF THE LORD AND THE SPLENDOR OF HIS MAJESTY

A. (:18) Valued Idols Cannot Stand Before the Terror of the Lord

“But the idols will completely vanish.”

Remember other confrontations between God and idols:

- **Dagon 1 Sam. 5:1-5** – Philistines trying to display the ark of God as a war trophy in the house of their idol god Dagon

“Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. 2 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. 3 When the Ashdodites arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him in his place again. 4 But when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. 5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor all who enter Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.”

- **Elijah battling the prophets of Baal – 1 Kings 18**

B. (:19) Arrogant Idol Worshippers Cannot Stand Before the Terror of the Lord

“And men will go into caves of the rocks, And into holes of the ground Before the terror of the LORD, And before the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble.”

Cf. finding Saddam Hussein cowering in a hole in the ground

On 13 December 2003, Saddam Hussein was captured by American forces at a farmhouse in ad-Dawr near Tikrit in a hole in Operation Red Dawn.

"He was caught like a rat," said **Maj. Gen. Ray Odierno** of the 4th Infantry Division at a separate press conference in Tikrit. "It was ironic that he was in a hole in the ground across the river from the great palaces he built using all the money he robbed from the Iraqi people."

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,105706,00.html#ixzz2H6ooSIrX>

Dennis Davidson: The God from whom their self-worship has alienated them will appear, and there will be no more cause to glory in human greatness than there would be to praise a flashlight in broad daylight.

C. (:20-21) Both Idols and Idol Worshippers Looking for a Place to Hide from the Terror of the Lord and the Splendor of His Majesty

“In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats Their idols of silver and their idols of gold, Which they made for themselves to worship, In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, Before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble.”

Motyer: Throw away is an expression of the idolater's disgust and the idol's lifelessness as a mere disposable object (cf. 41:5-7; 46:1-2).

Beall: The idols will do them no good at this point, only hindering their escape—so, like excess baggage, the people cast them away “to the moles and bats.”

Van Parunak: Not only do they discard them, but they defile them. The bat is unclean (Lev 11:13-19); “mole” is a hapax but is usually understood to refer to the shrew, which would be unclean like the mouse (Lev 11:29).

Rev. 6:15-17 fulfillment in the timeframe of the 6th seal:

And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

APPLICATION: (:22) STOP FEARING/TRUSTING MAN AND FEAR/TRUST GOD

"Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed?"

God is **Spirit** – source of life – the one who breathed life into Adam and Eve

Abandon all hope and trust in man – Turn to the one who is the source and sustainer of all life
Fragile existence

Motyer: *Breath* is not a metaphor for transience but points to human life as derived (cf. Gn. 2:7; Is. 42:5; 57:15).

CONCLUSION:

Self Absorbed . . . Abased . . . Quaking . . . Not a rosy picture painted here of the future of Jerusalem – of those with a hypocritical facade of religion

Oswalt: This verse makes it plain that the passage has not been talking chiefly about idolatry. It does not say *"be done with idols."* Rather, it says *Be done with man.* Idolatry is a result, not a cause. It is the **exaltation of man** that results in idolatry. The tendency of human beings to make ourselves the center of all things and to explain all things in terms of ourselves is the problem.

For us, the point of no return has not yet been passed; the offer of salvation and refuge from the terror of the Lord still exists; God exhorts us to run to the Rock which is the Lord Jesus; to turn away from our pride and arrogance; to stop exalting ourselves and cast all of our dependence not on man whose breath is in his nostrils, but to trust in the Lord Jesus who is coming again to receive His own but to judge those who persist in rebellion

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What assurance do we have that the Lord won't ever abandon us?
- 2) What type of pagan cultural influences have infiltrated the church?
- 3) How can we seek to humble ourselves before the Lord and see Him exalted right now?

4) Where do we need to guard against the tendency towards Self Help, Self Indulgence, Self Reliance, and Self Deception?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: [regarding contrast between :1-4 and :6-9]

He makes **five contrasts** between the ideal and the actual:

- (i) the world is drawn to Zion (2); God's people choose to conform to the world (6)
- (ii) the world seeks spiritual benefit (3); Zion heaps up material wealth (7a)
- (iii) the consequence of coming to Zion is world peace (4); Zion is full of armaments (7b)
- (iv) the world seeks to know the true God and commits itself beforehand to obey him (3); God's people are busy inventing their own gods (8)
- (v) the world is received before the Lord's tribunal (4); God's people are abandoned and denied forgiveness (6,9)

Motyer: [on structure of :10-21]

- A. The Lord exalted over man and his world (10-17)
 - A1. Fact: The Lord exalted, man humbled (10-11)
 - A2. Demonstration: The Lord exalted over every exalted thing (12-17)
- B. The Lord exalted over the no-gods (18-21)
 - B1. Fact: The Lord exalted, no-god and men alike vanish (18-19)
 - B2. Demonstration: The Lord exalted, the no-gods exposed (20-21)

Dennis Davidson: Full, But Empty

Though few people worship carved images today, worshiping objects that symbolize power or pleasure continues. We pay homage to cars, homes, sports stars, celebrities, money, etc. Such idol worship is evil because one, it insults God when we worship something He created rather than worshipping Him. Second, it keeps us from knowing and serving God when we put our confidence in anything other than Him. Third, it causes us to rely on our own efforts rather than on God (Deut. 27:15).

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/full-but-empty-dennis-davidson-sermon-on-gods-sovereign-will-99612.asp?page=2>

Brian Borgman: The Actual Jerusalem Filled with Pride

Professing church is not necessarily the true representation of the people of God; the broader religious context marked by pride, arrogance, the flesh; very ugly context; Ideal Jerusalem (:2-4) contrasted with Actual Jerusalem; vs. 5 is transition verse of exhortation to commitment; Actual Jerusalem deserves judgment; 2 iron bands of hopelessness: abandoned by God ... Prophet says "*do not forgive them*"; this sounds unthinkable to us; bringing judgment on that religious culture that is external only; terrifying words; Ex. 34:7; a religious but unconverted people always get the worst of it when judgment comes; light brings accountability; sins worthy of this judgment are detailed; "*you are filled from the east*"; occultism; psychic network hotlines; "*grasped hands with foreigners*"; "*How can two walk together unless they be in agreement*" (Amos 3:3); 2 Cor. 7:13-14; we have today no concept of separation; we are called to be separate from the world; amassing of wealth and military might; misuse of wealth or trusting in wealth forbidden; Hos. 2:8; utter conformity to the world; in the ideal Jerusalem it is the nations that flow to Jerusalem to hear the Word of God; they look just like the world; **Francis Schaeffer:** Look at the world and

in 20 years the church will look just like that ... church is just behind the world"; make unsaved so comfortable when they come into the church that they won't be disturbed; then try to slip them something that will be helpful; but that church has no power; job of the church is to be a peculiar people that transforms society; they have filled you up; because of that judgment comes; this abasing and humbling is not the saving type of humility; sin dehumanizes us and levels us so that the dignity that lies in us as the bearers of the image of God has been lost; leaves us as nothing more than animals; our current society tells us that we are nothing but animals – then we get upset when people live like animals; we become like that which we worship; at some point people become beyond recovery; our idols are more dangerous because they are sophisticated; Warning to seek safety = sarcasm because there is no safety; have you ever tried to hide in dust; from the dread of the Lord; plenty of terror and dread in NT as well as in OT; for believers the splendor of His majesty fills us with praise ... otherwise means nothing for you but terror; the Day of the Lord will restore proper order; we see God's attitude towards human pride; God hates haughty eyes worse than anything; all sins are not equally heinous in the sight of God; Prov. 6:16-17; pride is the sin which most directly attacks the glory of God; James 4:6; What about God's perspective towards protecting His own glory? Is. 42:8 "*I will not give my glory to another, Nor my praise to graven images*"; 48:9-11; God can remedy pride either through mercy and conversion or through judgment; Here man is humbled and God is exalted; Robert Schuller has never seen Is. Chapter 2 – seeking to exalt man – has to be opposed to God; where does self esteem fit on the lips of ones who should be seeking the glory of God? Lord of hosts will have a day; David contracts with Hiram to have cedars of Lebanon brought in for the building of the temple; highly valued – oak or cedar paneling; mountains represent enduring strength and majesty; what man views as valuable and invincible, God destroys; the best of the commercial world; could be rendered ships of pleasure – similar to our cruise ships; all that you have built with the works of your hands, God is going to unleash His power and ruin it all; God has sat by patiently and now His patience has run out and He stands up to come in judgment and the whole earth trembles; the Lamb is pouring out His wrath (mixed imagery – does not speak of the Lion of Judah); Israel had various tastes of this ... but one day at the end of the age the whole earth will taste the ultimate fulfillment; those valuable but heavy idols you cast off to try to escape yourself; vs. 22 is another transition that will lead us into chapter 3; God can close off our nostrils at any time; fragile nature of man; Bible is radically God-centered; human pride is the very antithesis of true religion; rejects God's authority and worship

TEXT: Isaiah 3:1 - 4:1

TITLE: JERUSALEM DESTINED FOR JUDGMENT -- CHAOS OF A COLLAPSING SOCIETY

BIG IDEA:

REJECTION OF GOD LEADS TO A COLLAPSE OF ANY SOCIETY – WITH SPECIFIC JUDGMENT DIRECTED AGAINST ITS LOFTY MALE LEADERS AND ITS ARROGANT ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN

INTRODUCTION: (Two part message)

Keep in mind the overall structure of this opening portion of Isaiah. After an initial chapter which serves to introduce the entire prophecy, we have been focusing on chapters 2-4 –which are bracketed by two bookends which describe the glories of the Messianic kingdom of peace and righteousness when all the nations will flock to hear and obey the law of the Lord administered from Jerusalem (2:1-4; 4:2-6); our passage falls in the middle where the judgments of the Lord are detailed during the day of the Lord; transitional verses in **2:5** (“walk in the light of the Lord”) and **2:22** (don’t trust in man).

Remember last week from chapter **2:6-21** -- In the day of reckoning, self-absorbed Israel will be abased and quaking before the majestic presence of the exalted Lord – now some of those more general descriptions of judgment are made more specific in terms of how God will judge the **lofty male leaders** and the **arrogant aristocratic women**.

Jerusalem is destined for judgment – and that judgment will be reflected in the **chaos of a collapsing society**. You can track through the lessons of history and trace the downfall of any powerful nation that ever existed. As the seeds of moral depravity bear fruit and the basic institutions of society break down – especially the family structure and respect for authority – chaos and anarchy inevitably fill the vacuum of whatever former structure of order existed.

It is sobering to evaluate where our great nation stands with respects to the signs of a collapsing society. On every front we see the negative consequences of our spiraling rejection of God and His revealed standards of morality and righteousness. How can we reject the basic principles of finance (you can’t spend more than you have) and expect to prosper? How can we continue to rely on humanistic forms of public education that have proven to be futile (Let’s just throw more money at the problem to fix it) and expect better results? How can we let our consciences become calloused about the lack of integrity in our government officials and expect them to make wise decisions? How can we turn upside down God’s revealed order for relationships in marriage (with role distinctions between men and women and the husband being the head of the home) and expect our children to develop in a healthy fashion? Our nation is collapsing before our eyes. We deceive ourselves if we think we will not have to pay the piper like every other nation. Israel’s lessons are important for us to consider.

REJECTION OF GOD LEADS TO A COLLAPSE OF ANY SOCIETY – WITH SPECIFIC JUDGMENT DIRECTED AGAINST ITS LOFTY MALE LEADERS AND ITS ARROGANT ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN

[Read text]

I. (3:1-15) SOCIETY TURNED UPSIDE DOWN BY JUDGMENT AGAINST LOFTY, MALE LEADERS

A. (:1-3) Judged by the Negation of Necessities – Abandonment

1. (:1a) General Summary – Both Supply and Support

“For behold, the Lord God of hosts is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah Both supply and support,”

Motyer: *Supply* and *support* are masculine and feminine forms of the same noun, an idiom of totality, meaning “every support without exception”

Near term partial fulfillment in the Babylonian Captivity in 586 B.C. under King Nebuchadnezzar; ultimate fulfillment in the Tribulation Period

God is going to pull the rug out from under them – everything that they have been trusting in will be overturned and they will be left with no foundation or security

2. (:1b) All Supply of Necessities of Life

a. Necessary Food

“the whole supply of bread,”

God used famine to judge Israel throughout her history. Our country knows nothing of famine. The worst we experience is when we have to ration gasoline. Maybe farmers have specific seasons where localized drought denies them a harvest. But our government is able to step in and subsidize their hardship. We could live every day like a Thanksgiving feast if we wished. When people come over here from third world countries and visit our grocery stores they are amazed at the abundance and the variety of the selections. We have taken for granted the blessing of our prosperity. History says it will not always be so for the nation that collapses.

Lord’s Prayer: “*Give us this day our daily bread*” – Where is our dependence for daily sustenance?

b. Necessary Drink

“And the whole supply of water;”

How long can you live without water? Maybe 3-5 days is what my Google search tells me; Our idea of deprivation is when the reservoirs dip beneath their required capacities and we put a temporary ban on washing cars; History says it will not always be so for the nation that collapses.

Preceptaustin: both in the Chaldean (Babylonian, 586BC) and in the Roman periods (Jerusalem and the Temple besieged and destroyed in 70AD), Jerusalem perished under dreadful famines such as were threatened...on both occasions, the inhabitants were reduced to such extremity that women devoured their own children (Lam 2:20)

3. (:2-3) All Support of Necessary Leaders

Van Parunak: The roles are grouped by the omission of the copula into three sets.

2 Kings 24:14-16

- a. Military Leaders
“The mighty man and the warrior,”

Israel had been known for her military might; a nation without a strong army is defenseless against invasion and oppression

- b. Judicial and Religious Leaders (legitimate and illegit)
“The judge and the prophet, The diviner and the elder,”

Van Parunak: These four are arranged chiasmically, with civil authorities on the outside and spiritual ones at the center.

Without a judge, where is the justice?

Without a prophet there is a famine in terms of understanding the mind of God.

Without an elder there is no maturity and wisdom to provide stability in the basic structures of home and society

“*Diviner*” is someone involved in occult practices – prohibited in Deut. 18; the stars do not hold our future; don’t pay attention to horoscopes

Preceptaustin: Isaiah's inclusion of diviner and enchanter (Is 3:3) does not signify that he approved of these practices. Unfortunately, the nation had come to "approve" of them and to depend on even these evil, godless methods for their "wisdom" and their survival. Isaiah wrote disparagingly about Babylon trusting in this kind of activity (Is 47:12).

- c. Specially Gifted Men
*“The captain of fifty and the honorable man,
The counselor and the expert artisan, And the skillful enchanter.”*

Van Parunak: The final five, in 3:3, may be more at the national level, and describe those who would enjoy the esteem of the common people

Israel had been putting her trust in her respected leaders in all areas of society. This trust was misplaced. God will remove all such support just like He removed the supply of their physical provisions.

B. (:4-12) Judged by the Chaos of Role Reversals -- Anarchy

1. (:4-5) Unnatural Roles – Upside Down Relationships

- a. (:4) Youth over Maturity
*“And I will make mere lads their princes
And capricious children will rule over them,”*

Preceptaustin: Nature abhors a vacuum and so does leadership. So when God takes away those things (and people) in which Judah had placed their trust and depended upon for military security and social order, this "vacuum" would be filled by those who were inadequate, incompetent and ill equipped to lead individuals

Capricious – unstable, immature, prone to rash decisions that are not thought out, one who acts

without justification; impulsive, unpredictable

- b. (:5) Substituting Oppression for Helpfulness and Rebellion for Respect
*“And the people will be oppressed, Each one by another,
and each one by his neighbor;
The youth will storm against the elder,
And the inferior against the honorable.”*

Everybody taking advantage of everyone else

2. (:6-7) Unwilling Leaders

“When a man lays hold of his brother in his father's house, saying, ‘You have a cloak, you shall be our ruler, And these ruins will be under your charge,’ On that day will he protest, saying, ‘I will not be your healer, For in my house there is neither bread nor cloak; You should not appoint me ruler of the people.’”

Nobody wants to be in charge of a sinking ship; usually people are aggressive in wanting to rise to positions of power and influence

Van Parunak – reference to **1:6**; I won’t bind up the wounds; Christ was wounded for our transgressions

3. (:8-9) Unashamed Depravity -- Nobody to Blame But Themselves – Their Words and Actions

“For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, Because their speech and their actions are against the LORD, To rebel against His glorious presence. The expression of their faces bears witness against them. And they display their sin like Sodom; They do not even conceal it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves.”

At the center of this section

Illustration: Atlanta Pastor Louie Giglio (headed up recent Passion Conference – shared President Obama’s agenda in the area of speaking out against human trafficking) pressured to back out of delivering the Inaugural benediction over his public preaching comments against homosexuality; Is everyone who holds to the moral system revealed by God in His holy scripture now persona non grata in our culture?

Borgman: “For” – gives us the reason; starts with speech; we will be held accountable for every idle word; Is. 6:5 – first thing that strikes the conscience of Isaiah is his sinful speech; “*I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips*”; blatant and blasphemous and flaunting sin; open defiance of God; parading of sin; brazen; homosexuals are not even in the closet anymore; no shame; to say “Woe” is to begin an oracle of doom

Delitzsch: describes an insolent look which their sinfulness is stamping upon their faces, without the self-condemnation which in others takes the form of dread to commit sin...The expression of their countenance testifies against them, for it is the distorted and troubled image of their sin that cannot and will not hide itself. They do not even content themselves, however, with this open thought silent display; they further speak openly of their sin, making not concealment of it, like

the Sodomites who proclaimed their fleshly lust...Jerusalem is, in fact, spiritually Sodom, as the prophet called it in Is 1:10-note. Through such shameful sinning they do themselves harm: this the undeniable fact, the actual experience.

Van Parunak: the core of their offense = “*To provoke the eyes of His glory*” – they don’t even attempt to hide their sins; behave this way right before His glorious eyes; military officers put on commanding look and assume commanding voice – “Don’t even think of disobeying” – but these people openly rebel

Ironsides: Thus they had brought down judgment upon their own heads, and so we hear the solemn “woes” pronounced against them - two in this chapter (verses 9 and 11); and six in chapter five (verses 8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22).

4. (:10-11) Universal Harvest Law – Applied to the Righteous and the Wicked – No Surprises here; they brought it on themselves

a. (:10) Applied to the Righteous – word of hope

*“Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, [him]
For they will eat the fruit of their actions.”*

Nugget of hope for the righteous
Universal principle of God’s judgment

Van Parunak: “*it will be well with him*” – singular righteous person; for “*they*” plural wicked; will eat the fruit of their wicked “*doings*” are wicked doings; when applied to men it means to do what you please without any accountability; it is a righteous thing for God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you; the righteous are not doing so well in this world picture

b. (:11) Applied to the Wicked – word of doom

*“Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him,
For what he deserves will be done to him.”*

Motyer: The boomerang quality of sin is highlighted and the sinner is his own paymaster

Why do the wicked prosper now?? Look at the ultimate end; the righteous will get his just reward; God will right all wrongs (**Psalm 73**)

“Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny.”

5. (:12) Summary: Unnatural Roles – Upside Down Relationships

a. Youth Over Maturity / Substituting Oppression for Submission

*“O My people! Their oppressors are children,
And women rule over them.”*

Van Parunak: vs. 4 in future tense; but right now (present) women are ruling over them; the judgment that is coming is an unveiling of what is already going on; the cancer that is looming under the service

b. Substituting Wandering for Guidance

*“O My people! Those who guide you lead you astray,
And confuse the direction of your paths.”*

Matt. 15:14 speaking of the Pharisees *“Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”*

Motyer: they enact laws which misdirect. And this is only half of their mischief for also (lit.) *“they swallow up the way of your paths”*; the old established signposts for right living are as completely obliterated as if someone had swallowed them!

Borgman: they are destroying (covering up) God’s true path; **Job 39:24**; speaking of the horse: *“he swallows up the ground”* in his running he throws up dirt that covers up his path;

C. (:13-15) Judged by the Supreme Judge Himself -- Accountability

1. (:13) Divine Judge Positioned

“The LORD arises to contend, And stands to judge the people.” [the nations]

They imagined themselves as invincible, untouchable

Van Parunak – “peoples” plural – talking about **the nations** here in contrast to Judah and Jerusalem; When you see the Lord standing it is almost always in the context of judgment -- Amos. 9:1; **Psalm 82:1**

2. (:14a) Key Leaders Targeted

“The LORD enters into judgment with the elders and princes of His people,”

Judgment starts at the top; more light and power means more accountability

3. (:14b-15) Inexcusable Exploitation of the Poor Indicted

*“It is you who have devoured the vineyard;
The plunder of the poor is in your houses.
What do you mean by crushing My people,
And grinding the face of the poor?’
Declares the Lord God of hosts.”*

Motyer: The *vineyard* is symbolic of the Lord’s care in choosing, delivering and settling his people (Ps. 80:8ff).

grinding like between two millstones

Oswalt: When government becomes corrupt it is usually those who are helpless who are hurt first and most often, especially if the leaders think of the people as their own preserve which they can use to their own advantage. But God says that the people, especially the helpless, are his and asks with the burning eyes of v. 8 how the rulers dare to treat his heritage as they do. Not only are the poor plundered, but they are devastated, broken into pieces, and then ground to powder.

Preceptaustin: Vineyard (kerem) literally describes a plot of land on which grapes were grown and which needs to be cultivated and tended, functions the elders and princes failed to perform for the nation in general and specifically for the poor. . . cp Ps 80:8-18, 14,15; a choice vine = Je 2:21; Je 12:10; Ezek 15:6, 7, 8; Ho 10:1)

CONCLUSION – Part 1:

We do not have the power to turn around our society from its downward plunge into spiraling depravity and rejection of God. We can and must pray for revival. We can witness to those around us so that they personally repent and put their trust in the one true God. We can take a stand against wickedness and expose the folly of sin. We can make sure that our lives and our families are not built on the sinking sand of trust in man but on the **Solid Rock** which is **Jesus Christ**. We can rejoice in our secure spiritual standing before the coming Judge: *“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* Our future remains glorious! *“Say to the righteous that it will go well with him.”*

INTRODUCTION – Part 2:

REJECTION OF GOD LEADS TO A COLLAPSE OF ANY SOCIETY – WITH SPECIFIC JUDGMENT DIRECTED AGAINST ITS LOFTY MALE LEADERS AND ITS ARROGANT ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN – PART 2

Last week we saw how far Israel had fallen in their rejection of God. Things were so bad that their culture was compared to Sodom and Gomorrah.

“For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, Because their speech and their actions are against the LORD, To rebel against His glorious presence. The expression of their faces bears witness against them. And they display their sin like Sodom; They do not even conceal it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves.” (:8-9)

Their sin is blatant in both word and deed. They boast in their rebellion. Woe to them! They have no excuses and no one to blame but themselves. So we saw God rising up to contend in judgment against His people. The emphasis was upon His judgment of their **lofty male leaders**. We drew the parallel to our own society. In what ways have we rejected God and caused Him to abandon us and turn us over to our own evil lusts? The process is described for us in Romans 1. As we review that passage, we can't help but be alarmed at how far down the path we are to utter devastation.

* * * * *

[Rom. 1:18-32](#)

A SOCIETY THAT ABANDONS TRUTH (KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GOD) WILL EXPERIENCE GOD'S WRATH BY BEING ABANDONED TO GROSS SIN AND IMMORALITY

A. (:18-23) Society's Rejection of God's Truth – Follow Paul's argument here:

1. (:18-20a) God has made His Truth Known – don't blame God

- Conscience – available to all men

- General revelation in nature – available to all men
Don't complain that you did not have access to the light of God's truth
Don't try to argue against the clarity of God's revelation – doctrine of perspicuity –
God does not start out hiding His truth ... although as light is rejected, further light is withheld

2. (:20b) Man is Without Excuse in Their Rejection of God's Truth

3. (:21-23) Such Rejection of God's Truth is Futile and Ludicrous

When we grumble against God instead of being thankful – maybe we better take that sin more seriously

Indictment of the wisdom of men and their sophistication

B. (:24-32) God's Abandonment of Society -- Series of 3 Judgments for Abandoning God's Truth – "*God gave them over*"

These judgments reflect a society that is spiraling downward to chaos and devastation and ultimately extinction

1. (:24-25) **Sexual Impurity is God's Judgment for Idolatry**

a. How did they abandon truth?

- 1) Exchanged the truth of God for a lie
- 2) Idolatry -- worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator

b. How did God judge them?

- 1) Gave them over to the natural outworking of the sinful desires of their lustful hearts
- 2) Life of sexual impurity rather than the beauty of holiness
- 3) Life that is physically degrading

2. (:26-27) **Homosexuality is God's Judgment for Worshipping the Human Body**

a. How did they abandon the truth?

- 1) Rejected natural sexual relations for unnatural
- 2) Rejected decency for indecency
- 3) Rejected truth for perversion

b. How does God judge such a society? with homosexuality

"shameful lusts" "inflamed with lust" "indecent acts"
not a legitimate sexual orientation, but an unnatural perversion that is living proof of God's wrath

3. (:28-32) **Unrestrained Total Depravity is God's Judgment for Casting off the Fear of God**

a. How did they abandon the truth?

you either value God's light or you ignore it and become your own guide thru life

b. How did God judge them? Unrestrained total depravity --

a whole smorgasbord of sin stemming from a depraved mind

* * * * *

That helps to put our passage in Isaiah 3 into the proper context. We are looking at God's judgment against His people for their rejection of His truth; We are looking at the disintegration of their society; We fear for the extinction of our own society

II. (3:16-4:1) SHAME AND HUMILIATION MAGNIFIED BY JUDGMENT AGAINST ARROGANT, ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN (PROUD, PAMPERED WOMEN)

Van Parunak: why address these pampered ladies?

- warns them about the nature and character of these women that would aspire to lead them – their pride and guilt

- influence that these women have on the leading men; these women do not encourage their husbands in godliness; they care about enlarging their wardrobe and enhancing their prestige; I need more money to buy this and that

Reason for Judgment

Retribution Described

Result of Judgment

A. (:16) The Reason for Judgment – Proud Prancing

*“Moreover, the LORD said, ‘Because the daughters of Zion:
are proud,
And walk with heads held high and seductive eyes,
And go along with mincing steps,
And tinkle the bangles on their feet,’”*

Peacock attitude of pride = their fundamental sin; **2:11**

Young: When the women are wholly vain and self-centered, the cancer of moral decay is truly consuming the nation's heart. Proper adornment and true beauty in women should be a reflection of the glory of God. When women cultivate and cherish beauty only for itself, they are infringing upon and detracting from the glory and beauty that belong to Him. That ordinary women of the world should be vainglorious might be expected. But the daughters of Zion, women who live in the city of God, under the very shadow of the Temple, who should have set the example of the beauty of holiness, these are haughty and walk with outstretched neck.

Beall: v 16 indicates that these women are dressed and are acting in a flirtatious, immodest Manner

Constable: Everything they did was designed to attract attention.

Borgman: Luther: they walk along and waggle; “*mincing steps*”; taking little tiny steps; have ornaments on their feet; ostentatious; making a show; proud of the show that they can make; wanting to get noticed

Look at the money spent on this frivolity when the poor are in such need

B. (:17-24) The Retribution Described – Shamefully Stripping Them

1. (:17) Embarrassing and Humiliating Them

“Therefore the Lord will afflict the scalp of the daughters of Zion with scabs,

And the LORD will make their foreheads bare.”

“*the Lord will lay bare their secret parts*” is more literal translation; uncover their nakedness; give them up violation and abuse; judgment for flaunting their sexuality; retributive justice

Glory of women to have long hair according to Paul

Young: Those who delight in immodest exposure will be rewarded with immodest exposure at the hands of vile men

Clarke: It was the barbarous custom of the conquerors of those times to strip their captives naked, and to make them travel in that condition, exposed to the inclemency of the weather; and the worst of all, to the intolerable heat of the sun. But this to the women was the height of cruelty and indignity; and especially to such as those here described, who had indulged themselves in all manner of delicacies of living, and all the superfluities of ornamental dress; and even whose faces had hardly ever been exposed to the sight of man. This is always mentioned as the hardest part of the lot of captives.

Van Parunak: references of nakedness as judgment from God -- **Jer. 13:22-27; Ezek. 16:35-43; Is. 47:1-3; Nahum 3:5** [*“Behold, I am against you,” declares the Lord of hosts; ‘and I will lift up your skirts over your face, and show to the nations your nakedness and to the kingdoms your disgrace.’*”] – Why is nakedness a shame? What is wrong with it? It was not shameful when man was first made; when they broke God’s law the very first thing they realized is that they needed a covering; needed a covering that relied on sacrifices; it is a wonderful thing that we stand erect and walk on two feet; amazing that we can speak; can make and use tools – did not become ashamed of these things; but ashamed of their ability to procreate; producing rebellious sinners = one thing you can be sure your children will inherit from you; that is something to be ashamed of; modesty in dress is how we show our awareness of this; they covered themselves instinctively as soon as they were aware of their sin

2. (:18-23) Stripping Off All Their Beautiful Adornments

“In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, headbands, crescent ornaments, dangling earrings, bracelets, veils, headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets, finger rings, nose rings, festal robes, outer tunics, cloaks, money purses, hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans, and veils.”

Van Parunak:

Headbands – ornaments representing sun god

Crescent ornaments – representing moon god

Sashes – something tied like a scarf

Amulet – good luck charm to protect from evil spirits

Ancient world you did not have a lot of changes of clothes like we do; to have multiple suits of clothing – special things for special occasions – was very special

Undergarments?? – fine linens

NT instructions for godly adornment and behavior of women:

1Pet. 3:3-6 “Your adornment must not be merely external – braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him, lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.”

I Tim. 2:9-11 “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; 10 but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness. 11 Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.”

Titus 2:3-5 “Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.”

Borgman: God strips them of everything they put their pride in in making themselves beautiful for themselves and others; God despises when men and women break out of their God ordained roles; feminism is eating their own fruit right now; women will stand out from the culture if they act as God has instructed

3. (:24) Exchanging Their Glory for Shame – 5 Contrasts for sake of illustration

a. Stench for Sweetness

“Now it will come about that instead of sweet perfume there will be putrefaction;”

dead, stinking carcasses

b. Simplicity for Fancy Accessorizing

“Instead of a belt, a rope;”

Preceptaustin: A rope brings to mind the picture of slaves being led away into captivity (cp Dt 28:36, 2Chr 29:9).

Tie their sackcloth around them with a crude rope rather than an ornate belt

c. Shame for Glory

“Instead of well-set hair, a plucked-out scalp;”

d. Sackcloth (Poverty/Mourning/Distress) for Luxury

“Instead of fine clothes, a donning of sackcloth;”

Some type of luxurious purple garment

e. Scarring (Disfiguring) for Beauty

“And branding instead of beauty.”

Motyer: all items listed in v. 24 but the branding are deliberate signs of the abstention from body-care associated with mourning

Van Parunak: Some type of burn on the flesh like a brand or scar; these women thought they were beautiful but they were not; they will lose both their loveliness and their lovers (the ones who could appreciate their beauty)

C. (3:25 – 4:1) The Result of Judgment – Reduced to Desperate Hopelessness – 3 Expressions of Desperate Hopelessness

1. (:25) Death -- of Potential Husbands

“Your men will fall by the sword, And your mighty ones in battle.”

2. (:26) Devastation -- City Vanquished

“And her gates will lament and mourn; And deserted she will sit on the ground.”

Borgman: men gather at the city gates; no more men

Preceptaustin: Jerusalem is personified as a destitute woman who sits mourning the empty city whose male population has been slaughtered. When the glory of the Lord departed the gates of the cities . . . these same gates which were once sites of song and rejoicing, will become scenes of great groaning and mourning.

3. (4:1) Desperation -- for Marriage with its Provision and Protection

“For seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, ‘We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach!’”

Motyer: In 3:6 the men “*take hold of*” a man, seeking a ruler, in 4:1 the women *take hold of* a man, seeking a husband. The men placed reliance on worldly social strength only to find such reliance always perishes for want of people fit to rely on; the women gave their all to allurements only to find that in the end there were no takers. How well Isaiah began this section with the call to refuse to put trust in man (2:22)! The women providing their own *food* and *clothes* (4:1) is the reversal of the due ordering of marriage (Ex. 21:10).

Oswalt: In an extremely powerful figure Isaiah makes the whole argument very concrete: wealthy women, secure in their luxury and their allure, are reduced to scabrous hags begging to belong to someone. . .

Here is the final end of our desire to avoid dependence. We will become dependent in the most degrading and disadvantageous ways. Instead of the exaltation and building-up which comes from glad submission to God and one another (60:1-62:12), our drive to be sufficient in ourselves brings only humiliation, despair, and bondage.

CONCLUSION – Part 2:

Psalm 81:8-13 –

Social reform is not the answer; Embrace God’s Truth – Listen and respond to God

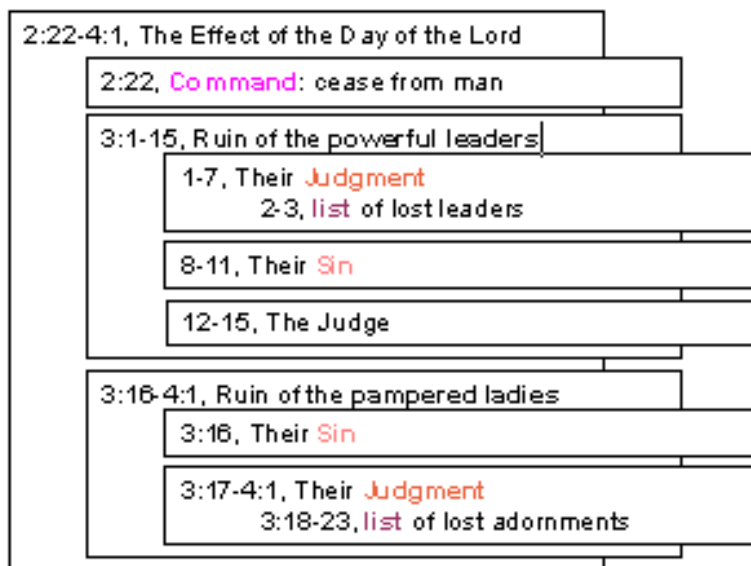
Based on the criteria in this passage, our society is obviously disintegrating rapidly as well; no more integrity of leadership; anarchy is starting to replace a well-ordered society that promotes righteousness; wicked words and actions demonstrate open rebellion against a holy God; our nation has become like Sodom and Gomorrah – in fact to speak against homosexuality as a sin in the eyes of God is quickly approaching the level of a state condemned hate crime; women assert their independence from their God-given role and strut about proudly in seductive and immodest ways; promiscuity has become accepted; it is all about what makes me happy in the moment; we should not be surprised that God will spring into action and give such a nation what it is asking for; the only question seems to be “How long before the Lord acts?”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of perspective should this passage give us towards Hollywood’s red carpet?
- 2) How do women in our culture reflect a spirit of pride and independence?
- 3) Where have we bought into the seductive and immodest dress styles of our present culture?
- 4) Why is social reform not the answer to this decay in the fundamental structures of society?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: Structure of this section



Brian Borgman: Actual Jerusalem – Evil Leaders (3:1-11)

What does the collapse of a nation look like? It looks like us, doesn’t it? Corrupt leadership;

widespread violence; rampant immorality and acceptance of things the previous generation would not have accepted as normal; on the downward spiral of religious apostasy; also a nation that refuses to honor God on His appointed day; profaning God on the Sabbath; we used to have blue laws that made sure that shops were closed on Sunday; We know that a day of reckoning is coming when wrongs will be righted; Lev. 26; Deut. 28 = the promised curses; we see these hard judgments as impediments to our temporary happiness; we lose perspective; God values the glory of His name above everything else; Sometimes He will bring about the collapse of a sinful nation; the reality of divine judgment needs to impact us so that we live in light of the holiness and justice of God; we need to be affected deeply; then we will appreciate the grace of God; I am going to jerk out from under them every type of supply and support that forms the basis of their trust and security; God is self-existent and self-sufficient; man is not; Ps. 107:33-34 – brings famine as judgment; Amos 4:6-8; going to pull the plug on your bread and water supply; God will collapse both legitimate and illegitimate means of support; think how utterly devastating the collapse of a nation would be; anarchy then takes the place of organized society; ruthless leaders; take it either literally as young rulers or figuratively as inexperienced and immature; God will give us the rulers that we deserve; the people will be oppressed by each other and by their close neighbors (not from external forces); teenagers will be insolent in arrogant pride against their elders; the low lives against those who have earned respect and favor; the scum of the earth against the upper crust; this is anarchy; political leadership becomes shallow and superficial and even mocked; I won't be your healer; I can't fix this mess; God tells us why He brings this judgment on His people; never capricious in His judgment; God has a very long nose (patient) – takes His nose a long time to become completely red; God's wrath is measured, prudent and proportionate to the offense

God Stands to Judge (3:12 – 4:1)

Vs. 12 – the nature of the leaders in a nation that is about to collapse; just 150 years later the Babylonians are going to come in and destroy the city and temple; southern kingdom on the verge of collapse; oppressing instead of leading them; defined as children – either literally children or in terms of their lack of maturity; Who comes to mind? Ahab is the epitome of childlessness; I want Naboth's vineyard; he can't have it so he goes home and pouts; his wife gets if for him; women speaks to weakness in leadership or literally to women; Jezebel wore the pants rather than Ahab; corrupt, weak, childlike leadership that only looks out for itself; cf. cults who lead people astray; God does not sit still; takes notice of everything going on; devastation when He springs into action to judge the people; enters into the courtroom battle with His people; message of prophets: calling people back to covenant faithfulness through repentance; see the obstinacy and stubbornness of men's hearts; Women exercise tremendous influence for good or bad over a nation; when femininity is raised and motherhood is esteemed shows a strong moral fabric in a culture; have their nose up in the air; their necks are stretched up in pride; sexual promiscuity is a common thing; chastity is out;

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=1019071753536>

Motyer: The message of the whole section is solemn in the extreme. Divine judgment on society begins to manifest itself in the disappearance of solid leadership (Is 3:1, 2, 3) and the appearance of immature, capricious leaders (Is 3:4). Society becomes divided (Is 3:5a), the age-gap opens up (Is 3:5b), values are at a discount and those who should be despised take the initiative (Is 3:5c). An air of despair dominates elections (Is 3:6, 7). All this arises from moral and spiritual causes. It is not the result of failures of policy but of speaking and acting against the Lord and provoking him; blatant sin inviting its just reward (Is 3:8, 9, 10, 11).

Preceptaustin: Richard Mayhue has a nice summary of the teaching on the Day of the Lord in Isaiah...

Isa 2:12 is the first mention of DOL in Isaiah's prophecy. This chapter emphasizes the future establishment of God's kingdom (Isa 2:2, 3, 4), the present sinful state of Israel (Isa 2:5, 6, 7, 8, 9), and the future day of reckoning (Isa 2:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22).

The prophet appears to look beyond the near to the far future in the judgment emphasis of Isa 2:10-22, just as he had looked to the eschatological kingdom in Isa 2:1-4.

There are several indicators of millennial conditions in Isa 2:1-4 (cf. Rev 20:1-6). Mt. Zion will be the world capital and all the nations will come to it (Isa 2:1, 2) in order to seek God's word (Isa 2:3). God will judge between the nations and war will be no more (Is 2:4,5). This eschatological emphasis in Isa 2:2, 3, 4 makes it reasonable to conclude that eschatological judgment is in view in Isa 2:10-22, rather than to God's chastisement of Judah by Assyria and Babylon.

DOL is described by Isaiah as a time of universal humiliation for all who are proud (Is 2:11, 12, 17). In contrast, the splendor of God's majesty (Is 2:10, 19, 21) will be displayed and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day (Is 2:11, 17). Isaiah's portrayals of DOL here should be interpreted as referring to that time immediately preceding the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth. It is a day when God's majesty will be outwardly manifested (Is 2:10, 19, 21), and the population will be driven in terror to caves for protection (Is 2:21, cf. Re 6:16, 17).

The timing and terminology of Isa 2:21 are strikingly similar to the description of the sixth seal in Re 6:16, 17. If these passages are correlated, it can be concluded that the sixth seal is a part of DOL and occurs at the end of the Tribulation. The correlation also confirms that Isa 2:12 refers to the far future. As will be noted later, Zec 14:1 and Mal 4:5 also emphasize only the far eschatological implications of DOL.

Isaiah 13 is the next chapter to be considered. It is an oracle concerning Babylon. Isa 13:1-8 deals with God's use of Babylon as his instrument of indignation for the destruction of Israel (Is 13:5, 6). This reminds one of Habakkuk's dismay that God would do such a thing (Hab 1:2, 3, 4). The DOL was near in the mind of Isaiah (Is 13:6), although it would not come for over one hundred years. It would be a day of destruction, terror, and pain (Is 13:8). There is little doubt that this refers to the near eschatological event fulfilled by Babylon from 605-586 B.C.

However, there is good reason to believe that Isa 13:9-16 speaks of DOL implications for the far future. The near emphasis returns in Isa 13:17-22 where the end of Babylon is described. That the far future is described in Isa 13:9-16 is shown by the cosmic disturbances (Isa 13:10, 13; cf. Matt 24:29; Rev 6:12, 13; Joel 2:31) and the universal judgment of mankind (Isa 13:11; cf. Isa 2:11, 12). Ladd accurately describes the interplay of the near and far views:

These two visitations, the near and the far, or, as we may for convenience call them, the historical and the eschatological, are not differentiated in time. In fact, sometimes the two blend together as though they were one day. Isaiah 13 calls the day of the visitation of Babylon the Day of the Lord. The Lord is mustering a host for battle (Isa 13:4-6), he will stir up the Medes against Babylon (Isa 13:17). Therefore, men are to "wail, for the day of the Lord is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come!" (Isa 13:6). This historical Day of the Lord is painted against the backdrop of the eschatological Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord will bring disaster to the earth and a disruption of the heavenly order (Isa 13:9-13). Judgment will fall both upon the world of nature and upon men (Isa 13:7) when God punishes the world for its evil and the

wicked for their iniquity (Isa 13:11). Here is a picture of universal judgment. The Day of the Lord is the eschatological judgment of mankind; but the two are seen as though they were one day, one visitation of God.²⁷

Isa 13:6, 9 is therefore similar to other passages previously noted which portray the DOL in one context as both a near historical and a far eschatological happening. (The Prophet's Watchword Day of the Lord -- By **Richard L. Mayhue** Grace Theological Journal 6:2 Fall 1985)

David Silversides: When God Demolishes

Everything was designed to draw the attention of men to themselves; not that women are to look odd or old fashioned; but they must not adopt the sensual fashions of the culture; Christian women must be outwardly different; plunging neckline; mini-skirts; tight jeans; bare midriffs; etc. These things are not an option for Christian young women; outward norms have become immodest and wicked; Lord will destroy their beauty; ruthless enemy will expose them utterly;

Application:

- The symptoms of divine demolition are already apparent in our culture [United Kingdom] The seeds of ruination are everywhere to see; cry out to God for mercy; think of how guilty we are in light of the privileges and blessings we have known and the access to God's truth and preaching
- Pray for the righteous that it will be well with them

Brian Vos: The Lord Contends His Case

Both the men and women display a heart of unbridled pride; women seek to gain attention for themselves; infringing from the glory and beauty that belong rightly to God (**Young**); no concern for oppression of the poor; rich are getting richer through excessive abuse of power; poor are being taken advantage of; they are basking in luxurious wealth; Lord comes to take it all away; grotesque and humiliating; they wanted attention – the Lord will give it; the Lord will empty out their wardrobes and closets; no jewelry or perfume; their ugliness is repulsive; all are made to look alike with their heads shaved to go into exile; city left vulnerable – subject to attack; the once glorious city is empty, lonely, desolate and mourning; Isaiah's successor Jeremiah lived to see this day; the mourning, weeping prophet; but still clinging to hope in the midst of judgment; another would come who would weep over the city and bear their sorrows;

TEXT: Isaiah 4:2-6

TITLE: *THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM – A TIME OF BOASTING, CLEANSING AND PROTECTION*

BIG IDEA:

THE MESSIANIC GOD-MAN WILL PURGE JERUSALEM TO USHER IN A KINGDOM OF SECURITY WHERE GOD’S PEOPLE MAKE THEIR BOAST IN THEIR BEAUTIFUL AND GLORIOUS REDEEMER

INTRODUCTION:

This Super Bowl week offers the opportunity for a lot of boasting. I am sure that the media coverage will capture some of the typical trash talking of the players on both teams. As much as I love my Ravens, some players can be immature idiots in mouthing off in boastful fashion. To the Ravens credit, many of their players sincerely have a spiritual focus where they are quick to give the Lord the credit for His work in their lives. But for most of the world of power and fame, people are quick to pridefully boast in their accomplishments. Like King Nebuchadnezzar of old, they look around and marvel at what I have been able to build or accumulate or possess. It is a humbling process as we saw in chapter 3 when the Lord sweeps away all support systems and exposes our trust in human flesh as empty and vain. He spoke of the judgment He would bring on the lofty male leaders and the arrogant, aristocratic women. It was not a pretty picture.

Today we emerge from the gloomy aspects of the future Day of the Lord to enter back into the glorious sunshine of the Messianic Kingdom. Isaiah keeps bouncing back and forth with those contrasting images. In that day God’s people will finally make their boast in their Messiah. The futility of human leaders will have been erased and Messiah will sprout up as God’s solution to a reign of peace and righteousness on the earth. Remember the two bookends to this section of Isaiah. **2:1-4** – now bracketed with **4:2-6**

THE MESSIANIC GOD-MAN WILL PURGE JERUSALEM TO USHER IN A KINGDOM OF SECURITY WHERE GOD’S PEOPLE MAKE THEIR BOAST IN THEIR BEAUTIFUL AND GLORIOUS REDEEMER

THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM – A TIME OF BOASTING, CLEANSING AND PROTECTION

I. (:2) A TIME OF BOASTING FOR GOD’S PEOPLE

A. Magnificence of the Messiah – Messiah’s Divine Connection

“In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious,”

The arrogant, aristocratic women of Israel who tried to establish their own beauty but were stripped and humiliated by God’s judgment are here contrasted with the pure beauty and glory of God’s Messiah.

1. The Timeframe for Future Hope – “in that day” – eschatological reference

Preceptaustin: *In that day* equates with that aspect of the Day of the LORD which includes the one thousand year reign of Christ or the Millennium. As discussed earlier, the Day of the LORD is not a single day but an extended period of time that ends with the passing away of the present

heavens and earth (after the Millennium which will take place on the present earth), for Peter says that... *the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.*

2. The Title of the Ultimate Ruler – “the Branch of the Lord”

Motyer: The *Branch of the Lord* is always elsewhere a title pointing to the Messiah in his kingly and priestly offices (Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12).

Beall: 2 Sam 23:3-5 states that the “*Rock of Israel*” tells David that “*a ruler over men will be just, a ruler in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises. . . . Is not my house thus with God? For He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For all of my salvation and all my desire, will He not cause it to grow (נִצְמַץ, “cause to sprout forth”)?*” The noun נִצְמַץ is from this same verb, נִצְמַץ, found in 2 Sam 23:5. The reference in 2 Sam 23:5 to the Messiah may indeed be cryptic, but it is developed here in 4:2 by Isaiah. That the term should be taken messianically in Isaiah is made clear by comparison of 4:2 with Isa 28:5-6a: “*In that day the Lord of hosts will be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people, for a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment. . . .*”

Young: Heb 7:14 may contain the same thought: “*Our Lord sprang forth [ἀνατέταλκεν, from ἀνατέλλω, “to spring forth”] from Judah*”

If you take this as Messianic reference the problem becomes how to interpret the next phrase in parallel fashion. Cf. the Vine in John 15

3. The Tribute to Messiah’s Perfections – “will be beautiful and glorious,”

Van Parunak: “beauty” *cebiy* describes the attractiveness of jewelry (Ezek 7:20), or of a city or nation (Dan 11:16, 41, 45). Notably, David uses it to describe the majesty of fallen Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:19).

Messiah has not always been recognized by the Jews as beautiful and glorious; **Is. 52:13ff** Refers to a process ... *will become beautiful and glorious* (imagery of bride and bridegroom)

We are fulfilling our role as God’s created beings when we recognize His precious Son as fully God and fully Man = the one Mediator between God and Man; the one who has redeemed us from our sin and death and separation from God so that we now recognize and worship Him as beautiful and glorious

We need to spend time meditating on Him; to take that precious bottle of perfume and break it over His head and feet and bow down in humble worship; to truly appreciate Him for all of His perfections; look at how the angels devote themselves to such activity

The world wants to paint Christ as ugly and impotent

The testimony of the heavenly Father: “*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*”

B. Pride of the Believing Remnant – Messiah’s Human Connection

“and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.”

Borgman: *“the fruit of the land”* – the land of Palestine that God put His hand on; the Lord will cause the sprout to come forth from the land of Israel; John 4 – salvation is from the Jew; emphasizes His humanity – even His Jewishness;

Look at the contrast with the ostentatious and worldly adornment of the arrogant aristocratic women in chapter 3

Rom. 1:3-4 *“concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord”*

Rev. 22:16 – *“I am the root and the descendant of David”*

Motyer: *Glory* had been their destruction (2:10) and *Pride* (2:12; a related word) their ruin. Now the divine glory dwells among them, they rightly pride themselves in him and he imparts a true dignity to them.

Adornment -- *“put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh;”*

Cause for boasting -- **1 Cor. 1:30-31** *“let him who boasts, boast in the Lord”*; not a carnal boasting -- Need some Christian Swagger

II. (:3-4) A TIME OF CLEANSING FOR GOD’S PEOPLE

A. Calling of Holiness

“And it will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy-- everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem.”

A remnant will make it into the Millennial Age; but with completely transformed character so that they are holy like the Lord Himself

Rom. 11:1-27 important passage about Israel existing as a remnant and ultimately all Israel being saved at a point in time yet future

MacArthur: a small nucleus of God’s people, preserved by His sovereign grace, form this righteous remnant in the midst of national apostasy (Cf. Isa 1:9-note). There were always the obedient few (referring to believing OT Jews) who preserved, obeyed, and passed on God’s law. There will always be a remnant because God will never forsake the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Mic 2:12,13; Ro 9:27-note; Ro 11:5-note)

Dan 12:1; Rev 20:12

Preceptaustin: Holy Remnant -- (Is 1:27; 52:1; 60:21; Ezekiel 36:24, 25, 26, 27, 28; 43:12; Zechariah 14:20,21; Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 3:12; Hebrews 12:14; 1Peter 2:9)

Borgman: These survivors (remnant) did not hang in there by chance; *“holy”* is first word in sentence = emphasized; separate from that which brought about the judgment in the first place;

not left over by accident; these are the elect; their names had been recorded in the book; Ephes 1 – election is always unto holiness; God washes away the inward and outward sins; not talking about God reforming people; the removal of the filth;

Motyer: the Lord's book is referred to throughout Scripture (e.g. Ex. 32:32-33). To have survived the calamity is no accident but arises from an elective decision of the Lord, a divine purpose expressed in the inscribing of the name in the book of life. Behind personal experience lies the predestinating mind of God.

* * * * *

Van Parunak: Isaiah uses “*holy*” more than any other prophet; uses it consistently – 1 time applied to the Sabbath; 36 times it describes the Lord – mostly as the Holy One of Israel; this is his only usage where it applies to the people; God takes His own name and attaches it to His own people; the Lord has set aside those who are His own and preserved them from the judgment; Ezek. 9 – preparation for judgment; inscribed for life and then the judgment fell. . .

When the remnant turns their eyes in worshipful appreciation to the one who is the Branch of the Lord and the Fruit of the Land, they receive this divine title “Holy.”

Compare the promise of the Lord to the Church of Philadelphia (**Rev 3:12**),

“I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”

The pampered ladies of 3:16-4:1 had been reduced to seeking a man, any man, and beseeching him, only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach (4:1).

But those in view here receive a far loftier name, that of the Lord God. (The link with 4:1 suggests a marriage theme, which is picked up in the “defense” of 4:5.)

Again, Peter may have this text in view: **2 Pet 1:4**

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

* * * * *

B. Process of Cleansing and Judgment

1. Targets of This Judgment

a. Lofty Male Leaders

“When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion,”

Chiastic approach – taking up these two groups in reverse order to how they had been addressed in chapter 3

b. Arrogant, Aristocratic Women

“and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst,”

Van Parunak: He again treats the two categories, the powerful leaders and the pampered ladies: *washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion*,--The first reference is to the women, in the same terms as 3:16. “Filth” is literally “excrement,” and recalls the judgment of 3:24, where their delicate ornaments and perfume-bottles are replaced with disgusting filth. We noted there that this replacement was not so much vindictive judgment as a revelation of their true nature. Now we see that it is not the end of the process. After making manifest the ugliness of their sin, the Lord now removes it, and washes it away. Only when they have been thus cleansed can they exhibit the faith described in 4:2.

and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof—The clear reference of “daughters of Zion” to the women of 3:16-4:1 suggests that we should understand this clause to refer to the bloodshed that results from the removal of the leaders in 3:1-15, and that in fact reveals the true nature of the abuses that they approved while they were in office. As with the women, so with the men, this revelatory judgment is followed with purging.

Beall: Vv 4-6 show that the judgment of the Lord must come first—the filth of the daughters of Jerusalem must be purged through God's judgment. The term used here is in stark contrast to the holiness of v. 3 which will be true of the remnant. As Young notes, in this verse Isaiah takes up two of the themes of chap. 3 in chiasmic order: the violent deeds of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the “beauty” of the women which was really “filth” (p. 183). John Martin aptly comments that “only the sovereign work of the Lord, not human effort, will be able to cleanse the nation” (Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 1041; cf. Zech 3:8-9; 13:1).

2. Instruments of This Judgment

“by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning,”

Some would see figurate use of this word *ruah* which can mean breath, wind, spirit; so would translate as “process” of judgment or “blast” of judgment”

Van Parunak: always to the divine spirit:

Isa 28:5-6 In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem Of beauty, unto the residue of his people, 6 And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment,

Isa 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

Mic 3:8 But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

It is God's spirit who will take away their sin, thus completing the process of judgment. and by the spirit of burning.--This cleansing is described by burning. Cf. 6:6,7, where Isaiah, having realized his sin, is purged by coals brought from the altar.

Motyer: The Lord so acts as to meet alike the objective demands of absolute justice and the subjective demands of his own holy nature.

III. (:5-6) A TIME OF PROTECTION FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

A. Creation of Protective Canopy

“then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy.”

Not fulfilled at the return from Babylonian Captivity; looks forward to the ultimate fulfillment in the Messianic kingdom

“*Bara*” – word for God’s unique **creative** activity – used in Gen. 1:1 – shows that what will happen here is the work of God Himself; not some reformation that man brings about

Grogan: a favorite later in Isaiah to denote realities brought into being by the Creator in his new and final purpose (cf. e.g., 41:20; 45:8; 48:7; 65:17-18).

Young: Isaiah uses language descriptive of the time of the wilderness wandering. This cloud of smoke had served as a protection for God’s people. . . The cloud was first a guide to the people. “*And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them in the way*” (**Exod. 13:21a**). It was also a protection. “*And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night*” (**Exod. 14:20**). It was also an approach to the Lord. “*Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*” (**Exod. 40:34**).

Grogan: The protective symbols would not move, as they did during the Exodus, for the future Mount Zion is journey’s end.

Oswalt: The canopy of cloud and fire, so terrifying to God’s enemies, will be a source of comfort to the remnant. The same fire which purged them is now their protection and hope.

Drastic changes to the earth’s environment?? – cf. changes that happened after the universal Flood

Word “*canopy*” used of the wedding ceremony (cf. context of 5:1) – canopy of God’s love and protection

Oswalt: *Canopy* (*huppa*) always denotes the “marriage chamber” (Ps. 19:5; Joel 2:16).

B. Function of Protective Canopy

“And there will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.”

Is. 43:2-3 similar imagery of protection “*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*”

Like a booth in the Feast of Booths – protect us from everything that nature or the world could throw at us –

Ray Lewis quotes – this is the true application: shirt with **Psalm 91**;
Mantra of **Is. 54:17** “*No weapon that is formed against you will prosper*” – God not primarily speaking of the Baltimore Ravens there

CONCLUSION: 3 Main Applications:

- We need to **make our boast in our Redeemer** who truly is beautiful and glorious and our all sufficient Mediator as the perfect God-Man
- We need to **put on the Lord Jesus** as our adornment so that our life and works faithfully represent the holiness of God and His abundant grace that has cleansed us from the filth and bloodshed of our wickedness.
- We need to rest in the Security of Messiah’s Protection from anything this world can throw at us

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What image comes to your mind when you think of the “*Branch*” of the Lord? What is this imagery meant to signify?
- 2) What does this emphasis upon remnant theology and the Book of Life say about God’s sovereignty in salvation?
- 3) How can we better meditate on the Lord’s beauty and glory?
- 4) Are we availing ourselves of the Lord’s protection as our canopy and shelter in every situation?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: God will not give up on his people. In fact, the coming fires of the Exile will only serve to make his people more what God has always wanted them to be (v. 4). . . If he branch is the Messiah, then the point would seem to be that the real and lasting produce of Israel is God’s gift, not the result of her own fruitfulness and power. God will take away that honor which she created for herself (3:18) and give her a new source of honor and exaltation. Israel herself is not the sprout, but rather that which has come from her by God’s grace. When God gives her glory, then she will know her true greatness, the greatness which eluded her when she sought to produce that glory herself. The thought that the Messiah is the mediator of God’s glory is a prominent one in the NT (Luke 2:32; 9:26, 32; John 1:14; 2:11; 11:4; 17:5, 22, 24; 1 Cor. 2:8; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:27; Heb. 1:3).

Brian Borgman: The New Jerusalem

We come to the end of a major subsection of the text. Inclusio – this section starts and ends with the same theme – the ideal or new Jerusalem. In between you have contrast with earthly, carnal,

fallen Jerusalem. The Day of the Lord includes both judgment and blessing. Near term (already) reference to Babylonian Captivity and future (not yet fully consummated) application to coming Messianic kingdom. We live in the tension between the already and the not yet. Messiah is reigning right now but will stay reign in different fashion when He returns in power and glory.

“*Branch*” – a shoot or a sprout (not one of the big things hanging out from the trunk of a tree) – think of a stump cut down and dead; fallen and destroyed; out of that stump will come a little shoot and that branch is the Messiah; the branch is a human descendant of King David; Jer. 23:5 -- “*a righteous branch*”; but also divine -- the branch that comes from God Himself; named “*Jehovah our righteousness*” (23:6); Rev. 22:16 – “*I am the root and the descendant of David*”; He is the root (the one from whom David comes) and the branch; Offices of this branch – Zech. 3:8ff – the Servant of the Lord (Is. 42:1 – starts 6 songs about the Servant of the Lord = Messiah); 3:9 – God will remove the iniquity of His people in 1 day = Good Friday; this was the function of the Priest; 6:11ff – He will build the temple of the Lord and be both a King and Priest; He will rule in righteousness; Israelites tried to make up their own feigned beauty and glory; feast on the beauty and glory of Christ; our theology is shallow today because we don’t meditate like the spiritual giants of the past; (cf. John Flavel);

Systems that believe in infant baptism find it to be parallel to OT old covenant rite of circumcision; But only those born again by the Spirit of God and cleansed by faith are in the New Covenant; you don’t want a mix of regenerate and unregenerate membership in New Covenant; God has created a new pure Zion; Rom. 9:6 -- not everyone who was circumcised according to the flesh was a member of the regenerate community; (Deut. 29:4 – most of Israel was unregenerate);

Smoke and fire in Exodus symbolized the presence of God; that is how they knew God was with them; divine creative act ex nihilo; God is doing something new in this age in the area of Zion and her assemblies; connection between heaven and earth – dream Jacob had of staircase; presence of God had been manifested there; John 1:51 allusion to Jacob’s ladder – Son of Man bridged the gap between heaven and earth; tabernacle in the wilderness wanderings with ark of covenant – representing presence of God with Shekinah glory; God is mobile and on the move; David wants to build God a permanent house; Solomon builds temple – represents dwelling place of God; Jews not so foolish to think God was limited to that; John 1:14 the Word became flesh and tabernacle among us; dwelling place moved from a physical place and is now in the flesh of Jesus Christ of Nazareth; John 2 – destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it = talking about His body; Jesus ascends into heaven and His body on earth is now the church; temple is wherever God’s people gather; New Jerusalem coming down from heaven was bride; Heb. 12:22;

Canopy – refers to a marriage chamber; this will be over the presence;

Van Parunak: “*In that day*” (2:11, 17; 3:7, 18; 4:1) – a day of humbling and judgment and darkness; finally we come out of the darkness into the sunlight; remember 2:1-5; Mt. Zion replacing Mt. Sinai (where law of God first came from); emphasis back there was on the Gentile nations; God is going to humble particularly the nation of Israel; turning of the Gentiles to the Lord will provoke Israel to jealousy and eventually they will come to their senses;

“*branch of the Lord*” and “*fruit of the land*” – Hebrew parallelism; not talking about agricultural bounty here; words are too extravagant to be talking about the Farmer’s Market; John Calvin –

generalizes it to abundant grace and spiritual blessings; but he doesn't go far enough; speaks of Messiah Himself – easier to make case for first expression; then you can make the parallel argument for “*fruit of the land*”; where did Isaiah get the concept? Jewish Targum translates verse as referring to Messiah; **2 Sam. 23:5** – last words of David; rhetorical questions: “Is not my house so with God ... will He not cause it to grow?” Or “He will surely cause it to grow”; He will cause my house to sprout, to branch as part of His everlasting covenant with David;

3 Arguments for reference here to branch being to Messiah:

1) Fits the argument and context here; speaking of the loss of human rulers; those remaining will be called holy; talking about redemption here and washing away filth; not talking about your garden; David looked forward to one who would come and rule in righteousness and justly in the fear of God

2) Isaiah accustomed to using such agricultural metaphors to refer to Messiah – **Is. 11:1** (different Hebrew word for branch here); **53:2** – Lord described as tender plant

3) **28:5** – similarity to 4:2; talking about *in that day*; about the remnant of Israel; speaking of glory and beauty; Lord Himself described here

Jeremiah and Zechariah referring back to this reference in Isaiah;

It shall become *beautiful and glorious* – speaking of a process; no longer just something cut off; 2 Sam. 1; honor; respect attributed to something that is glorious; in His First Advent Israel did not view Messiah in this way; cf. Is. 53 – *despised and rejected of men*; who will recognize His beauty? The Jewish remnant – will look upon Him they had pierced; 1 Pet. 2 – to you who believe He has become precious; Israel has been despising that branch;

“*the fruit of the land*” – parallel expression; twice in Num and once in Deut; The precise phrase appears only in reference to the produce of the promised land, in Num 13:20, 26; Deut 1:25 (the report of the spies). So we should translate “the fruit of the land [of Israel].” Isaiah talks about people as fruit; emphasizes where Messiah came from; wasn't born in Egypt; came from the land of Israel; from David's loins; origin is both divine and earthly; **Rom. 1:3** – important verse; Son of Man and Son of God; complex Christology didn't start with Paul; not speaking of two natures; our Saviour is one person – both God and man; all of Him is Son of Man; all of Him is Son of God; There may be a parallel in these two titles to the two NT titles used for our Lord, “Son of God” and “Son of Man.” It is misleading to apply these titles to our Lord's “divine nature” and “human nature,” as is sometimes done. Such language was created by the church councils, and does not appear in the text of Scripture. The titles Son of God and Son of Man both apply to him as a complete person, and express his twofold origin. As the Son of God, he is the branch of the Lord; as the Son of Man, he is the fruit of the land.

Remnant – 3 singular nouns in the Hebrew; same group of people;

TEXT: Isaiah 5:1-7

TITLE: SONG (PARABLE) OF THE VINEYARD – DEFUSING THE BLAME GAME

BIG IDEA:

CAN GOD BE BLAMED FOR ISRAEL’S APOSTASY AND UNFAITHFULNESS?

INTRODUCTION:

When we have been caught doing something wrong, we are all quick to play the **Blame Game**. [Def: accusations exchanged among people who refuse to accept sole responsibility for some undesirable event.] Kids are great at this. But as adults we just continue the game with a little more sophistication and argumentation. This Blame Game reaction started back in the Garden of Eden with Adam: “*That woman you gave me, she gave me from the tree and I ate.*” Eve ramped things up with her response: “*The serpent deceived me ... the devil made me do it.*” James warns us against attributing blame for our sin to God Himself: “*Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God.’*” Job’s wife takes the cake for blaming God – her counsel to her husband in the midst of his afflictions was just “*Curse God and die.*” When we find ourselves in situations we don’t like and don’t feel that we deserve, we as well are quick to turn against God and try to lay some element of blame at His feet.

Here in chapter 5 of Isaiah’s prophecy, before he unleashes a string of 6 terrible Woes (v. 8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22 – categories of sin) uttered in judgment against the unfaithful Israelites, he pauses to give a simple vindication of the righteousness of God in His judgments. Remember how Abraham found God to be a righteous Judge in His destroying of Sodom and Gomorrah. Here God wants to make it plain that the Jews have no bone to pick with Him. God can in no way be blamed for Israel’s apostasy and unfaithfulness.

CAN GOD BE BLAMED FOR ISRAEL’S APOSTASY AND UNFAITHFULNESS?

PRELUDE TO THE PARABLE:

“Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.”

Van Parunak: By starting the song in this way, Isaiah entices his hearers to listen. They are expecting a ballad of pastoral romance, two lovers romping through the garden together.

Terms of **endearment** – God loves His people; describing His people = His vineyard

Paradox: that we can refer to our God as the transcendent Holy One of Israel; the great and majestic Lord of the Universe – yet also speak more intimately in terms of intimate friendship and marriage imagery

I. (:1-2) JUSTIFICATION PORTRAYED -- GOD DID EVERYTHING HE COULD FOR ISRAEL –

LOVING NURTURING OF THE VINEYARD WITH THE EXPECTATION OF GOOD FRUIT

A. (:1) Prime Location

“My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.”

Real estate – it is all about Location, Location, Location
Canaan = Promised Land

Keil and Delitzsch: The vineyard was situated upon a *keren* (**Preceptaustin:** *qeren* = Hebrew for horn, that which projects) i.e., upon a prominent mountain peak projecting like a horn, and therefore open to the sun on all sides...This mountain horn was *ben-shemen* (**Preceptaustin:** "*son of fertility*" figuratively = richness, plenty, lavish), a child of fatness: the fatness was innate, it belonged to it by nature (*shemen* is used, as in Isa 28:1, to denote the fertility of a nutritive loamy soil). And the owner of the vineyard spared no attention or trouble.

Not a snow-capped horn like Matterhorn Mountains – but a projection

B. (:2a) Careful Cultivation

1. Preparation of the Soil

“And He dug it all around,”

Laborious work is involved; expenditure of a lot of tedious effort; preparation of the soil; possibly some type of trenches for irrigation system

2. Removal of Impediments

“removed its stones,”

Oswalt: These stones would be piled about the perimeter of the field as a wall to keep out marauding animals. Those left over from the wall could be used later to build a watchtower

Study book of Joshua – look at the all of the enemy nations which the Lord conquered; He wanted the Israelites to completely drive out the pagan idolaters so that they could fully enjoy the Land of Promise; God was giving them the victory; they just needed the faith to take it

Young: The Arabs have a proverb to the effect that when God created the world an angel flew over it carrying a bag of stones under each arm. As he flew over Palestine, one bag broke so that half of all the stones in the world are in Palestine.

3. Planting the Best Vine

“And planted it with the choicest vine.”

Heb. word for the best species; the best kind

Jer. 2:21 *Yet I planted you a choice vine, a completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before Me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?*

C. (:2b) Strong Protection

“And He built a tower in the middle of it,”

Where God can keep watch to protect it

D. (:2c) Great Expectations

“And hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes,”

Two year waiting process before you realize the fruit of all your hard work

Van Parunak: The winepress is a basin hewn from the limestone bedrock in which the grapes are trampled to extract the juice. So confident is he in the harvest that he expects to be able to make his own wine, rather than simply selling his grapes to others. At Gibeon, the winepress is close to the storage caves for the wine. The amorous couple now has a lovely country garden, with the seclusion of a tower, and promise of plenty of wine. The listeners are by now fully engaged.

Young: In the choosing of Israel God did a gracious thing. Upon this people He showered abundant blessings, such as the law and the prophets. To it He clearly made known His ways. . . . What was the result of such a choice?

Privileges of the Jews detailed: **Rom. 9:4-5** *“who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”*

E. (:2d) Inexplicable Results

“But it produced only worthless ones.”

Tree is known by its fruit

Motyer: (here and vs. 4) *bad fruit* means stink fruit

Ex. 7:18 – objects that have a foul odor; evil deeds are so rotten they have a foul smell

“The fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul,”

Worthless grapes will be further defined in the 6 woes he proclaims – detailing their specific sins and failures

When the vine owner returns to inspect your fruit, what will He find? Looking for specific types of fruit:

1) Internal Fruit = those character traits that demonstrate conformity to Jesus Christ = the fruit of the Holy Spirit – **Gal. 5:22** *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”* – not demonstrated by the Israelites; will the Lord find the deeds of the flesh instead? A preoccupation with selfish pursuits; the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life??

2) External Fruit = good works and evangelism to save lost souls as well as edification of the body of Christ – How are we investing our time and our talents and our resources for eternity??

II. (:3-4) **JUDGMENT INVITED -- GOD INVITES EVALUATION OF HIS PERFORMANCE AND HIS EXPECTATIONS -- YOU MAKE THE CALL**

A. (:3-4a) **God Invites Evaluation of His Performance – What More Could He Have Done?**

“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?”

change in speaker from the prophet to the owner of the Vineyard

Cf. Matt. 21 What should the landowner do?

God invites us to check out His Track Record; He will be found to have been Faithful and True Specifically makes it clear that he is addressing the southern kingdom

Van Parunak: Like Nathan's parable to David (2 Sam 12), this one does not immediately point to the people's sin, but starts as a curious story to which anyone might want to pay attention, and seduces the people into proclaiming judgment on their own sin. An important key to this strategy is the threefold repetition of the Hebrew particle נא , which marks a statement or request as polite or respectful. It indicates that the speaker respects the higher status of the one who is addressed. The particle appears at v. 1 "now," v. 3 "I pray you," and v. 5 "now, go to." This deferential attitude captures the people's attention, and makes the impact of the accusation, when finally it falls in v. 7, even more striking.

Other Scriptural examples where *God Defuses the Blame Game*:

Gen. 18:25 – complaint of Abraham upon finding out the impending judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah: *"Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"*

Job 40:1-2 – complaint of Job about the severity of his undeserved trials – *"Then the Lord said to Job, 'Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.' Then Job answered the Lord and said, 'Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You?'"*

Is. 45:9-11 *"Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker – an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands?'"*

Rom. 2:1 *"Therefore you have not excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."*
The very conscience which allows you to judge others should cause you to look inward and acknowledge your own guilt before a holy God

Rom. 3:19 *"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God"*
Plenty of guilt to go around

Rom. 9:14-29 *"What shall we say then? [in light of God's sovereign elective choice demonstrated in the distinction between Jacob and Esau – determined before they were even born] There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! . . . You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?' On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?"*

B. (:4b) God Invites Evaluation of His Expectations – Is He Wrong to Expect Good Fruit?

“Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?”

God asks rhetorical questions – not because He needs answers, but He wants to wake up His people to realize their sinful condition; effect is to shut the mouths of men who have no response or comeback

What more could God have done to produce good fruit in our lives? Especially an indictment of those from Christian homes – born into such privilege – Remember: greater light and greater privilege brings greater accountability:

- **John 3:16** – what more could God the Father and God the Son give in their love for us?
- **Ephes. 1:3** *“blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”* – fairly comprehensive provision
- **2 Pet. 1:3-4** *“seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”*
- Way of escape from any temptation – **1 Cor. 10:13**
- Privilege of Answered Prayer
- Sufficiency of Jesus Christ – book of Colossians

Application: Parents experience frustration when they have nurtured children and tried to bring them up to follow the Lord, but they rebel and act the fool

Difference: every parent must admit that there is more that they could have done to be a more faithful parent; yet there is consolation from this story that even perfect parenting cannot always ensure a godly product

III. (:5-6) JUDGMENT PRONOUNCED -- GOD PRONOUNCES JUDGMENT UPON THE GUILTY VINEYARD

A. Exercising Right of Ownership

“So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard:”

We are so quick to try to tell God what He should be doing; what He is doing wrong; why our lot in life is so harsh and unfair

He is the Creator; we are the creatures

He is the Potter; we are the clay

It is His vineyard!

B. Exposing it to Complete Neglect (in contrast to Careful Cultivation)

1. Exposing it to Devastation

- a. No more hedge of protection

“I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed;”

Van Parunak: The hedge consists of the briars that he piles on top of the stone wall, to keep small animals from eating the grapes.

b. No more wall of protection

“I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.”

Probably parallel statement rather than referring to a double wall??

Or the wall constructed by piled up stones that would offer protection against animals

c. Complete Devastation

“And I will lay it waste;”

Cf. **Matt. 21:33ff** – Lord used same imagery of the vineyard = common symbol for the Jewish nation; Jesus was clearly referring back to this passage in Is. 5 – but has a different theme in mind

2. Exposing it to Powerful Enemies

“It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up.”

Cf. **Gen. 3:18** where these environmental obstacles are part of the curse on man’s labor associated with the Fall

Just leave sinners to their own devices without any protection and nurturing and the outcome is inevitable

3. Exposing it to Denial of Nourishment

“I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.”

Clear indication that we are not dealing here with just a human owner of an ordinary vineyard

Comparison to **Ps. 80:8-16**

Hos. 5:15 *“I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”*

IV. (:7) JUDICIAL INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE

A. Identification of the Vineyard

“For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,”

Hard to imagine that the people could have been so thick headed that they needed this simplistic explanation; but the prophet leaves nothing to their own interpretation or twisted thinking; he drives home the singular point – which is characteristic of the parable motif

B. Identification of the Choice Plant

“And the men of Judah His delightful plant.”

C. Inexplicable Lack of Justice and Righteousness

1. Inexplicable Lack of Justice (1:23; 3:14)

“Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;”

Motyer: *Justice* is the righting of wrongs while *bloodshed* is the inflicting of wrongs. *Righteousness* is right living and right relationships while to *cry* (scream) indicates wrong relationships and the anguish of the oppressed.

PreceptAustin: **Justice** {*mishpat*} ...**bloodshed** {*mispach*} ...**righteousness** {*tsedaqah*} ...**cry** {*tsa'aqah*} - The double play on words emphasizes the point that Jehovah's judgment would bring the opposite of what Israel and Judah were expecting. Why? Because they had not met Jehovah's expectations - He expected justice but they committed bloodshed. He expected righteousness but in their oppression by their enemies they cried for help. This clear prophetic warning was not heeded but ignored.

2. Inexplicable Lack of Righteousness

“For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.”

MacArthur: The English words “equity . . . iniquity . . . right . . . riot” illustrate the effective play on words in the underlying Heb. behind v. 7.

Young: The assonance would seem to point to the fact that the worthless grapes bore at least an outward resemblance to the good ones. In appearance at least the nation seemed to be the people of God. . . . May we who belong to the church ever examine our hearts that there be no such hypocrisy within us, but rather may our lives bring forth the fruits of that righteousness which comes from God alone!

CONCLUSION:

In 1 John, one of the key characteristics of a genuine believer is that he should take ownership of his own sin.

John 15 – Jesus presents Himself as the True Vine – contrasts with false vine of Israel

* * * * *

Ezekiel 15 – Jerusalem described as a useless vine that bears no fruit and ends up just being burned

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What kind of fruit is my life producing?
- 2) Where do I tend to question God’s fairness in my life and blame God for my situation?
- 3) How has God expended great effort and care in cultivating my life and granting me so many privileges so that the expectation would be that good fruit would result?
- 4) What types of excuses do men hide behind to try to escape their accountability before God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: Comparing Psalm 80:8-16 with Isaiah 5:1-6, 24

	Psalm 80:8-16	Isaiah 5:1-6 , 24
Attribution	<i>Psalm of Asaph. ... To the chief Musician upon Gittith [variant of githth 'winepresses']</i>	1 Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:
Preparation by removing obstacles	8b thou hast cast out the heathen , ... 9a Thou preparest room before it,	2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof,
Planting an imported vine	8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt : ... and planted it.	and planted it with the choicest vine [soreg, Jud 16:4]
Anticipation of the harvest		and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes,
Growth of the vine	9b and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. 10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. 11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.	
Poor quality of the fruit		and it brought forth wild grapes. 3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?
Removal of protection	12 Why hast thou <i>then</i> broken down her hedges ,	5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, ... and break down the wall thereof, ...
Resulting devastation	so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? 13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.	... and it shall be eaten up ; ... and it shall be trodden down :
Direct destruction		6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.
Prayer for restoration	14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; 15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch <i>that</i> thou madest strong for thyself.	
Destruction by fire	16 <i>It is</i> burned with fire , <i>it is</i> cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.	24 Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff , so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust:

H. A. Ironside: Chapter five completes the prophet's address. In the parable of the vineyard, God rehearses His ways with Israel and emphasizes their lack of response to His love and patience. This "Song of the Vineyard" links intimately with our Lord's parable concerning the same

subject (Mt 21:33ff), which He put before the scribes and Pharisees shortly before His arrest and crucifixion... This vineyard represents Israel as God viewed them at the beginning of their Palestinian history. Having brought them out of Egypt, He planted them in the land of promise, and there cared for and protected them from the ravages of their enemies.

Charles Spurgeon: *You drove out the nations and planted it* [Ps. 80]- Seven nations were dug out to make space for the vine of the Lord (cp Dt 4:37, 38, 7:1); the old trees, which long had engrossed the soil, were torn up root and branch; oaks of Bashan, and palm trees of Jericho were displaced for the chosen vine (cp Dt 7:6, 14:2). It was securely placed in its appointed position with divine prudence and wisdom. Small in appearance, very dependent, exceedingly weak, and apt to trail on the ground, yet the vine of Israel was chosen of the Lord, because he knew that by incessant care, and abounding skill, he could make of it a goodly fruit bearing plant. . .

I have been thinking of the advantages of my own position towards the Lord, and lamenting with great shamefacedness that I am not bringing forth such fruit to him as my position demands. Considering our privileges, advantages, and opportunities, I fear that many of us have need to feel great searchings of the heart.

Brian Borgman: Parable of the Vineyard

Reminds us of parable Jesus told in NT; Isaiah changes tactics in his preaching; aware that his congregation is jaded and sermon-proof (putting up defenses); becomes a ballad singer; the starts off beautifully but then grossly disappoints the listeners – just like the vineyard; assonance = the vowels are in a rhyming pattern intermixed with consonants; you can hear the rhyme in the Hebrew;

(:1) Introduction to the Song – Isaiah speaking; addresses God as his well-beloved = term of endearment and friendship; paradoxical since God is this majestic, holy, transcendent being;

(:2a) Hard Work of the Beloved – irrigated it; intensive stem – dug very carefully in his preparation; he de-stoned it; many stones in Palestine; explains why stoning was method of execution; arduous task to remove all the stones; planted a singular vine – when you think of a vineyard you usually think of vines all over the place; Jer. 2:21; Tower served two purposes: protection (you could see enemies from afar off); permanent habitation in contrast to temporary hut or tent; you only dig out a winepress when you are expecting a great harvest with good grapes;

(:2b) Disappointment -- Eagerly waited – intensive stem; *it only made stinking things*; putrid, rotten; How can a Sovereign God get His hopes up and get disappointed?

(:3-4) changes tone; new speaker; Jehovah speaking directly Himself; cf. Nathan coming to David (2 Sam. 12) – stirring up David to say let's execute that guy on the spot; luring the guilty in to pronounce their own judgment; heightens the drama; Didn't I do everything necessary for a good harvest? **Matthew Henry:** "God expects vineyard fruit from those who enjoy vineyard privileges."

(:5-6) double protection; hedge made of wild bushes with thorns and briars; I will bring it to nothing; overrun with briars and thistles; only God can command the weather; don't despise the kindness of God; becomes utterly desolate under the judgment of God

(:7) Explicit summary statement and explanation – play on words; they sound so similar; change in one letter takes it from justice to bloodshed; sins of Sodom and Gomorrah cried out – same word; distressful cry of nature crying out against the sins of Israel;

People turned around in scornful rejection of the God who had provided everything they needed to be fruitful and righteous; the nation was a failure – Assyrians, Babylonians, Roman judgment in 70 A.D. Should God have picked another nation? Same result; white washed sepulchers; we

have to be on guard against hypocrisy; are we producing the fruit of the Spirit or stinking things?

Theological issue regarding God's efficacious grace? Can man's disobedience thwart God's plan?

Observations:

1) Main point of parable – no parable walks on all fours – don't press all the points; trying to get across one point = God's common grace leaves us with no excuse; we are morally responsible for our failures and each aspect of grace heightens our guilt and responsibility before God; Unproductive vine will bear its own judgment; anybody living in Western civilization falls under condemnation along these lines; What more could God have done for us? Can't say "If only He would have . . ." We are such a blessed people; bible in our own language; bible believing church to attend; social structure with moral fabric; What more could God have done? Expectation was for better fruit; look at the foul, disgusting state that we are in! We are without excuse; that is one of the scary things about growing up in a Christian home; raised with vineyard privilege; we have not just general revelation but scripture

2) Strong words designed to arouse God's people to repentance – shake them up and awaken them; necessity of persevering in faith and good works; preach the certainty of judgment on the unrepentant; the elect believe in perseverance . . . everyone else believes in once saved always saved; give heed to the warnings of God;

3) Israel's failure paves the way for Christ's success – this vine failed miserably; John 15:1 (Carson's commentary); cf. Psalm 80:7-8; we must be rightly related to Jesus

Dr. John Whitcomb: Judgment and Yet Hope

Third introductory sermon in the book; Where did this prophet come from who spoke so brilliantly; his conversion will be dealt with in chapter 6; one of the most depressing chapters in the Bible; shows what Israel did in spite of God's great mercy and blessing; what a story in the book of Joshua telling of the removal of those enemy peoples; We can never say God failed me; didn't do enough for me; was not patient enough; did not reveal enough truth to us; Jer. 2:21; the rest of Chap. 5 is the aftermath of apostasy in Israel – their abandonment and denial of their God

Dr. Michael Barrett: God's judgment is never capricious; always deserved; a significant transition into the actual theme of judgment; great privileges and responsibilities that belonged to nation of Israel; with increased privilege come increased responsibility; a literary masterpiece; we should be impressed with Isaiah's skill and artistry, but don't miss the message;

I. The Imagery

(:1-2) Position and Privilege belonging to this vineyard – common imagery to describe people of God; "the horn of the sun of fatness;" speaks of prosperity; designed to produce the very best; great care and extreme labor and activity exerted by the owner; very steep slopes – not easy labor; hacking and hoeing by hand – tedious effort; Palestine proverbially a very rocky place; he unstoned it; no hindrances or obstacles or impediments to natural growth; old rabbinic superstition or tradition: explains the conditions of the land – when God was creating the world and using the angels in the process, there were leftover rocks and the angels were removing them and flying across the heavens with these great sacks of rocks and a hole developed and rocks spilled out into Palestine; tower for watchman to ensure its protection so no unwanted intrusions by animals or thieves; James: imagery of farmer who works hard at planting and then eagerly waits for the harvest;

(:3-4) You make the decision; here is the evidence; what would you do? What more could I

have done?

(:5-6) God declares what he will do; going to take away everything; if you want to be a wild plant, then we will make this conducive for the wild fruit to come; abandonment; the Lord withdrawing His hand of special attention and care; given the privilege the judgment became absolutely necessary

II. The Purpose of Judgment – discipline; chastisement; **Hos. 5:15** – Lord will withdraw Himself until they acknowledge their offense and seek My face; Hosea speaking more to the northern people and Isaiah to the southern people; designed to awaken them to their condition and bring them back to the Lord; God in His justice and holiness cannot ignore sin – whether on the part of the heathen nations or His covenant people; Judgment upon individuals, upon nations, etc.

Application: think of all the privileges that we have; what kind of fruit are we producing?

Oswalt: The parable of the vineyard (vv. 1-7) sets the stage for the rest of the chapter, which includes a discussion of six conditions (wild grapes) that exist in the people and are contrary to God's expectations for them (vv. 8-25), and an announcement of coming destruction (cf. vv. 5, 6) at the hand of the Gentile armies. It is a word which is devoid of hope, but that note has already been sounded in ch. 4. Here the need is to face the present and its relation to what lies immediately ahead.

Beall: The vine is often used as a symbol of Israel: note esp. Ps. 80:8-18 and Jer 2:21 ("*Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?*"); see also Isa 3:14; Jer 12:10; Ezek 15:6-8; Hos 10:1; Mark 12:1-9). . .

TEXT: Isaiah 5:8-23

TITLE: WOES DECLARED AGAINST SIX PERVERSIONS

BIG IDEA:

THE SOCIETY ON THE VERGE OF EXPERIENCING GOD'S SEVERE JUDGMENT REFLECTS SIX CONDEMNED PERVERSIONS – THE ROTTEN, STINKING FRUIT OF AN APOSTATE PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION:

Last week we saw in the Parable of the Vineyard in chapter 5 that God could in no way be blamed for the coming judgment on the people of Judah. What more could He have done? The reality was that the choice vine He planted and cultivated and protected produced rotten, stinking grapes.

The prophet goes on in our section today to deliver six stinging indictments against the specific sins of the people. These are perversions that are especially shocking since the guilty party is not some pagan nation but the chosen people of God. He introduces each of the descriptions of the nature of this rotten, stinking fruit with the attention-grabbing emotional declaration of “*Woe.*”

TWOT: An interjection, usually of lamentation. It occurs fifty times in the prophets and once elsewhere. Six usages refer to mourning for the dead (as 1Kings 13:30), and forty involve negative warnings or threats of God's physical chastisement.

This word usually appears in funeral or lament contexts related to death; or used by the prophets to anticipate coming doom – “*How horrible it will be*” – the opposite of the word “*Blessed*” that you see in the Beatitudes on the Sermon on the Mount. Judgment is coming; judgment is deserved; and judgment will be a devastating work of the Holy One of Israel.

Most of us are probably familiar with the biblical record of the famous 7 Deadly Sins. (The currently recognized version of the sins are usually given as **wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony**.) Here we have the less famous but overlapping and equally pervasive 6 Condemned Perversions. Just as the prophet is trying to get Judah's attention and motivate them to turn from their sinful ways, these six woes have very direct application and relevance to the current sin climate here in the United States. It should be sobering to us in our study today to make the connection to our own rotten, stinking fruit that issues from the same heart of rebellion and indifference to the requirements of a holy God. God is not mocked ... whatever a person or a nation sows, that they will also reap. Our apparent prosperity is only temporary; what is coming down the road apart from revival will not be pleasant.

THE SOCIETY ON THE VERGE OF EXPERIENCING GOD'S SEVERE JUDGMENT REFLECTS SIX CONDEMNED PERVERSIONS – THE ROTTEN, STINKING FRUIT OF AN APOSTATE PEOPLE

I. (:8-10) PERVERTERS OF POSSESSIONS -- GREEDY MATERIALISM AND EMPIRE BUILDING – COVETOUSNESS AND SELFISH AMBITION

A. Sin (and its Opposite) – Greedy Materialism vs Godly Contentment

“Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field,”

Lack of Contentment; Anxiety over future security; no faith in God’s provision of daily bread
Despicable taking advantage of the poor; lust of the eyes

Chrysostom: covetous men, if they could, would willingly take the sun from the poor

Oswalt: According to the Torah all the land belonged to God, and while he allowed families to possess parcels of that land, it was never theirs to dispose of as they wished. It had to be kept in the family. In the extreme event that keeping the land in the family was impossible, then it should be bought back as soon as possible. Failing that, it must automatically return to the heirs of the sellers in the Jubilee, or fiftieth year (Lev. 25:23-28; Ezek. 46:16-18). . . Isaiah accuses the landgrabbers of wanting to possess everything in sight until they could live by themselves in their own little world.

1 Kings 21:1-16 Ahab coveting Naboth’s vineyard and Jezebel plotting to acquire it

Amos 3:15 *“I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house; the houses of ivory will also perish and the great houses will come to an end”*

B. Unintended Consequence or Outcome -- Loneliness

“Until there is no more room, So that you have to live alone in the midst of the land!”

No neighbors or friends

Eccles. -- SOMETIMES THE MAN WHO HAS EVERYTHING HAS NOTHING

C. Divine Judgment – Desolation, Isolation, Decreased Productivity

“In my ears the LORD of hosts has sworn, ‘Surely, many houses shall become desolate, Even great and fine ones, without occupants. For ten acres of vineyard will yield only one bath of wine, And a homer of seed will yield but an ephah of grain.’”

Ten acres (yokes) = amount ten teams of oxen could plow in one day

Preceptaustin: in the California Napa Valley, one acre yields about 120 gallons of wine; so 10 acres would yield 1200 gallons (vs. the 6-12 gallons in one bath of wine)

Beall: would yield only an ephah (1/10 of a homer, or 3/5 of a bushel) of grain. A reverse tithe will take place!

Houses are intended to house occupants – not stand deserted

D. Parallel References --

- Parable of the Rich Fool -- Luke 12:13-21 (vs. Luke 12:22-34)

“Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions. . . So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Matt. 23:14 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’*

houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.” (cf. TV televangelists who make their pleas for money)

Young: The condemnation is not of the purchase of property as such, but of monopoly and the acquisition of what belongs to a poor owner... not content until they had obtained all the property which they could. . . Inasmuch as the land had been promised to the descendants of Abraham, each descendant should have had a place in which to reside. . . the owners must now live alone.

II. (:11-17) PERVERTERS OF PLEASURES – SENSUAL OVER INDULGENCE – HEDONISM – ADDICTED TO PLEASURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

A. Sin (and its Opposite) – Intoxicated by Strong Drink and Sensual Over Indulgence (vs. Self Control)

1. Intoxication

“Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink; Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them!”

Wrong Priorities

Drunkenness could be associated with all of these perversions; not the root problem; seeking satisfaction somewhere else other than in God; lust of the flesh; party animals; out clubbing day and night

Grogan: Most societies consider early morning drinking a mark of moral degeneracy; for the man who thinks first of drink when he wakes is in its grip, and he cannot pull his weight in the work of the day

Message of Ecclesiastes.: WHEN YOU LIVE FOR THE PLEASURES OF TODAY -- YOU ARE LEFT WITH A HANDFUL OF SMOKE -- FUN UNDER THE SUN = NONE WHEN LIFE IS DONE -- LIVING IT UP WILL ALWAYS LET YOU DOWN

Eccles. 2:1-2 *“I said to myself, ‘Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself.’ And behold, it too was futility. I said of laughter, ‘It is madness,’ and of pleasure, ‘What does it accomplish?’”*

Eccles 10:16-17 *“Woe to you, O land, whose king is a lad and whose princes feast in the morning. Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the appropriate time – for strength and not for drunkenness.”*

Amos 6:4-6

2. Sensual Over Indulgence

“And their banquets are accompanied by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine;”

Young: Isaiah is not condemning music as such. Music is one of God’s greatest gifts to man. What is condemned is the usage to which musical instruments are put at the drunken carousals,

so that the noise of these instruments, as it were, would drown out the voice of conscience.

B. Unintended Consequence or Outcome – Neglect of What Really Matters

*“But they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD,
Nor do they consider the work of His hands.”*

Van Parunak: The phrase “*work of the Lord*” emphasizes primarily his work in judgment. Compare **Ps 46:8** “*Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has wrought desolations in the earth.*”

Fat and Happy – don’t consider that they are really poor and naked

C. Divine Judgment –

1. Deprivation

a. Exile

“Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge;”

Preceptaustin: **Hosea 4:6** *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge* (experiential knowledge of the living God. To know God is to live in harmony with His will = obedience to His illuminated Word. Loss of the knowledge of God leaves a destructive vacuum in personal and national life). *Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*

b. Famine

“And their honorable men are famished;”

c. Thirst

“And their multitude is parched with thirst.”

Young: By means of a pagan manner of living the nation has profaned the holy and promised land. Consequently, the people will continue to live in a heathen manner in a foreign land. Eating and drinking had been made to serve their evil purposes; they would therefore face hunger and thirst. Living sensually like animals and without the use of their understanding, they were now to go into their punishment without an actual understanding of the true nature of what was taking place.

2. Devouring

a. Sheol’s Appetite

“Therefore Sheol has enlarged its throat and opened its mouth without measure;”

Grogan: The midnight revelers, their mouth open for more food and drink, will suddenly find that they have become the food of that hungriest of all monsters – death.

b. Feasting on Jerusalem

“And Jerusalem's splendor, her multitude, her din of revelry, and the jubilant within her, descend into it.”

3. Humiliation of Man / Exaltation of God

a. Humiliation of Man

*“So the common man will be humbled, and the man of importance abased,
The eyes of the proud also will be abased.”*

Motyer: The eyes are the organs of desire (Gn. 39:7; Ps. 123:2), referring back to the covetousness of verse 8 and the greed of verses 11-12. Judgment falls where it is merited.

Matt. 23:12 *“Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”*

God resists the proud

b. Exaltation of God

*But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment,
And the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness.*

Motyer: both justice and righteousness are the outshining of holiness

4. (:17) Replacement Theology – Animals and Foreigners

*“Then the lambs will graze as in their pasture,
And strangers will eat in the waste places of the wealthy.”*

Eccles. 6:2 *“a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires; yet God has not empowered him to eat from them, for a foreigner enjoys them. This is vanity and a severe affliction.”*

D. Parallel References --

2 Pet. 2:9-10 *“then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority”*

Matt. 23: 25-26 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.”*

III. (:18-19) PERVERTERS OF REVERENCE – NO FEAR OF GOD --

A. Sin (and its Opposite) – Blatant Defiance Against God

1. (:18) Flaunting Sin

*“Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood,
And sin as if with cart ropes;”*

Young: Iniquity is a severe taskmaster. No taskmaster of Egypt ever ill-treated the Israelites more severely than did their own iniquity. These cords of vanity could be broken only by the Lord. Man can weave these cords, but he cannot unweave them.

Van Parunak: In terms of **Num 15:27-31**, they are sinning presumptuously, not out of ignorance.

Oswalt: the prophet exposes the underlying cynicism which is responsible for the people's refusal to live in obedience to God's nature. They doubt that God really is active in the world and they imagine that they are better able to determine what is really right and wrong than he is. The result is a perversion where values are reversed. . . They are sinning with a "high hand" and not out of mistake or ignorance. They are pulling the iniquity to themselves with ropes. They have not fallen into it. They are consciously choosing evil and exerting concerted effort to make that choices.

2. (:19) Mocking God

"Who say, 'Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it;'"

"And let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near And come to pass, that we may know it!"

Why doesn't God do something? Taunting expression of irreverence; you prophecy of God's work of judgment – but I don't see it – where is it?? I will never believe what you are saying until I see it come to pass

Preceptaustin: Woe - Number three is directed to their defiant attitude and deep attachment to their iniquity and sin.

Archer: these backslidden people dragged along their idol of iniquity, challenging the Holy One of Israel as if he were powerless to intervene in human history and exercise his sovereignty.

Vine: However presumptuously they might glory in their ungodliness, it would bring the inevitable punishment. The description is sarcastic. Vaunting themselves in their evil in word and deed they failed all the time to apprehend the retribution it was bringing upon them.

B. Parallel References --

2 Pet. 3:3-4 *"Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.'"*

IV. (:20) PERVERTERS OF VALUES --

A. Sin (and its Opposite) –

1. Perverting Goodness

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;"

- spanking and properly disciplining your children labeled as physical abuse and outlawed
- marriage between people of the same sex praised and promoted – values training
- abortion and contraception supported by public funds – shouldn't a woman have a right over her own body to make choices that involve murdering her unborn child – Shocking – but this is what people want (a life of no accountability); shouldn't our teenagers have access to free contraceptives provided by public funds – they are going to engage in sex anyway (Abstinence is not viewed as an option) so let's help make it Safe Sex – eliminate all accountability
- legalizing drugs like marijuana – our campaign not so long ago was "Just say No to drugs";

soon it will be “Just say Yes so we can tax the products and use the revenue for bigger government”

2. Perverting Light

“Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;”

3. Perverting Sweetness

“Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!””

We have lost our moral compass – conscience is now out of whack; no more due north by which we can navigate; everything is turned upside down and is morally relativistic

Van Parunak: This kind of sophistry is common in academic analyses of Scripture, and is particularly common in writings of the so-called “Christian feminist” and “Christian gay” movements. It is a refusal to believe that Scripture means what it clearly says. Ultimately, it leads to the modern deconstructionist movement, which argues that language has no meaning. (In the process, of course, it invalidates all use of language, including itself.)

Preceptaustin: Reversing God's standards of right and wrong characterizes times of apostasy and precedes times of divine judgment. This phenomenon is increasingly characteristic of Christendom today. These verses paint a perfect picture of the "modern morality" with its glossing over of evil, and its re-dressing of wickedness to give it the appearance of righteousness. This insensitivity to moral decay is the sign of deepest corruption.

B. Parallel References --

2 Tim. 3:1-5 *“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.”*

Rom. 1:32 – *give hearty approval* to those who practice these things

John 3:19 *“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”*

Mark 3:22-29 – Pharisees attributed the miracles of Christ to Beelzebub

V. (:21) PERVERTERS OF WISDOM -- PRIDE IN SOPHISTICATION

A. Sin (and its Opposite) – Conceited

*“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
And clever in their own sight!”*

Pride of life – professors in academic world; those in positions of power who think they can make the rules and then even live above them; self righteous commentators in the media who love to expose the faults of others; comedians who poke fun at everything and anything

We are a people who are wise in our own eyes – we were not there at Creation ... but we expect

everyone to believe some preposterous explanation called Evolution that multiplies chance by time and comes up with fish growing wings and evolving into birds and monkeys growing into humans despite no evidence of any transitional links – you are branded as an ignoramus if you do not accept such human wisdom as the final, authoritative word on origins – no wonder that we are so foolish in rejecting God’s message regarding human destiny as well

Van Parunak: In using this phrase, Isaiah shows his knowledge of Proverbs. The expression “*wise in one's own eyes*” appears five times in Proverbs (3:7; 26:5, 12, 16; 28:11), and only there.

Prov. 3:7 “*Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.*”

B. Parallel References --

John 9:41 speaking to the Pharisees “*If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.*”

1 Cor. 3:18-21 “*Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, ‘He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness;’ and again, ‘The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.’ So then let no one boast in men.*”

VI. (:22-23) PERVERTERS OF JUSTICE --

A. Sin (and its Opposite) – Corrupted Power

1. Champions of Intoxication

*“Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine,
And valiant men in mixing strong drink;”*

Look at our TV commercials – We make heroes and champions out of the strong drinkers:

Wikipedia: “**The most interesting man in the world**” -- The advertisements feature a bearded, debonair gentleman roughly in his 70s (portrayed by actor Jonathan Goldsmith). with Frontline narrator Will Lyman conducting voiceovers. As Ottmar Liebert's "Barcelona Nights" plays in the background, the advertisements featured a montage of daring exploits involving "the most interesting man" when he was younger.

The precise settings are never revealed, but he performs feats such as: freeing an angry bear from a painful-looking bear trap; shooting a pool trick shot before an Indian audience (by shooting the cue ball out of the mouth of a man lying on the pool table); catching a marlin while cavorting in a Hemingway-esque scene with a beautiful, young woman; winning an arm-wrestling match in a South American setting; surfing the killer wave; and bench pressing two young East Asian women in a casino setting, each woman being seated in a chair. The voiceovers themselves are intended to be both humorous and outrageous ("if he were to punch you in the face, you would have to fight off the strong urge to thank him"; "he can speak French, in Russian"; "even his enemies list him as their emergency contact").

At the end of the advertisement, the interesting man says, "I don't always drink beer, but when I do, I prefer Dos Equis." Each commercial ends with a signature sign-off: "**Stay thirsty, my friends.**"

2. Champions of Injustice

*“Who justify the wicked for a bribe,
And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!”*

Prov. 17:15 *“He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.”*

Leaders cannot afford to have their judgment compromised by intoxication
Famous for all of the wrong reasons
How many politicians have we seen get in trouble for unethical behavior?

Motyer: So what is life like on the basis of unaided human wisdom? First, success is measured by the degree of self-satisfaction achieved and indulgence enjoyed. *Heroes* and *champions* is sarcastic use of terms of military honour

B. Parallel References --

James 5:5-6 *“You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.”*

CONCLUSION:

Isaiah in **Chap. 6** – Exclaims *“Woe is me!”*

Sees the holiness of God and is broken over his own sin so that he is not a self righteous prophet here; but only a sinner who has experienced forgiveness of sins and volunteers to bring the message of God’s saving grace to his fellow countrymen.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In what way is the situation in the United States parallel to that of Judah and in what ways is it different?
- 2) Compare and contrast the 7 Deadly Sins with the 6 Perversions condemned in this passage. What are the similarities and differences?
- 3) What references can you find from the book of Ecclesiastes and from Proverbs that relate to each of these six areas of perversion?
- 4) How can we avoid coming across as self righteous in warning others about God’s impending judgment against these perversions?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Jayson Toth: Six Woes on America

The trouble in this country is not who was elected President or the economy; the trouble is what the people want; they want the freedom to sin without accountability; want to live like Sodom and Gomorrah; the problem for Isaiah was not the king – but the people; Josiah got rid of many of the sins but the next generation went right back to their sinful ways; nation full of harlotry and murder and unfaithfulness to God; people want to have their own pockets lines; greedy and filthy; 6 indictments in the form of woes against the land of Judah; common sins in other civilizations because the heart of the people is the same; If we don't turn, God will bring down judgment

1. Riches, Materialism and Greed – making money at the expense of others; exploitation; cheating; taking advantage of others; dishonest and cruel and deceptive and greedy; love of money is the root of all evil; around the world America known for its materialistic lifestyle; as long as we have we don't have who doesn't have; not an indictment of capitalism; your prosperity will be brought to desolation; I will make you barren; you have neglected the Great Provider; are we so foolish as to think that the prosperity of America will continue on forever?

2. Drunkenness – parties and feasts and banquets – excuse to get drunk; how can I have a good time in my self indulgence – excess of any type of pleasure or drug; we don't care what God is doing; we just want the best fix of sin every day; living for the pleasures of sin; every sports game you have everyone drinking to excess around you; because of your sin you have disregarded God; taken your eyes off of God; Don't tell me I can't sin;

3. Doubters and Skeptics who Mock God – they sin so easily and regularly; they cart around their sin; they have the audacity to doubt and mock and provoke God; God is not coming in judgment; treating God as if He were a joke; We only believe what we can see; We are the master of our own fate; You had better make sure you are right – gambling with eternity; this nation was once filled with people who were fervent servants of Jesus Christ;

4. Reversal of Values – characterizes America; cf. abortion; murder is not only legal and acceptable but called good and anybody who says differently is mocked; cf. homosexuality – don't you dare call what God calls an abomination good; cf. legalization of marijuana – not really the issue – the point is trying to take sin and turn it around; switched from “Just say No” to legalizing it; what other sins will be overturned?? Call immorality normal; filthy entertainment; abstinence until marriage is mocked; Don't you dare have the Ten Commandments hanging up in the school = offensive; everything is backwards; can't have nativity scene but lewd advertisements are fine; now the Bible is being forced into the closet; we take the rainbow and make it the flag of Sodom and Gomorrah – look how we have turned things around! People now believe the Bible is bigoted and prejudiced; only acceptable mention of Jesus is as a curse word; our tolerance for sin is evil

5. The Proud – they were sure that they were OK and did not have any spiritual need; they don't think they deserve hell; not in trouble with God; too smart for their own good; proud people will never admit they are wrong;

6. Corrupted Power – they allow the wicked to go free for some form of reward or bribe; try to tell you how to raise your children; much of politics is about who is going to get the money; judgment corrupted by sin – in the home, in the church and in government

Conclusion: What is a Christian to do? Chapter 6 – Isaiah sees God in His holiness; includes himself in the indictment; we are all wicked; we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God; he is broken by sin; we should not have a judgmental spirit; we live in a land that is corrupt but we are also corrupt; go to the cross for forgiveness and cleansing; Isaiah volunteers to go and tell the people the message of the gospel; you will never receive grace if you don't see your sinfulness; the only hope for America is a turning from sin to God; calling sin sin is not being judgmental when it is attached to a message of grace

TEXT: Isaiah 5:24-30

TITLE: *THE WRATH OF GOD IS IMMINENT, INTENSE AND INESCAPABLE*

BIG IDEA:

STINKING FRUIT DESERVES DEVASTATING JUDGMENT THAT IS IMMINENT, INTENSE AND INESCAPABLE

INTRODUCTION:

This passage sweeps over us with its dark, gloomy waves of judgment. There is no glimmer of hope in this section. God demonstrates the consistency of His character – both in being gracious and forgiving to those who repent and in being just to judge unrepentant sinners. Remember how God revealed His name to Moses: **Exodus 34:6-7** *“Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished’”*

Summary:

- **Defense of God’s Faithful Character** – Parable of the Vineyard –
Don’t blame God for the stinking fruit
- **Detailing of the Wicked Perversions** -- 6 Condemning Indictments in the form of proclamation of 6 Woes
 - o 1. (:8-10) Perverters of Possessions
 - o 2. (:11-17) Perverters of Pleasures
 - o 3. (:18-19) Perverters of Reverence
 - o 4. (:20) Perverters of Values
 - o 5. (:21) Perverters of Wisdom
 - o 6. (:22-23) Perverters of Justice
- **Description of Devastating Judgment**

STINKING FRUIT DESERVES DEVASTATING JUDGMENT THAT IS IMMINENT, INTENSE AND INESCAPABLE

Number of different historical divine interventions in judgment in view: all future from Isaiah’s perspective

- Assyrian attack and resulting captivity – Northern Kingdom – 722 B.C.
- Babylonian attack and resulting captivity – Southern Kingdom – 586 B.C.
- Roman attack on Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- Judgments in the Great Tribulation Period – the Day of the Lord
- Final Wrath of God in casting the wicked into Hell

I. (:24) DEVoured BY DESERVED DESTRUCTION FROM THE LORD OF HOSTS, HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

A. Metaphor of Destruction – Tongue of Fire

*“Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble,
And dry grass collapses into the flame,”*

Vs. 24 and vs. 25 both introduced by *“Therefore”*

Acts 2:3 Holy Spirit comes upon the believers at Pentecost in the form of tongues of fire; Fire in Scripture often denotes the presence of God; **Ex. 3:2** *“The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed”* – Here all of the stubble and grass are consumed immediately and violently – with great rapidity and intensity

B. Totality of Destruction – From Root to Fruit

*“So their root will become like rot
and their blossom blow away as dust;”*

Brings to mind the contrast between the way of the righteous and way of the wicked in **Psalm 1** Two paths . . . Two Destinies *“The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.”*

Root was futile; no lasting strength; fruit was a mirage; no lasting glory

Van Parunak: The simile draws on the final clean-up after grain harvest. The goal of raising grain is the edible kernel, which is wrapped in an inedible sheath and grows on top of an inedible stem. When the plant is mature, two processes are needed to retrieve the kernels. Both generate waste.

First, the heads are cut off from the stem with a scythe. The stalks that remain in the ground are called “stubble.”

Then the heads are crushed under a sledge to separate the husks from the kernel. On a windy hillside, the material is tossed into the air. The heavier kernels fall to the ground, and the husks blow off to the side. What blows away is called “chaff.”

After the kernels are safely stored, the chaff is burned to get rid of it. Cf. **Matt. 3:12**, *“he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”* Sometimes the fields are burned as well, to prepare them for replanting. Both the chaff and the stubble are very dry, so this fire burns very quickly. Thus the simile refers to the deliberate, rapid destruction of useless portions of the crop by fire. . .

The point of the comparison with the fire is in the **rapidity** with which this judgment comes.

C. Justification for Destruction

*“For they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,
And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.”*

Grogan. The series of “woes” is over. The last of them was pronounced against evil judges; now the supreme Judge begins to declare sentence. The fire of God will burn them; the hand of God will smite them.

Key explanation for the severity of this judgment

how does a person *“despise”* God’s Word? By ignoring it, by devaluing it, by refusing to live according to it.

1 Sam. 15:23, 26 Samuel's rebuke of Saul -- "*Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.*"

Jer. 6:19 "*Because they have not listened to My words, and as for My law, they have rejected it also.*"

Why would someone ever foolishly reject **God's Word** and **God's Authority**?

- They prefer their sin; they imagine that God's path of holiness and righteousness is restrictive and boring and unfulfilling; they want to live life to the fullest; they think happiness can be found in sinful pleasures for the moment
- They want to control their own life; they love autonomy and independence rather than submission to God; they want to call the shots; think that they are wiser than God
- They imagine that their perceived freedom is better than serving God; not realizing that they are actually in bondage to sin and to Satan
- They are blinded by pride and selfishness and covetousness and the lies of Satan

II. (:25) DEVoured BY THE OUTSTRETCHED HAND OF THE ANGRY ALMIGHTY – USES NATURAL DISASTERS LIKE EARTHQUAKES

A. Imminent Judgment

"On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people,"

Bad things have been presented as going to happen – now the Lord presented as the direct agent

People in Isaiah's day had been mocking the prophecies of impending judgment – I don't see it; I don't believe it is coming – Isaiah warning them that they are under the blade of the guillotine and it is about to fall in swift and punishing justice

B. Intense Judgment

"And He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down, And the mountains quaked;"

Aside: How are we to respond to natural disasters like Katrina??

- We cannot presume to know the mind of God in terms of His intent in allowing any situation to occur – sad commentary on the unloving spirits of some professed Christians who spoke out publicly linking the tragedy that played out in New Orleans to some of the debauchery that could be found in any major city in the U.S.; remember when the disciples asked Jesus in **John 9:2** "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?*" Jesus rebuked them for such presumptuous reasoning: "*It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*"
- If we are involved in a severe trial we must look to the Lord ourselves and examine our hearts to see if it might be some form of discipline for sin; to see if some type of response of repentance is needed on our part; but don't force such counsel on others; remember the counselors of Job who tried to get him to take ownership for sin as the cause of his troubles ... but sin was not the cause; don't imagine that we are above God's judgment; take a balanced perspective
- We on the outside of the disaster must respond with hearts of compassion and mercy rather than judgment – remember that mercy triumphs over judgment

Is. 13:9 “*The day of the Lord is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it*”

People today are not quaking in their shoes at the prospect of standing before God in judgment; they don't believe in the intensity of God's wrath; instead the afterlife is portrayed of some pleasant, peaceful journey where there is a bright light at the end of the tunnel as you pass from this life to the next; almost a serene type of pastoral setting like that pictured in the 23rd psalm where you rest comfortably in the meadow beside the still waters after the difficult trials of this life

When God's wrath is displayed, the mountains quake – not a peaceful, serene picture but one of intensity and fear

C. Inescapable Judgment

*“and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets.
For all this His anger is not spent, But His hand is still stretched out.”*

Preceptaustin: God's *anger* burning is a frightening metaphor, one that is frequently repeated in Isaiah (Is 5:25, 13:9, 13, 30:27). . . *His hand is still stretched out* - This anthropomorphism describing God's hand is frequently used by Isaiah to picture of God's power and authority. (see Isa 5:25, 9:12, 17, 21, 10:21, 14:26, 27, 31:3)

Cf. actual earthquake in days of Uzziah – Amos 1:1; **Zech 14:5** “*you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.*”

MacArthur: Josephus connects it with Uzziah's sin of usurping the role of a priest (2 Chron 26:16-23). An earthquake of severe magnitude occurred ca. 755 B.C.

Van Parunak: This “*therefore*” answers the taunting request of v. 19. They asked, “Where is his promised judgment?” Isaiah responds, “You saw a part of it already, in the earthquake.”

Beall: Note the same refrain in v. 25 as in 9:11, 17, 21, and 10:4.

Anger is inexhaustible – plenty more there to dish out – “*His hand is still stretched out*”
Don't think that God's anger is over; more to come

III. (:26-30) DEVoured BY THE ENEMY NATION COMMANDED BY THE SOVEREIGN LORD OF HOSTS – USES PAGAN NATION

A. (:26) Imminent Judgment

“He will also lift up a standard to the distant nation, And will whistle for it from the ends of the earth; And behold, it will come with speed swiftly.”

Vs. 17 – reference to “*strangers will eat in the waste places of the wealthy*”

Hab. 1 – Perplexity of the prophet: The prophet wrestles with the appropriateness of God using the wicked Chaldeans(Babylonians) to judge His own people – Divine discipline can be packaged in strange ways; unrestrained cruelty; but ultimate accountability ... “*the just shall live*

by faith”

Perplexity regarding God’s ways and God’s timing should never shake our faith in God’s righteous judgments or faithfulness to His prophets

When God calls this foreign nation to come in judgment; they come immediately and swiftly; no delay

B. (:27-28) Intense Judgment

1. Fully prepared for battle

“No one in it is weary or stumbles, None slumbers or sleeps; Nor is the belt at its waist undone, Nor its sandal strap broken.”

girding up your loins so you would not trip

2. Fully equipped for battle

“Its arrows are sharp, and all its bows are bent;”

Always store a bow unstrung; when you are ready to use it you string it; locked and loaded

3. Fierce and swift in the execution

“The hoofs of its horses seem like flint, and its chariot wheels like a whirlwind.”

C. (:29-30) Inescapable Judgment

1. Image of the Roaring, Growling Lions – Catching and Dragging Off Their Prey

“Its roaring is like a lioness, and it roars like young lions; It growls as it seizes the prey, And carries it off with no one to deliver it. And it shall growl over it in that day”

loud roar of lion as it sets out on its hunt; contrasted with growling as it protects and eats its prey

2. Image of the Roaring Sea

“like the roaring of the sea.”

3. Image of the Dark Storm Clouds

“If one looks to the land, behold, there is darkness and distress; Even the light is darkened by its clouds.”

No hope of deliverance

Young: The preceding judgments had all been insufficient. God’s outstretched hand, the symbol of His power and strength, will still carry out His purposes, inflicting new judgments beyond those which had already been executed. . . Capable is the enemy and ready for attack. He is also fierce and bold, and one who will have success.

Oswalt: For Isaiah at that point, it was not so important to specify who the destroyers would be as it was to indicate the imminent, irresistible, and wholly-to-be-expected nature of what lay ahead.

Preceptaustin: The beastly aspect of the barbarian brutish nation is dramatically described. There is no one to deliver from such an overwhelming force. Israel is like a helpless prey before the powerful predator.

Van Parunak: They are “locked and loaded.” The arrows are sharpened, and the bowstrings have been placed on the bows to make them ready for action. (A bow is stored unstrung, so that it will not lose its tension.)

God could also use:

- Financial Disasters
- Health Disasters – Disease and Plague
- Internal Treachery

CONCLUSION: Application: Look at Final Judgment – both believers and unbelievers face ultimate accountability – for the believer, our worthless deeds will be burned up without reward, but for unbelievers their fate is one of condemnation and eternal suffering in hell

A. Imminent

James 5:9 “*the Judge is standing right at the door*”

Jonathan Edwards – July 8, 1741 – preached the most famous sermon in the history of America: “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” – taps into much of the same imagery Isaiah used in our passage:

“There are the black clouds of God’s wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor”

B. Intense

Rev. 20:14-15 “*Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*” Not just tongues of fire but lake of fire

Many evangelical scholars are backing away from the concept of eternal punishment in hell in a lake of fire; watering down the scriptural doctrine to advocate **annihilationism** (the wicked will cease to exist after death) – men like John Stott ... listen to the words of R.A. Torrey:

“Shallow views of sin and of God’s holiness, and of the glory of Jesus Christ and His claims upon us, lie at the bottom of weak theories of the doom of the impenitent. When we see sin in all its hideousness and enormity, the Holiness of God in all its perfection (cf. Isaiah 6), and the glory of Jesus Christ is all its infinity, nothing but a doctrine that those who persist in the choice of sin, who love darkness rather than light, and who persist in the rejection of the Son of God, shall **endure everlasting anguish**, will satisfy the demands of our own moral intuitions.”

Robert A. Peterson: A TRADITIONALIST RESPONSE TO JOHN STOTT'S ARGUMENTS FOR ANNIHILATIONISM:

I have weighed the argument that hell-fire signifies unbelievers’ extermination and found it wanting. Although some hell-fire passages could be interpreted in this way, they should not be.

This is proved by the fact that fire signifies the suffering of pain, not consumption . . .
http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/37/37-4/JETS_37-4_553-568_Peterson.pdf

C. Inescapable

Jude 15 the Lord will come “*to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way; and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.*” There will be no escape from the final wrath of God

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How many images of destruction and suffering can you find in this short passage?
- 2) How would you answer the claims of those who believe in annihilationism that the fire of hell speaks of extinction and destruction rather than eternal suffering?
- 3) In what ways do we reject or despise God’s Word and God’s Authority?
- 4) How are we to respond when natural disasters strike our home turf?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: The second short “*therefore*” section describes how punishment fits the crime. They invited the Lord to hasten (19) and now judgment will be swift as fire in stubble (24a). They made themselves the ready slaves of sin (18, 20) and now they will be like the dry grass which falls helplessly into the fire (24b). They claimed autonomy (21) and now their roots will be exposed as rotten (24c). They produced the fruit of unrighteousness (22-23) and now their blossom will vanish (24d). The external foe of fire (God’s wrath) and the internal foe of rottenness will leave no remainder.

Brian Borgman: Judgment for Moral and Spiritual Obligations Failed

The harvest because of the stink crop; sin is most irrational, illogical thing in universe; people are so brazen that they dare God to bring judgment; law of God not given to make us legalists but to lead us to holiness; morally autonomous people want nothing to do with God’s revelation; moral autonomy rejects God’s law; intellectual autonomy rejects God’s Word; outstretched hand is sign of God’s judgment; God’s anger is so intense that even creation feels it; so tumultuous; consider whose wrath is displayed here; What is a worm of the dust before the wrath of such a being? God wants us to feel the weight of the truth that His wrath is awesome and inexhaustible. He acts in time and space; He will act in eternity; God is sovereign over the nations; Ezek 38:4; Hab. 1 – God promises to raise up the Chaldeans = fierce and violent and evil; prophet wrestles with this paradox: How can you use a pagan nation to judge your people; God responds with series of Woe oracles; Rev. 17:17; there is a beauty to the fierceness of the lioness; cruel and wicked nation is a mighty weapon in the hand of God; ancient Israel thought they were safe and invincible; we had better watch our arrogance; God may want to teach this godless nation a lesson; this is a very small taste of the wrath to come; the atrocities of Assyria and Babylon and Rome are nothing compared to the day of wrath; there is only one place of safety = in the person

and work of the Lord Jesus Christ

Trevor Kirkland: Why Men and Women Sin

How could these people so singularly privileged have practiced such sins? What led them to sin? Used word *Torah* – the commandments of God; the law was the spoken word of God; Ps.

119:172; 147:15 word and commandments used in parallel synonymous fashion; that which is rejected, despised, loathed; Why would they reject the law of God? Such contempt for the law of God;

I. They Reject the Law of God Because They Hate the Law

1. They hate the law of God because they fail to understand it (Martin Lloyd Jones) – they felt the law of God was against them (against their happiness) so they were against it; people desire to find happiness; search for the good life; Eccles – record of a man in search of happiness; he tries all kinds of things to find the good life; he discovered all is vanity;

2. They hate the law because they consider it opposed to their liberty; to be free they must cast off the law; they don't want to be restricted by their parents or by authorities; want to do as they please; they change one authority over them for another; if God is not ruling their life than Satan is; Satan is a vicious, hateful tyrant; he doesn't care about you; wants everyone damned; back in the Garden the emphasis Satan made was on the restriction to the exclusion of liberty while God's initial command emphasized maximum freedom; becoming a slave to sin; in God's law there is maximum freedom to serve Him

3. They hate the law because they consider it is opposed to love; Modern man sees law and love as opposites; modern man says all you need is love; what is love for one is betrayal for another; Rom. 13:10 "*love worketh no ill to his neighbor*;" love without the law is tragedy; we need law to define, direct and govern love; otherwise you have anarchy; homosexual agenda demands a revolting type of love that is against God's law

II. They Reject the Law of God Because They Despise the God Who Gives It

1. They didn't want a higher authority than themselves – the Lord of Hosts; they want license without accountability; Ex. 5:2; Job 21:15 "*What is the Almighty that we should serve Him?*" = voice of anarchy; Ps. 12:3-4; Eve wanted her experience to tell her what is right and wrong; she cast off the authority of God; Who rules your life?

2. They dislike the whole manner of holiness – the Holy One of Israel – don't want to be confronted with their sin and guilt; *without holiness no man shall see God*;

Application:

1. There can be no absolute morality without God's law – many philosophers have tried to establish such a morality; utilitarianism of Hitler; Victorians understood this issue; without God's law you have chaos; who will decide morality?

2. Beware of so-called clever devices that undermine the place of the law – cf. Joel Osteen and other popular writers – the devil uses the law and that gets us depressed so disregard the law; Rom. 13:9

3. The biblical message for sinners is simple = God judges Sinners; that's what the cross tells us; take away the wrath of God and Isaiah 5 makes no sense

TEXT: Isaiah 6:1-7

TITLE: ISAIAH'S CALL TO MINISTRY – OVERWHELMED BY FORGIVENESS FROM A HOLY GOD --

BIG IDEA:

THE CALL TO MINISTRY DERIVES FROM APPRECIATION FOR FORGIVENESS OF SINS IN LIGHT OF THE GREAT GULF BETWEEN GOD'S HOLINESS AND OUR GUILT

INTRODUCTION:

What is your motivation for serving God? When you get up in the morning, what inspires you to ask the Lord to use you to accomplish His purposes and to further His glory? Maybe those are not even your priorities. We are going to gain some insight today into Isaiah's motivation as a spokesman for God. Why was Isaiah eager to bring a message of judgment that would prove so unpopular? Why make the commitment and the sacrifice?

Review: It is interesting that this account of Isaiah's calling to his prophetic ministry did not occur back in chapter 1. Instead the prophet chose to immerse us in the depths of the desperate situation of the apostate people of God for five chapters. Just a quick reminder of where we have been these past weeks. The first 5 chapters serve as the introduction to the book and are broken into 3 main sections:

- Chap. 1 -- **DESPITE SPIRITUAL HARLOTRY, PURIFIED JERUSALEM PROMISED A FUTURE OF JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS**
- Chap. 2-4 – Bracketed with those opening and closing glimpses of the exalted role of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom, you have the harsh reality of the sin and apostasy of God's people which are deserving of judgment
IN THE DAY OF RECKONING, SELF-ABSORBED ISRAEL WILL BE ABASED AND QUAKING BEFORE THE MAJESTIC PRESENCE OF THE EXALTED LORD / REJECTION OF GOD LEADS TO A COLLAPSE OF ANY SOCIETY
- Chap. 5 – Parable of the Vineyard – God cannot be blamed but the guilt falls squarely on the shoulders of God's faithless people – **WOES DECLARED AGAINST SIX PERVERTIONS / STINKING FRUIT DESERVES DEVASTATING JUDGMENT THAT IS IMMINENT, INTENSE AND INESCAPABLE**

How can a holy God cleanse guilty sinners so that they are useful vessels in His service? How can Israel end up functioning in the Millennial Kingdom as a light to the Gentile nations?

Two parts to chapter 6 – **a vision and a message;** forms a hinge between the first 5 chapters of introduction and then chapters 7-12 that will pick up the theme of Isaiah's prophetic message and develop it further. This is the perfect spot to be introduced to what motivated Isaiah in his service for God.

This is one of the most famous passages in the book; one has to feel inadequate trying to cover it ... we stand on the shoulders of so many men of God who have attempted to unfold its meaning. I think of **R. C. Sproul** – his video series on The Holiness of God (snippets on YouTube) –

probably one of the most listened to series from Ligonier Ministries. I have appreciated the messages of **Brian Borgman** (a little less famous) captured on sermonaudio.com ... but at the end of the day we all confess our limitations in trying to plumb the depths of understanding the person of our God. May the Holy Spirit bless our feeble efforts this morning. May we come away as Isaiah did from this confrontation with a Holy God with a sense of being **overwhelmed** and yet **thankful** and **motivated**

THE CALL TO MINISTRY DERIVES FROM APPRECIATION FOR FORGIVENESS OF SINS IN LIGHT OF THE GREAT GULF BETWEEN GOD'S HOLINESS AND OUR GUILT

Isaiah finds himself Overwhelmed on 3 different levels:

I. (:1-4) OVERWHELMED WITH A VISION OF THE EMPHASIZED HOLINESS OF THE MAJESTIC GOD

A. (1) The Vision Focuses on the Sovereign Lord as the Exalted Priest King

“In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.”

In contrast to Israel's shame which was spelled out in great detail in chap. 5; here we have a vision of the Lord's glory

1. Significance of King Uzziah – prosperous reign; presumptuous desire at the end after 52 years of reigning to usurp the **role of the priest** – **2 Chron. 26:16-23** (need a lot of historical OT background to understand these major prophets); died around 740 B.C.; humbled by his leprosy; time of uncertainty for the people – especially if they had been putting their trust in their earthly leader who was respected and revered; Isaiah possibly a nephew of the king

Young: according to tradition, the great city on the Tiber arose about this time. From now on Judah declined more and more, and Rome increased.

Heading away from the emphasis on God's program with Israel to the times of the Gentiles

2. Identity of the Lord here – word used adonai refers to His **sovereign** reign; absolute lordship; His kingly rule; Uzziah might be dead, but the ultimate King is still alive and in charge over all; preincarnate Christ – **John 12:41** *“These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory; and he spoke of Him.”*

Presents a bit of a problem for us in light of verses such as:

John 1:18 *“No one has seen God at any time”*

1 Tim. 6:15-16 *“He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see.”*

No man can see the Lord and live; in fact God is a Spirit in His essential being and cannot be fully seen

Fish: [quoted by Preceptaustin.org] -- It is obvious that the phrase “*to see God*” is used in two different senses. Man cannot see God in His essence. Man can only see God as He has revealed Himself. Any time a person sees God, it is an indication that God has adapted Himself to the limited capacity of the creature. We do not know God as He really is. We only know God as He has revealed Himself. Our knowledge of God is never exhaustive and perfect, but it is nevertheless true. It is not exhaustive because no one can see God and live. It is true because God has accommodated Himself to the weakness of man so that there was a sense in which Isaiah was able to “see” God.

Oswalt: the Hebrews normally believed that to see God was to die (Gen. 32:30; Exod. 19:21; 20:19; 33:20; Deut. 18:16; Judg. 13:22)

3. Setting: Throne in the Temple/Palace – surprising picture – seat of authority and power -- seems to go beyond what one would expect in the earthly building in Jerusalem – vision transports Isaiah to see the Lord in His heavenly temple (Rev. 4:1-6; 5:1-7; 11:19; 15:5-8); it is only in the temple where the Lord meets with His people on the basis of sacrifice

Complexity in having the Messiah fill both roles of **King and Priest** (and Judge) – in contrast to Uzziah trying to presumptuously usurp that combined role

- Royal line as descendant of seed of David from the tribe of Judah – and yet only by the miraculous virgin birth (chap. 7) could Jesus avoid the curse pronounced against the line of Jeconiah (Jehoiachin / Coniah = short form of the same king) by **Jeremiah 22:30**; only reigned for 3 months – last king of Judah before the Exile; only 18 years old; taken into captivity; pronounced childless in terms of having a descendant to sit on the throne of David

MacArthur: How could Jesus then be the Messiah when His father was under this curse? It was because Joseph was not involved in the blood line of Jesus since He was virgin born. Jesus’ blood right to the throne of David came through Mary from Nathan, Solomon’s brother, not Solomon (Jeconiah’s line) thus bypassing this curse

- the priestly line after the order of Melchizedek – separate from descending from the tribe of Levi;

Ps. 110:1, 4 combines both roles of king and priest – Very complex fulfillment by God

4. Theme of Exaltation – *lofty and exalted* –

Is. 52:13 used of the **Servant of the Lord** -- “*He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted*”

Is. 57:15 “*For thus says the high and exalted one who lives forever, whose name is Holy*” – this is regal language -- **Borgman**
Futile for man to exalt himself

5. Impressive Garments – “*train of His robe*” – more impressive than wedding garments

Vine: the hem or fringe of His robe, as in Exod. 28:33, 34. His garment consists of light (Ps. 104) and fills the Heavenly Temple, just as the cloud filled the Tabernacle (Exod. 40:35).

Maybe Isaiah finds himself lying prostrate and his best view is of the train of His robe

The more impressive the garments ... the more impressive the person in Near Eastern monarchies

B. (:2) The Vision Unveils the Hidden Ministry of the Seraphim Who Praise and Serve the Lord

“Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.”

We don't give enough attention to the doctrine of angels in the Scriptures; we tend to think of them in one homogenous mass – just distinguishing the good angels from those who fell; but there are many orders in the hierarchy of the functioning of angels; many different types of ministries and administrations – all taking place behind the scenes –

Angels Are For Real:

- ANGELS APPRECIATE AUTHORITY
- ANGELS MINISTER TO THE DESPERATE NEEDS OF SAINTS
- ANGELS ARE VERY REAL AND VERY ACTIVE -- EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE TOUGH TO IDENTIFY
- ANGELS SPECIALIZE IN WORSHIP AND JUDGMENT

Majestic beings created by God to perform His will and glorify Him

Col. 1:15-16 *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him.”*

A lot going on in the invisible realm: good angels as well as fallen

- some angels mentioned by name – **Gabriel** – chief messenger angel
- Archangel – **Michael** (Jude 9)
- Cherubim
- Guardian angels
- Here we have the *Seraphim* – burning ones, fiery ones – cf. similarity to the 4 living creatures of **Rev. 4:6-8** *“each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within”*; but similarity does not mean identity; not necessarily a class to themselves?? A descriptive label

Dr. Whitcomb points out that 2/3 of their wings function in humility and worship while only 1/3 are used for service – might be a good ratio for us to consider

Verbs are in the imperfect tense = ongoing continual activity on the part of the Seraphim; Cover the face so as not to look on His glory; cover the feet in humility; Emphasis on their function in praise and service

Motley: In covering their feet they disavowed any intention to choose their own path; their intent was to go only as the Lord commanded.

Oswalt: *“Feet”* is sometimes used in ancient Near Eastern literature as a euphemism for genitalia, and it is possible that such a meaning is intended here

C. (:3) The Vision Emphasizes the Pervasive Holiness and Glory of the Lord

“And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.’”

Communication is between the Seraphim – cannot stop talking about the glories and the moral perfection of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Vine: This suggests that their utterances were antiphonal, though not in song. There is no record in Scripture of angels singing.

We have various ways in which we show emphasis – for the Hebrews, they liked to use **verbal repetition** (R.C. Sproul, Borgman)

Why don't they sing “Love, Love, Love”? repetition brings out emphasis; Is. 26:3 “peace, peace” = “perfect peace”; 2 Kings “gold gold” = “pure gold”; Jesus speaking with emphasis: (Amen, Amen) “Truly, truly I say to you;” but threefold repetition here for a **super superlative** that is invented here;

Beall: The message given in v. 3, “*Holy, holy, holy,*” probably does not refer to the Trinity; rather, it is the strongest form of the superlative: God is the holiest of all. Note Isaiah's characteristic name for God, “*the holy one of Israel.*” Holiness is **what made God distinct**. Similarly, Israel was to be holy (Lev 19:1). God's glory fills the earth (not just the temple).

Oswalt states, “where God's glory is manifested, there is judgment for sin, for the two cannot exist side by side” (p. 181).

Borgman: 2 aspects to holiness of God:

- First aspect: **transcendence** (separate) = God is other than us; a gap that exists between us and God of infinite proportions; **Ps. 50:21** “*You thought that I was just like you*”; man made in the image of God – but only certain communicable attributes (you know what a communicable disease is); attribute of love; we have the capability to show love; but there are a whole other set of incommunicable attributes that belong to God alone; over-familiarity today with the Holy One of Israel; we will never exhaust the divine being in our knowledge of Him even in eternity; explore the galaxies – look how big it is out there;
- second aspect: **Separateness from sin and evil and moral impurity**; No darkness in Him; we will not come to the light because we have a love affair with darkness

Doesn't seem to us like the whole earth is full of His glory (f. 6 Perversions) – **Ps. 19** – why is He even mindful of us? Earth is center of universe “*The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands*”

Constable: God's glory fills the earth in that the revelation of God's attributes fills the earth (cf. Ps. 19:1-3). God's glory refers to the outshining of His person

Preceptaustin.org: God's glory is essentially the profound, glowing, visible, confluent expression of the attributes of Deity which bears witness to a still more profound and incomprehensible reality of essence. In His character and essence, He is “Spirit,” and thus invisible to man (Jn 4:24), but He has made Himself known to man through revelation by His many names and titles, by His attributes, by His written Word, and finally by His living Word, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14).

D. (:4) The Vision Magnifies the Awesome Impact of the Presence of the Lord

“And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.”

Beall: the smoke is similar to the cloud of glory in the wilderness (Exod 13:21; 16:10; also Solomon's temple [1 Kings 8:10-13]).

Voice of the angel speaking -- not the voice of God; yet look at the impact on inanimate objects

John Martin: The thresholds (cf. Amos 9:1) were large foundation stones on which the doorposts stood. The shaking suggested the awesome presence and power of God.

Left with sense of being overwhelmed; in awe at who God is

II. (:5) OVERWHELMED WITH THE GUILT OF PERSONAL AND NATIONAL SIN

A. Ruined – Personal Application

“Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined!’”

Response of Isaiah to this confrontation with a God who is proclaimed as Holy, Holy, Holy
Remember the six woes proclaimed in chapter 5; slightly different word used here
Understood when woes of doom proclaimed against foreign pagan nations; surprising to see the prophet apply this to himself

Van Parunak: A better translation would be, *“I am destroyed.”* This is his high-level assessment of his destiny. We might say, “I’m toast.” This is the first reason for his despairing cry: he perceives that this unspeakably holy God must destroy him.

Oswalt: Such confrontation cannot help but produce despair. For the finite, the mortal, the incomplete, and the fallible to encounter the Infinite, the Eternal, the Self-consistent, and the Infallible is to know the futility and the hopelessness of one’s existence. . . Existentialism presumes there is no meaning in the universe and that we are thus meaningless. Isaiah knows, more horribly, that there is Meaning, but that he has no part in it.

Totally bankrupt; nothing to offer a Holy God

B. Guilty – Perception of Self and of Surroundings

*“Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I live among a people of unclean lips;”*

Pollution within and pollution without

Van Parunak: James (3:2) reminds us that our speech is the most sensitive indicator of our sinfulness.

James 3:6 *“the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell”*

Especially crippling when you are a prophet, the mouthpiece for God to communicate His will to His people

We have dirty mouths; washing out with soup won't cure the problem

Jesus taught that it is not what we put in our mouth that defiles us, it is what comes out of our mouth and reveals the wickedness of our heart – lies, slander, selfishness, blasphemy, complaining, hurting others

Do we criticize our fellow members of the body of Christ when we see their sinful lapses or do we identify with them and grieve for the lack of maturity and completeness in the overall body??

Vine: It is one thing to condemn the saints, it is quite another to take upon ourselves the confession of their sins as ours. It is that which causes the Holy Spirit to use us for real blessing amidst them.

C. Terrified – Perception of God

“For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

Our God is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Isa. 33:14; Heb. 12:29)

Isaiah not seen pleading for mercy; he considers his case hopeless

Contrast the reaction of Isaiah to contemporary evangelicalism where we have such a **familiarity with God**; such a **casual attitude** towards worship; yes we can dress comfortably – but in our heart we need a sense of the majesty of God; He is the King of kings; this passage should elevate our comprehension of both God's holiness and the sense of our own depravity

III. (:6-7) OVERWHELMED BY THE GRACIOUS PROVISION OF FORGIVENESS

A. (:6) Forgiveness Derives from the Altar of Sacrifice and Propitiation

“Then one of the seraphim flew to me, with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken from the altar with tongs.”

What was Isaiah thinking as this strange creature flew towards him with a burning coal in his hand?

Probably a coal taken from:

- the altar of incense associated with the Day of Atonement (**Lev. 16:11-19**) – sacrifice along with incense; must understand this background

Van Parunak: If the parallel with the Day of Atonement is correct, the coal originated on the altar of burnt offering, where the bullock of the high priest's personal sin offering has already been slain, and where its blood will shortly be offered. Those coals in the censer generated the smoke, and now one of them is brought to Isaiah, making him a personal recipient of the sacrifice with which they are associated.

Motyer: It holds together the ideas of the atonement, propitiation and satisfaction required by God and of the forgiveness, cleansing and reconciliation needed by his people. All this is achieved through substitutionary sacrifice and brought to Isaiah, encapsulated in the single symbol of the live coal.

Was Isaiah saved at this point in time? I think he already was a man of faith – but this moment of his commissioning for his prophetic ministry brought his focus back to God’s gracious forgiveness of his sins which is the foundation for spiritual ministry; we need to constantly be reminded of the gospel and our focus needs to go back to how we were converted; how did we come to turn away from our trust in ourselves and put our trust solely in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins

Look at the insights we gain here regarding the provision of our salvation: **5 Insights here:**

- Only God can forgive sins – uses an intermediary – you cannot save yourself or do penance for your sins; can’t add anything to the work of Christ on the cross
1 Tim. 2:5-6 “*For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all*”

Matthew 9:1-8 “*the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*”
- God’s wrath must be Satisfied = where we get the word *propitiation* – someone must pay the penalty for our sins; the soul that sins, it must die; the wages of sin is death; the holiness of God cannot be compromised
Rom 3:21-26 “*whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith*”
- The Initiative is God’s Sovereign Elective Choice –
Ephes. 1:4-7 “*just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him, in love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace*”
- Salvation is Personal – remember the words of Jesus Christ in **John 3** to Nicodemus – stressing the need to be born again; this is something that is very personal; the provision for salvation has been made by the sacrifice of Christ; but it must be personally applied just as the coal was brought to the lips of Isaiah in a very personal way; you can’t slide into Christianity; it requires a conversion; a rebirth; The evidence should be in your life right now that your faith is in Jesus Christ alone for salvation
- Salvation Requires a Blood Sacrifice of an Acceptable Substitute
Heb 9:22 “*all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*”

Hebrews 10 – shows how the sacrifice of Jesus Christ – both the Lamb of God Himself and our great High Priest – was a once for all sacrifice that was superior to all of the types and shadows of the Levitical sacrificial system

B. (:7) Forgiveness is Applied with the Assurance of Security

“*And he touched my mouth with it and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.’*”

The removal of our sin and the satisfaction of God's wrath; on the cross God treated Jesus Christ like He justly should have treated us

Look at the insights we gain here regarding the blessings accompanying our salvation:

Isaiah experienced these **9 blessings**:

- Forgiveness and Cleansing – our sins are removed as far as the east is from the west
Ps. 103:10-12 *“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*
- Worship – God seeks worshipers who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth
Ps. 15 *“O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart.”*
- Joy – **Psalm 51** – incorporates many of these blessings of salvation
51:8 *“make me to hear joy and gladness”*
- Freedom / Liberty / Confidence / Boldness – How could Isaiah be so bold to speak God's word of judgment in the court of kings?
Heb. 10:19-21 *“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God,”*
- Clear conscience –
Heb. 10: 22 *“let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water”*
- Sense of Victory / Dominion – no more bondage; no more defeat
Rom. 8:1-4 *“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”*
- Sense of Security --
Ps. 27 *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?”*
- New Life --
2 Cor. 5:17-20 *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ”*
- Motivated to Serve / to Testify – *“Here am I, send me” vs. 8*

R. C. Sproul: The Holiness of God

When we understand the character of God, when we grasp something of His holiness, then we begin to understand the radical character of our sin and hopelessness. Helpless sinners can survive only by grace. Our strength is futile in itself; we are spiritually impotent without the assistance of a merciful God. We may dislike giving our attention to God's wrath and justice, but until we incline ourselves to these aspects of God's nature, we will never appreciate what has been wrought for us by grace. Even Edwards's sermon on sinners in God's hands was not designed to stress the flames of hell. The resounding accent falls not on the fiery pit but on the hands of the God who holds us and rescues us from it. The hands of God are gracious hands. They alone have the power to rescue us from certain destruction.

CONCLUSION:

A fresh vision of the holiness and majesty of our Savior should fundamentally and dramatically impact our worship and service

We who have been forgiven so much, how can we fail to show appreciation; how can we fail to forgive others?

Now We should be ready to serve our holy God

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Reginald Heber, 1826

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In what ways do you relate to the Lord Jesus as your King and your High Priest?
- 2) In what ways does the current Christian culture minimize or obscure or neglect the holiness of God?
- 3) How can we communicate to a lost world the great gap between the holiness of God and our depravity and guilt?
- 4) How should an appreciation for cleansing and forgiveness impact my motivation for service?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Young: Isaiah's purpose apparently is first to present the heart of his message, and only then to relate the account of his own prophetic call. To accomplish this end he places at the head of all his prophecies a general introduction (chapter 1) in which he sets forth in germ form the themes which he is later to develop. From this he plunges immediately into his message, beginning with a note of hope (2:2-4) and concluding on the same note (4:2-6). In this first utterance he announced the sinful depravity of the nation and the certainty of coming judgment. From this judgment the only refuge was to be found in God and His redeeming grace. In order to reinforce the message a picture of the loving care of God in the choice of Israel and in the gifts which He gave to her is found in chapter 5, a chapter which leaves no doubt as to the justice of God in sending judgment upon sin. It is only after this initial proclamation that the prophet is ready to relate the call to the prophetic office, an account which reinforces what he has already proclaimed.

Keil and Delitzsch: Uzziah reigned fifty-two years (809-758 B.C.). This lengthened period was just the same to the kingdom of Judah as the shorter age of Solomon to that of all Israel, viz., a time of vigorous and prosperous peace, in which the nation was completely overwhelmed with manifestations of divine love. But the riches of divine goodness had no more influence upon it, than the troubles through which it had passed before. And now the eventful change took place in the relation between Israel and Jehovah, of which Isaiah was chosen to be the instrument before and above all other prophets. The year in which all this occurred was the year of Uzziah's death. It was in this year that Israel as a people was given up to hardness of heart, and as a kingdom and country to devastation and annihilation by the imperial power of the world. How significant a fact, as Jerome observes in connection with this passage, that the year of Uzziah's death should be the year in which Romulus was born; and that it was only a short time after the death of Uzziah (viz., 754 B.C. according to Varro's chronology) that Rome itself was founded! The national glory of Israel died out with king Uzziah, and has never revived to this day.

Van Parunak: The chapter is built around three conversations. The first is among the Seraphim, **praising** the Lord. The second is between Isaiah and one of the Seraphs, concerning his sin and its **pardon**. The third is between Isaiah and the Lord, in which he undertakes the **purpose** of representing the Lord.

Oswalt: chs. 1-5 have raised a serious problem. Sinful, arrogant Israel is going to be the holy people of God to whom the nations will come to learn of God (cf. 43:8-14; 49:5, 6; Ezek. 36:22-

38). But how can this be? Ch. 6 provides the solution. Sinful Israel can become servant Israel when the experience of Isaiah becomes the experience of the nation. . . just as ch. 6 is the conclusion to chs. 1-5, it is also the introduction to chs. 7-12. . . In a real sense, chs. 7-12 are a fulfillment and an explication of the word given to Isaiah in his call. . .

Attempts to determine the nature of the vision are bootless. Whether it was ecstatic or mystical or “actual” has no bearing upon the reality of the event for Isaiah’s ministry. How he saw the Sovereign is insignificant. What matters is that he saw him and saw him in such a way as to change the shape of the rest of his life. Similarly, attempts to prove that the vision took place in either the earthly temple or a heavenly one are generally of no consequence . . . Once again, the reality of the experience for Isaiah and the truths which it conveyed to him are of fundamental significance. Precisely how or where the experience occurred has little to do with those questions.

Brian Borgman:

I. The Vision of the Divine Holiness (:1-4)

Chapter which inspired hymn we sang; also famous exposition: **The Holiness of God** by **R.C. Sproul** = video series; begins with the time of the vision; 52 years is a long time to be king; brought prosperity and wealth and strength to the nation; endeared himself to the people; came to a tragic end; God will not tolerate pride in His servant; kings come and go; but the Lord reigns for all eternity; Isaiah saw the absolute Monarch; the essence of God cannot be seen; God is Spirit; but God has manifested Himself visibly through history = theophanies (manifestation of God); saw here the eternal Logos of God; He does not describe what He looks like here but rather what is going on around the throne; “*throne*” used over 40 times in book of Revelation which is about God’s authority and sovereignty over evil; the length of a train on king’s robe reflects on the degree of his majesty and glory in ancient Near East; dynamic active participle = is filling the temple; there is no end to it and it seems to keep increasing; the word translated temple can also be palace; there is an altar in vs. 6; throne is consistent with a palace; was Isaiah in the palace mourning the loss of Uzziah and then translated in a vision to heavenly throne?? Seraphim is not a title of a group of angels; it is a descriptive term; no article in front of it; these burning creatures have wings; there is a holiness about them; hover about the throne of Adonai and yet cover their faces with two of their wings; because of the blazing holiness that is too bright to behold; like they are looking into the sun and can’t stand it anymore; at burning bush Moses commanded to take off his sandals because of holy ground; the foot of man connects man with nature; this part of man most vividly describes his creatureliness; remember these angels are without sin; these angels were awestruck with the holiness of God;

“*the whole earth is full of his glory*” – couple of ways to translate; essential glory and declarative glory = the perfection of his own attributes and character; Rom. 1; God is committed to the display of His glory;

Results: foundations trembled and temple/palace filled with smoke; the majesty of His holiness even moves inanimate objects; Hab. 3; smoke and fire proclaim the terror of Yahweh; confrontation of His holiness with man’s sin; We have forgotten that our God is holy; we need a sobriety and seriousness even mixed with great joy when we approach God; the attribute of God which is revealed to the third degree is Holiness; don’t trifle with God; seriousness to way we worship and pray; have we treated our God as Holy??

II. Human Sin and Divine Forgiveness (:5-7)

The incomprehensibility of God; yet knowable; absolute yet personal; the believer cannot fully comprehend revealed truth; **A. W. Tozer** -- The Knowledge of the Holy – in condescending love He has revealed certain things about His attributes to us; Is. 6 brings us to the point where the incomprehensible touches the knowable; what happens when the holy comes into contact with the unholy; we have made everything so superficial today;

A. The Holy One Confronts the Sinner (:5)

“Woe oracle” = oracle of doom; normally directed against God’s pagan enemies; here surprising to pronounce a Woe oracle upon himself; best vivid expression of despair; I am silenced (cut off as in death; I am history) and destroyed = ruined; undone; there is nothing I can say before this holy God; he is in the presence of the living God while the praises of God are being recited; He is painfully aware of His own sin; the lips that should be praising are now seen to be polluted; struck by his own unworthiness; it’s not what goes in that defiles us but what comes out of our mouths; his mouth had been a channel for pouring out the filth of his own heart rather than for praise of the Holy One; aware of the pollution from within and that from without – he comes from a corrupt race; we hear blasphemies and profanities and perversions and cursings all day long; angels cover their eyes and Isaiah has no such protection – my eyes have seen the king and I am ruined; experience of Job; of Habakkuk; no sense of bartering with God; Ps. 51 “*You are justified when you speak*”

Application:

- in order for us to know ourselves we must know the God with whom we have to do; the only people with elevated view of self know nothing of the God of Isaiah 6; forget about self love, self esteem, self worth – healthy to have a good sense of guilt and self condemnation in the presence of a holy God
- As Christians our minds must be filled with the greatness of God; **Charnock**: The Existence and Attributes of God; **J. I. Packer**: Knowing God; **Tozer**: Knowledge of the Holy; **:Pink**: The Sovereignty of God; **Piper**: The Pleasures of God
- Our worship, our preaching and our evangelism must set forth our God as the Holy King; God-centered evangelism = displaying God in His fullness; use the law in evangelism so that sin is not fuzzy and ambiguous; preach the Ten Commandments; our worship must be saturated with the glory and majesty and greatness of God; not trying to have really good music to draw a crowd of young people; weed out silly, trivial camp songs that don’t exalt God but just give you a warm fuzzy; Nadab and Abihu thought they would do their own thing when it came to worship and offered strange fire – went outside of God’s prescription; Uzzah stretched out his hand to steady the ark of the covenant – God killed him; Christian preaching does not exalt God but the needs of man; and it does not have much of Christ in it; you must exalt God and His Son Jesus Christ; try this approach to evangelism: “God is the king and He created you and you are morally obligated to obey His holy law”

B. The Holy One Forgives the Sinner (:6-7) “but God”

Isaiah needs an intermediary; he does not possess the capability to cleanse himself; can’t do penance to remove his guilt;

TEXT: Isaiah 6:8-13

TITLE: ISAIAH COMMISSIONED TO A MINISTRY OF HARDENING HEARTS

BIG IDEA:

**A MISSION OF PROCLAIMING GOD’S TRUTH WILL HARDEN THOSE HEARTS
GOD ALLOWS TO BE HARDENED**

INTRODUCTION:

People today love a **positive message** – something that will make them feel better about themselves. They want to go away from the church service encouraged and uplifted with an extra bounce in their step. As we study Isaiah’s calling and commissioning in chapter 6, we come face to face with an extremely negative commission and calling. Go preach to these people about imminent judgment with words that will essentially harden their hearts and confirm them in their stubborn rebellion. Your expectation should be that none will respond and repent. Can you imagine a Seeker Church pastor stepping forward to volunteer for such a discouraging mission – “Here am I. Send me!”

I think of the current series of TV commercials for AT&T where the marketing executive in a suit sits at a small table in an elementary school classroom with young children and asks them for their preference regarding obvious choices:

- Is bigger better? Would you like a bigger tree house?
- Would you prefer more or less?
- Would you like to save more or less?
- Are two better than one?
- Do you prefer faster or slower?

The children jump on the obvious choice and ramble on with their cute explanations ... but the bottom line is “It’s not that complicated.” Here, we ask as a prophet of God, **would you rather have people respond to your message or reject your message?** The preference is obvious. But it is not about what Isaiah prefers. It is about what God has determined will glorify Him.

The doom of the Lord’s people has been fixed; there will be no relenting or second chances. The Assyrian Captivity for the northern kingdom and the Babylonian Captivity for the southern kingdom are already fast approaching.

Let’s not forget some important background about the **depravity of man:**

- Since Adam’s sin, all men are born into the world as sinners
- Salvation requires God’s sovereign intervention in mercy and grace; if left on our own we lack the ability to even choose to repent and trust in Christ
- **2 Cor. 4** – the minds of the unbelieving are blinded to the gospel apart from the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit to enable us to see the Light
- The Light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than the light

That is the sad condition of man apart from God’s saving grace – so any ministry of hardening hearts does not impact people that are morally neutral and send them over the edge – they are already confirmed sinners – God is just allowing them to continue further down the path they have chosen for themselves

We want to first look at **one OT example** and then **one NT example** of this ministry of judicial blinding before diving into our text in Isaiah:

1) OT example -- Pharaoh

This **ministry of hardening hearts** is nothing new – God used Moses to harden the heart of Pharaoh – important background theologically. Van Parunak did a great analysis here captured on his website at cyber-chapel.org

- Pattern established – **Ex. 7:1-5** God’s prophets bring the message of truth to Pharaoh; God authenticates his messengers and His message with signs and wonders; end result is that Pharaoh’s heart is hardened
- As you work your way through the plagues, sometimes that process of hardening is attributed directly to **God Himself** – 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17; Sometimes that process is attributed to **Pharaoh himself** (8:15) – leading to the conclusion that we must look at these two perspectives as flip sides of the same coin – wherever you find God hardening the heart you find the person hardening his own heart – and in all cases as we already noted because of the doctrine of man’s depravity, that heart is not a morally neutral entity
- Also we can see that God is not working some Houdini magic in the background; He is using the presentation of the truth as the method for hardening Pharaoh’s heart
- We must also understand how this interaction between God and Pharaoh is used by the Apostle Paul in **Romans 9** to teach the doctrine of Sovereign Election – He will show mercy to whom He chooses in a way that is inscrutable to us – don’t try to unscrew the inscrutable – hold to both sides of the same flip coin: God’s sovereignty in salvation and man’s responsibility – **the blame** for man’s reprobation never falls on God for not electing someone

PreceptAustin.org: In Exodus we see how Pharaoh's decision to harden his heart was followed later by Divine hardening. . . This sovereign act of God, designed to make His power known (Ro 9:17-note) might seem cruel except that Pharaoh volitionally hardened his own heart against God (Ex 8:15), and so fully merited God's judgment. Here is an example of the great mystery, inscrutable to our finite minds, of God's election versus man's will. Like two sides of the same coin, both are real but can only be viewed and pondered separately. Neither can be discarded. Paul uses this as an example of the inscrutable will of God and of His mercy toward men (Ro 9:14, 15, 16, 17, 18.)

2) NT example – Proclaiming the Gospel -- 2 Cor. 2:14-17

Important to see that the message of God’s truth is the same in both cases; our responsibility lies with the proclamation – not with the results

Illustration: It is the same sun that melts the wax that also hardens and bakes the clay. Some hard words here this morning – not at all what we would expect God to say . . .

A MISSION OF PROCLAIMING GOD’S TRUTH WILL HARDEN THOSE HEARTS GOD ALLOWS TO BE HARDENED

I. (:8) A MINISTRY OF HARDENING HEARTS REQUIRES A FAITHFUL PROPHET – NO PREDETERMINED EXPECTATIONS

Isaiah volunteers willingly with no strings attached; no predetermined expectations; **Rom. 12:1-2**

A. Voice of Commissioning Authority -- Finally God Speaks

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying,”

Up to this point, Isaiah had only heard the impressive voice of the seraphim extolling the majestic holiness of the King of kings – that was enough to cause an impressive impact of the foundations of the temple/palace shaking

Isaiah was now prepared for spiritual service -- **Cleansing** must precede significant service to the Lord; the Lord will only use holy vessels

2 Tim. 2:21 “Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.”

What a privilege for sinful Isaiah to have such an opportunity for service; a moment ago he was lying face down, undone; now he is being commissioned for the most important task the Lord has at hand

Young: A moment before he had feared that there was no hope for him; now, however, that he has received the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins and understands that God will not banish him from His presence, he is ready to do service for the sovereign Lord.

B. Vacancy for Serving the Triune God – Presented as an Opportunity

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?”

Significance of the Lord speaking in the plural? Is He including the seraphim? But He only needs to consult with Himself so more likely a reference to the Trinity; same sense of **Gen. 1:26** “*Let us make man in our image*” (compare Gen 3:22; 11:7).

Motyer: The New Testament, however, relates this passage both to the Lord Jesus (Jn. 12:41 – where Jesus is identified as the agent of the judicial hardening of Israel – still a small remnant believed) and to the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:25 – Paul’s explanation of turning the focus of gospel preaching to the Gentiles because of Jewish rejection), finding here that which will accommodate the full revelation of the triune God.

God does not ask questions such as these because He does not know the answer; prompting Isaiah to respond willingly from his heart to serve the Lord

C. Volunteer Offers His Service

“ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’ ”

Rom. 10:14-21 – God is pleased to use the instrumentation of human preachers to proclaim His truth in a way that glorifies Him and accomplishes His purposes

Are we available to serve God? Are we willing volunteers? Should not be difficult to get people to serve in various capacities in the local church; here Isaiah offers himself before he has even heard the job description; presents himself as a blank check – just like the prophet Samuel – Here am I, Send me. At the end of the day do you want to look back and see that your life counted?

Young: One cannot but admire and even love Isaiah for his willingness and readiness to serve God, even though he was told that his labors would appear to be fruitless. From this we learn the

necessity for continuing in the work of the gospel, even when outward success does not appear to attend our work. It may be that apparent lack of outward success is in part due to our own inefficiency; our task, however, is to be faithful. May God grant that His church may have ministers who, above all else, are faithful, even as was Isaiah.

Willing to volunteer even before he fully understands the details of the mission

1 Cor. 4:1-2 *“Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.”*

Oswalt: But if the truth could not save the present generation, if it would, in fact, destroy that generation, it could, faithfully recorded, save future generations. This, then, was Isaiah’s commission, as it is of all servants of God, not to be successful in a merely human sense but to be faithful. . . Such a grateful offering of themselves is always the cry of those who have received God’s grace after they have given up hope of ever being acceptable to God.

Grogan: Biblical teaching presents a beautiful balance . . . The message of God to Isaiah in vv. 9-10 is strongly predestinarian. How appropriate, therefore, that the verse preceding them should place such emphasis on the prophet’s responsibility! He is not coerced into service; rather, his will makes ready response as a grateful reaction to God’s forgiving grace. No doubt Isaiah’s very response was itself the product of divine grace, but this is not where the stress falls here. Instead, we see him faced with the challenge to personal commitment.

Jerry Bridges: Isaiah gave his life in service to God. He essentially offered himself as a blank check, to be filled in as God saw fit....With Isaiah we see a three-step process: first, acute realization of one’s own sinfulness in the light of God’s holiness; second, hearing the gospel that one’s sins are forgiven; and finally the response of gratitude, love, and surrender leading to action....

II. (:9-10) A MINISTRY OF HARDENING HEARTS SEEMS CONTRADICTIONARY TO GOD’S CHARACTER (e.g. HIS GOODNESS) – MINISTRY EXPECTATIONS

A. (:9) A Ministry of Hardening Hearts Keeps God’s Truth Unintelligible

“And He said, ‘Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.’”

Possibly refers to them in a derogatory sense as *“this people”* rather than *“My people”* (although you can find examples where the expression is not always one of displeasure)

Not going to a seeker friendly group

The truth from God is not hidden; but it is not perceived by those whose hearts are hardened
Problem is not with the obscurity of the message; Isaiah made it simple and clear

Cf. **Parable of the Soils** – problem is with a heart that is hardened and not receptive to truth

The message Isaiah has to bring is one of doom; Jonah would have loved this calling as he set off for Nineveh

Presented here as **commands** to the Jewish people – but God using irony and sarcasm ... you don't actually see Isaiah going out and commanding the people in this way; God setting forth the ministry expectations for Isaiah –this is the type of rejection you will face

Borgman: “*Hear Ye indeed, but understand not*” -- Qal infinitive absolute construct – not idea of repetition (keep on hearing) but **emphasis** is the key; most emphatic way you could make a command; “*You will certainly listen to this; but do not understand;*”

Van Parunak: In each case, the command

- reflects the predisposition of the hearers,
- is to be understood as permission to continue their current sin rather than as recommending a new course of action (“Since your heart is set on this course of action, go ahead. I won't stop you.”)
- is associated with a warning of the consequences that will follow.

Thus these commands do not communicate God's will to the people, but are all examples of how God abandons people, or “gives people up,” to their own lusts:

Psa 81:11-12 *But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. 12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.*

Acts 7:42 *Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?*

Rom 1:22-24 *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, (cf. v. 26).*

Oswalt: *hear indeed* (lit. “hear a hearing”). The infinitive is functioning in an adverbial way to strengthen the main verb (as in “you shall surely die,” lit. “to die you will die,” Gen. 2:17). It expresses for the Hebrew the strangeness of the contradiction, for to hear was normally synonymous with acknowledging and doing (Deut. 1:43; 6:3). Here the prophet is saying that the disease of pride and rebellion has gone so deeply that they will simply misperceive the truth of what they hear (cf. 2 Tim. 3:7).

B. (:10) A Ministry of Hardening Hearts Negates the Healthy Functioning of the Senses

Parallel passage -- Deut. 29:2-4 “*Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.*”

Chiastic arrangement: now these are commands to Isaiah himself

1. Dead Heart

“*Render the hearts of this people insensitive, . . . [Lest they] Understand with their hearts,*” make their hearts fat – a layer of fat that obscures the truth

2. Dull Ears

“*Their ears dull, . . . [Lest they] Hear with their ears*” ears heavy

3. Dim Eyes

“And their eyes dim, Lest they see with their eyes,” eyes obscured
Besmear their eyes – like poor windshield wipers

C. (:10b) A Ministry of Hardening Hearts Prevents Spiritual Repentance and Healing

“And return and be healed.”

Application: In order to be responsive to God’s Word to us we must cultivate:

- Sensitive Heart
- Sharp Ears
- Bright Eyes

Young: He is charged to work in such a manner that his labors will bring about a hardening of heart and sensibility upon the part of the nation.

Zech. 7:8-14

Multiple fulfillments – not just the Babylonian Captivity – **John 12: 39-40**

Why would God desire and even destine these people to a state of reprobation? There must be something more important to God than their healing? Somehow **His glory** will be established in a greater way through this judgment.

God’s insight here into the process of hardening hearts is intended to help the prophet cope with the negative reaction to his ministry;

John MacArthur: Isaiah’s message was to be God’s instrument for hiding the truth from an unreceptive people. Centuries later, Jesus’ parables were to do the same

NT Quotation of these significant verses:

cf. Mt. 13:14-15 -- Explanation of Jesus for why He taught using parables; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10; Rom. 11:8 – Paul’s explanation of Jewish unbelief during the times of the Gentiles

III. (:11-12) A MINISTRY OF HARDENING HEARTS MUST ACCEPT THE DURATION AND SEVERITY OF GOD’S JUDGMENT WHILE MAINTAINING A HEART OF COMPASSION – JUDGMENT EXPECTATIONS

Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered, "Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people, And the land is utterly desolate, 12 "The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

Tone of lament – heart of compassion on the part of the prophet; he is not insensitive to the consequences of those who persist in their rebellion

question related to both the duration and consequences of his ministry

How long must Isaiah labor in this ministry?

How long before the nation is removed from this judicial blindness?

Borgman: does not ask a sovereign God Why, but **How long**; be careful about asking Why; there is a difference; we don't have the right to know Why; the secret things belong to the Lord our God;

Van Parunak: Heb. "*the Lord has removed the man*" – talking about mankind; but an allusion here; Gen. 1-3 this phrase used extensively; here it is a reversal of God's gracious creation; "*great shall be the forsaking in the midst of the land*" – 54:6 a woman who has been put away by her husband; 60:15; 62:4; very striking image in 50:1 – bill of your mother's divorce referenced; God divorced Israel; the result is that she is a forsaken woman; ultimately she will be reunited; Undue His creation; divorce His people

IV. (:13) A MINISTRY OF HARDENING HEARTS STILL ANTICIPATES THE HOPE OF A BELIEVING REMNANT – REMNANT EXPECTATIONS

"Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump."

In the case of the nation Israel, these Messianic expectations are eschatological in terms of their time reference; small picture of hope; fulfilled at the end of the Babylonian Captivity; population that came back was much smaller under Ezra and Nehemiah; there will yet be a subsequent judgment under Antiochus Epiphanes and under the Romans in AD 70; still life there and it will sprout again

Motyer: Typically of Isaiah, hope is the unexpected fringe attached to the garment of doom.

Grogan: God has so ordered the plant kingdom that almost total destruction does not always extinguish life.

PreceptAustin.org: *It will again be subject to burning* - This is a difficult phrase. Although, one should avoid dogmatic interpretation, it seems to predict that the remnant will pass through another "fire", which could refer to further chastisement. Irregardless, the important point is that the "burning" would not result in complete destruction, for God would preserve a holy remnant. Some commentators see this as a prophecy that will ultimately be fulfilled in the time of the Great Tribulation, the time of Jacob's distress, when "Many will be purged, purified and refined" (Da 12:10), which will result in 1/3 of the nation of Israel receiving the Messiah as Savior (Zech 13:8, 9).

The *holy seed* reminds us of the good soil of the Parable of the Soils; the godly remnant; the tree looks dead

Is. 37:31-32 [regarding deliverance from Sennacharib, King of Assyria in Hezekiah's day] "*The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.*"

Grogan: How astounding that God should use the word "*holy*" of the remnant of his people when it has been used already in v.3 in relation to his own transcendent being! This is condescending grace indeed!

7:3 name of his son – Shearjashup – *the remnant shall return* – Rom. 11:5 – God is still faithful to His promises to Israel

CONCLUSION:

By contrast with Isaiah’s situation look at the privileged position we are in today as ambassadors for Jesus Christ. Yes, we minister in the last days when judgment is approaching with the return of Jesus Christ. But the one who has commissioned us has assured us that the fields even now are white for harvesting. There are many prepared hearts out there with good soil ready to respond to the glorious message of the gospel. Our message will still only appeal to the minority for the way is narrow that leads to the cross as opposed to the broad way that leads to destruction. God authenticates our message by transforming our lives so that we can testify that the gospel has proved powerful in our own experience. We have the assurance that our preaching will be both a savor of life unto life and of death unto death. So regardless of the results, God desires our faithfulness and obedience. We need to be available and willing to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ today.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What role should the local church play as a sending agency for missions and how does this tie into the individual sensing a call from God?
- 2) How available are we to do the hard things that God wants done?
- 3) How did God intend this emphasis on the hardening of hearts to impact Isaiah in terms of his motivation for ministry?
- 4) What relevance does the promise of remnant hope have to Isaiah since he would not live to see the return of the people from captivity?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: The sequential relationship of the elements ought not to be overlooked. Each element leads to the next. The king’s death prepares the way for the vision of God; the vision of God leads to self-despair; self-despair opens the door to cleansing; cleansing makes it possible to recognize the possibility of service; the total experience then leads to an offering of oneself.

Grogan: Once again we are impressed by the structure of the book; for this chapter immediately follows and precedes examples of wrong reaction to God’s word. In 5:24 it is the people who reject it, and in chapter 7 Ahaz refuses it. Note also the statement that God “is hiding his face from the house of Jacob” in 8:27. Through his prophets of that generation, God warned his rebellious people that both the declaration of the word (Amos 8:11-14) and the grace of repentance in response to it were in the sovereign hand of God the King. We should note also that this hardening judgment was pronounced after centuries of his people’s defective hearing of

his word, and so it may be seen to be judicial as well as sovereign.

PreceptAustin.org: As in the case of Pharaoh, Yahweh's hardening is not arbitrarily imposed on a righteous or even morally neutral object. Rather His hardening is an element of His righteous judgment on recalcitrant sinners. Ironically, Israel's rejection of prophetic preaching in turn expedites disciplinary punishment, and brings the battered people to a point where they might be ready for reconciliation. The prophesied judgment (cf. Isa 6:11-13) was fulfilled by 701 B.C. when the Assyrians devastated the land (a situation presupposed by Isa 1:2-20; see especially Isa 6:4-9). At that time the divine hardening had run its course and Isaiah is able to issue an ultimatum (Isa 1:19, 20-note, one which Hezekiah apparently took to heart, resulting in the sparing of Jerusalem (see Isa 36-39) and cf. Jer 26:18,19 with Mic 3:12).

Ironside: Even though the Word seemed to have no other effect than to harden them in their sins and rebellion, Isaiah was to proclaim the message faithfully. The servant of GOD is responsible to the Lord Himself. Having received his commission, he is to go forth in the name of the One who sends him, declaring the message committed to him. The results must be left with GOD. Whether men hear or whether they forbear (Ezek 2:3, 4, 5), he who proclaims the Word faithfully has delivered his soul. The Apostle Paul entered into this when he spoke of being a sweet savor of CHRIST unto GOD both in them that are saved and in them that perish (2Co 2:15). GOD is honored when His truth is preached, no matter what attitude the hearers take toward it, and that Word will not return void, but will accomplish the divine purpose (Is 55:11). Faced with the solemn responsibility of proclaiming so unpopular a message, Isaiah cried, "Lord, how long?" It takes special faith and obedience to continue to preach to an unheeding people who are only hardened by the Word instead of being softened by it. The Lord's answer was that the message must be proclaimed until there were none left to hear.

John Fish: The preaching of Isaiah in Isaiah 6 calls us to remember a solemn and important message of Scripture. The God of grace and mercy is also a God of judgment. Even though God is longsuffering and a God of love, His love and patience cannot be assumed presumptuously. There will come a day when He will come and deal out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (2Th 1:8, 9).

The day of grace will end and there will be no more opportunity for salvation for those who have rejected the Lord Jesus. Isaiah, chapter six teaches us that even in this age the day of grace may come to an end for certain individuals. That happened to Israel in Isaiah's day and to many of the individuals in it. Because of their sin which is presented in the first five chapters, they are judged by God. God "gave them up." He cut them off from further light. The effect of this was to confirm them in their sin, and therefore confirm them in their lost estate.

Are we offended by this? We should only be offended if we are offended by the fact that God is a God who judges sin. This has nothing to do with innocent people being kept from salvation.

We may safely say at once that God never hardens hearts that would otherwise be soft, and that owe their hardness to His interposition. He does not blind the eyes of those that would fain see, and apart from His interposition, would see.

Rather this hardening is the outworking of the message of **Pr 29:1**,

He, that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

God will not forever offer the pearls of His grace and salvation to those spiritual swine who continually trample them in the dust. This is a solemn warning for all who are outside of Christ to take heed and to come to Him in faith. But it is never meant to be a message of despair to any lost sinner who desires salvation and would like to come to the Savior. There is no sin which is too great for the grace of God, and anyone who wants salvation can rest in the promise that *"the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out"* (**Jn 6:37**). Those who are hardened by God are simply confirmed in their own sinful thoughts and desires. They are already rebellious and hostile to God. The judgment of God means that they will continue this way. This message is also a message that grace really is grace. God is under no obligation to forgive all sinners. Nor is He obligated to offer salvation to everyone forever. When He judges sin, He is still perfectly just and righteous. Isaiah, chapter six is a message that the judgment of God is not only in the future, it may also be now. (The Commission of Isaiah - Emmaus Journal V4:1, Summer, 95)

Brian Borgman: Isaiah's Divine Call and Commission

Come to a passage of very hard words; The Bible does not always say what we think it should say; but this is the authoritative word from God.

I. (:8) Sovereign Call of God on Isaiah's Life –

Isaiah had been confronted with holiness of God in a way that no other attribute of God had been so exalted to the third degree; His holiness was so blazing and bright that sinless angels still had to cover their eyes; We saw what happened when human sinfulness was confronted with divine holiness; words of self condemnation in the presence of a holy God; Seraphim covered their eyes but my eyes have seen the King so I am ruined; after the declaration of his cleansing and forgiveness of sins; reconciliation has been accomplished; people do not understand that when we come into this world we are not truth seekers or God lovers, but haters of God; tremendous enmity exists; **Ps. 58:3** *"we go forth from the womb speaking lies"*; the stain of Adam; Why wouldn't God send one of the holy angels?? How gracious; God does not ask questions because He is ignorant on a subject or does not know the answer; movement called **free will Theism** = God is not omniscient; does not know all things; this is a God who is not God; The question is designed to draw out from Isaiah that response of gratitude; Who will be my mouthpiece? Who will speak on my behalf? Speaking of the prophetic ministry; a glimpse of plurality within the godhead; those who are forgiven have the desire to serve their God; why is it so hard to get people in church to commit to ministries? Don't let that passion burn out and die; look at the eagerness and willingness – but had not yet heard the job description

II. (:9-10) The Hard Message and Its Awful Result –

Fruitless ministry of condemnation; a command; this is the ministry of condemnation; sealing these stiff-necked people in their spiritual deafness and blindness; you will preach with clarity and demand that they hear but God will not let them understand; not the call to the ministry that we would be interested in; this commission carried out by preaching; *"make fat the heart of these people;"* desensitize their hearts with a layer of fat by your preaching; make their ears heavy; besmear their eyes;

We don't like this message; Isaiah did not like this message; but this was the message God gave

him; God always retains the prerogative to withhold the grace of enlightening and converting; the grace in Scripture is narrower but deeper than our modern day concept; the rebel heart hears the truth preached and becomes even more deeply engrained in its rebellion without the grace of the Spirit; but the blame still rests on the human responsibility; the depravity of the heart; the source of the hardening is in the rebel's heart; Pharaoh was not some morally neutral being that was seeking for truth; what kinds of hearts does God harden? Depraved hearts; God will harden whose heart He will and show mercy to whom He will – Rom. 9; 2 Cor 2:15 “*aroma of death to death*;” same word goes forth to both groups; this may be the message that seals someone in blindness; **Matt. 11:25-27** – context above teaches moral obligation for our response to God's truth; yet emphasis on sovereignty of God's grace in withholding light from some and giving it to others; 11:28-30 closes with open-ended gospel invitation; free offer of salvation to all who would believe; **Matt. 13:10-17** [cf. how homiletics professors use Jesus' technique of preaching in parables as good use of illustration to make plain the truth – not what Jesus says here – not that illustrations bring in windows of light on the sermon] – I teach in parables so that in the clarity of truth they will continue in their blindness and deafness; **John 12:36-50**; they could not believe; these are hard words; we have no inherent ability to believe the truth; our depravity blinds us; puts us absolutely at the mercy of a sovereign God; Rom. 11:7ff gives us insight into why God set things up this way; there is a purpose for God ordained blindness and hardness of heart = so at the end of the day God can show greater mercy; the hardening of the Israel brings in the fullness of the Gentiles; then at the end of the age God will lift the veil on ethnic Israel and save national Israel; Calvin called this the awful decree – that the word should be purposed to go out and harden some

III. (:11-12) Isaiah's Question – How Long -- and God's Explanation –Isaiah shows deep concern and passion; this awful decree does not render us calloused people; it makes us concerned and sensitive

IV. (:13) Nugget of Hope – shines brighter when against the black backdrop of doom and gloom of judgment and condemnation; **Rom. 9:22-23** – that is one of the reasons hell lasts forever; accentuates the mercy of God; jeweler brings out piece of black velvet to show off the brilliance of the facets of the diamond; a tithe portion – a very small portion; it will again be burned; judgment will decimate and destroy; there will be a little portion left – but the burning up of them will be different – it will not consume them but makes them strong – purified as by fire; the holy seed is its stump; you will not be able to burn this tree to the ground; Rom. 11:5; Is. 11; all the chaff will be burned up; there will be a little bit of wheat; messianic overtones to this promise

Dr. John Barnett: God's Pathway to Usefulness = Consecration (:1-8)

We are called to be an instrument that God uses; we want our life to count for God; we want our children to be useful for God; only one life will soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last; the balance sheet of our life is all about usefulness

:1-4 vision of God's majesty and holiness

:5 understanding of our sinfulness; painful awareness

:6-7 receive God's cleansing and presence and power; when we are weak we can be strong in God; want a decreasing experience of sin and increasing conformity to holiness

:8 God starts directing them; we start understanding God's calling for us; let every part of your life be attached to serving God

Dr. Michael Barrett: A Vision of God's Glory

After such a vision, the prophet was compelled to serve; he could not avoid this activity because of what he saw of the character of God; we must be obedient to the call; we cannot refuse to be sent and to proclaim God's message; we must be concerned about the souls of men; I have no right to pick and choose which commands to obey; it's God's choice whom He chooses to save; obtaining visible results is not the reason we tell others; not to impress somebody with our logic or rhetoric; the results are not in our hands; beyond our control to make someone accept the message; we are the instruments of the proclamation of that message; Isaiah could have become discouraged; you keep at it regardless of the visible results; God holds us responsible for our faithfulness;

Matthew Black: When People Won't Listen

People who hear the words of the gospel but it doesn't connect; they don't even understand; Some make quick confessions of faith and then seem to fall away back into the world; a very strange commission given to Isaiah; this nation has seen the end of my mercy for this generation; Isn't God a God of love? Also a God of justice and holiness; these people have no ability to hear what you are saying; God is closing off the understanding of their heart; 2 Cor. 2: 14ff; God already knows the elect and the reprobate; two groups of people; Paul said he was not sufficient for such a ministry; we do the proclaiming and God saves whomever He wants to; you are furthering their condemnation when they do not respond; Deut. 29:4 answers the question why certain people are not saved even though they have been given the gospel; God is the author and finisher of our salvation; Unjust for God not to give all men eyes to see?? Rom. 9 answers this; How wicked to think that because saves some He must save all; the amazing thing is why does God love anyone; men are saved by the mercy and grace and sovereign choice of God; why do men perish? Because of our own sins; Don't ask God for justice or fairness; total inability of man to understand God's truth apart from His intervention; man is a dead corpse; man loves darkness rather than the light; man is blind and he loves it; he doesn't want to see; Discouraging commission and yet not without hope; "I thought all men could believe if they wanted to..." but they don't have the ability to want to believe; nothing wrong with the preaching of Jesus;

Van Parunak: Mission of Isaiah related to Judicial Blindness

Mission of blinding through confronting men directly with God's revelation; not unusual to tell the people to Hear and See; but unusual to tell people not to understand what I am saying; make their heart fat, their ears heavy and shut their eyes; My purpose is that they not turn and repent; Why would God want to blind people to this revelation? How does Isaiah accomplish this mission? This passage quoted six times in the NT; Can't find any place where Isaiah does command the people not to understand; Irony and sarcasm – you say something that is so opposite of what you mean – go ahead and follow your path of depravity and see where it leads you; Is. 50:11; Ezek 20:39; Amos 4:4 go to Bethel and worship the golden calf; Matt. 23:31-32 Go ahead and act sinfully like your fathers and go kill prophets; God is not commanding the hearers of Isaiah's ministry to harden their hearts; they already have that disposition; God is not going to prevent them from their determined course of depravity; these commands do not communicate God's will in terms of do this or else you will be sinning; instead God gives them up to their predetermined course of action and says essentially that He will not stand in their way; God gives people up to a certain course of behavior; Rom. 1; abandoning them to their sin; Commands to the people in vs. 9 vs commands to Isaiah himself in vs. 10; can't really take these as irony; God hardens hearts; people harden their own hearts; Satan assigned that role once in blinding the minds (2 Cor. 4:4) and here the prophet is assigned that role as instrument of God; If we can understand how Isaiah hardens people as God's instrument maybe we can understand how God does it; not doing anything magical to their hearts internally; How can such a ministry

make the heart of this people fat? Dynamic between Moses and Pharaoh must be understood; Exod 4:21 – God is doing this hardening in the context of His servant performing designated miracles; 7:3-4; Look at the pattern for the plagues – 7:13 Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and then did not obey Moses and Aaron as the Lord had said – explicit fulfillment of vv.3-4; later it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (10:20) and that is presented as fulfillment of 7:3-4; these are two sides of the same coin: (Exod. 4-14)

- God hardens the heart of Pharaoh by presenting unmistakable evidence to the hearer
- Pharaoh hardens his own heart by rejecting God’s truth because he prefers his sin and does not want to confess his sin

How is it that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart? Directly associated with Pharaoh hardening his own heart; further miracles and revelation end up confirming his stubborn rejection; confront the people directly with their sin; God wants to encourage Isaiah in his ministry so that he can handle the rejection; through our preaching, God hardens hearts; when confronted with their sin, people get turned off; our task is not just to preach to people who will be receptive

Study the NT quotes of this passage; look at the verses side by side; the Septuagint (quoted by Matthew) changed the tone of the quotation; explaining why Christ spoke in parables; the statement in Hebrew is a strong command – God abandoning them to their own sinfulness; Septuagint softens it to a prediction which recognizes the tone of irony so it is not a bad translation; changes the focus in Matt. 13 from the prophet as God’s agent to the people themselves; don’t caught up in trying to figure out which came first in the two sides of the same coin: God hardening the heart or the people hardening their own heart; people were already sinners before this hardening process; some of these NT quotes emphasize the role of God while some emphasize the role of the people; 3 modes of teaching:

- Winsome approach to teaching – John 4
- Direct, hard approach of confronting sin with the truth
- Deliberate, obscure teaching in parables which finishes off the hardening process

TEXT: Isaiah 7:1-9

TITLE: TREMBLE OR TRUST? WHOM DO WE TRUST IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

BIG IDEA:

FAITH IN THE LORD IS THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMES THE WORLD / UNBELIEF RESPONDS TO CRISIS WITH FEARFUL PANIC THAT ENDS IN DEFEAT

INTRODUCTION:

Palm Sunday seems like it has arrived especially early this year. The Prophet Zechariah spoke of the entrance of the Messiah King into Jerusalem to usher in a reign of peace:

“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

Zech. 9:9-10

Back in our text in Isaiah, we are still immersed in the days of conflict with the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem. But we are beginning a new section of this important prophetic book – **chapters 7-12** which are called the Book of Immanuel = *God With Us*. Isaiah looks forward to the coming of the Messiah King as that child born into a world of sin and conflict who will ultimately reign in peace:

“Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.” **Is. 7:14**

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.” **Is. 9:6-7**

Today we will focus more on the historical context that provides the background for these precious promises. King Ahaz finds himself in a time of crisis and must decide **Whom he will trust?**

- The arm of the flesh represented by turning to Assyria for help, or
- The God of the Covenant who has done so much for His people Israel in the past

Van Parunak: Later in the book, Isaiah again directly counsels a king of Judah, in ch. 36-39. The two episodes invite close comparison with each other. We shall note points of contact as we study this episode, and then return to this chapter when we reach ch. 36. There, the king is Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz; Assyria is threatening Judah rather than Israel; and importantly, **Hezekiah responds in faith rather than fear**. Thus the pervasive theme is, *“Trust in the Lord, not in man.”* . . . God graciously invites Ahaz to ask for confirmation of this call to faith.

Similarly, in ch. 38, Hezekiah asks for a sign (v. 22), and the Lord moves the shadow on the sundial backwards (v. 8).

We face times of crisis as well. We need our faith strengthened so that we don't give in to the fearful panic of unbelief. Worry, anxiety, stress – all are just different names for the sin of Unbelief -- failing to put our confidence in the Lord and rest in Him. We can learn much from Isaiah's encounter with King Ahaz. Just as we saw last week from chap. 6, a negative response to God's revelation further **hardens one's heart**. May God's Word find good soil in our hearts this morning.

FAITH IN THE LORD IS THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMES THE WORLD / UNBELIEF RESPONDS TO CRISIS WITH FEARFUL PANIC THAT ENDS IN DEFEAT

4 WAYS TO REINFORCE THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

I. (:1) HISTORY LESSON -- THE VICTORY OF FAITH MUST FEED ON PAST EXPERIENCES OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS – THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SIGN OF IMMANUEL /

THE FEARFUL PANIC OF UNBELIEF REJECTS THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

A. Historical Background of Wicked King Ahaz – the wicked are given opportunity to believe!

“Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah,” about 735 BC

Kings of Judah had varying degrees of godliness – Jotham – **2 Chron. 27:2-6** / Ahaz / Hezekiah (**29:2**) – Ahaz had a wicked track record

2 Chron. 28:1-4 very young when he took over the throne; no better than the wicked kings of the southern kingdom; led the nation into idol worship; burned his sons in fire

Van Parunak: It seems most straightforward to locate this after the initial successes of Syria and Ephraim against the countryside (2 Chr 28). They now move to attack the capital. It's not clear whether Ahaz has already sent his appeal to Assyria for help (in which case Isaiah is condemning that action), or whether he is contemplating it (in which case Isaiah is warning against it).

B. Historical Background of Political Alliance Between Syria and Israel

“that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel,”

The Syro-Ephraimite War --

Must understand the threat from the nation of Assyria – the rising, dominant world power at the time; remember their previous history with the prophet Jonah – one generation had responded in repentance in the city of Nineveh ... but by now, they have sunk back into their wicked ways of conquering other nations in outrageous and abusive forms of cruelty

C. Historical Background of Previous Unsuccessful Invasion of Jerusalem

“went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it.”

2 Kings 16:5 glosses over the details of this first invasion just as Isaiah does here:
“Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to wage war; and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him.”

Doesn't sound unsuccessful when you read the story in **2 Chronicles 28:5-15**
Difficult to get all of the chronology pieced together from these different accounts

II. (:2-4a) COMMAND -- THE VICTORY OF FAITH MUST LOOK TO GOD WITH COURAGE / THE FEARFUL PANIC OF UNBELIEF TREMBLES AT THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS

A. (:2) Immediate Crisis Can Stir Up Fear – Imminent Second Invasion

“When it was reported to the house of David, saying, ‘The Arameans have camped in Ephraim,’ his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.”

Van Parunak: Ahaz has no thought of seeking the Lord. His mind is full of his plan to take refuge with Assyria. But his fear shows that this plan is not bringing him great peace.

He had good reason to fear – his troops had been depleted in the previous battle; now the Arameans have returned to finish him off

Look how the people feed off of the confidence level of their leader

B. (:3) Intervention by the Word of God

1. Gracious Ministry of the Lord – Taking initiative to reach out to Ahaz in his moment of crisis

“Then the LORD said to Isaiah, ‘Go out now to meet Ahaz,’ ”

Not an easy thing to deliver God's message to the King; had to put your big boy pants on; required faith and courage on the part of Isaiah

The king certainly did not welcome Isaiah with open arms – had no interest in seeking God's counsel; did not appreciate being confronted with his lack of faith

2. Gifted Messengers of the Lord – The Prophet and his son = Word Incarnate

“you and your son Shear-jashub,” = “a remnant shall return”

Surprising to see God send the son with the prophet – very unusual

Motyer: So certain was Isaiah of coming events that he was prepared for the word to “become flesh” in the person of his first son. Shear-Jashub was thus an “acted oracle”, a visual aid bringing home the word of God that much more clearly. He was also, by giving double expression to the word – sight as well as sound – making its fulfillment doubly sure.

3. God-Ordained Meeting Place – Strategic for the coming invasion

“at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field,”

C. (:4a) Imperative to Choose Faith Over Fear – 4 Commands

“and say to him,” Sense of urgency, earnestness, passion - **Borgman**

1. Two Positive Commands

- a. “Take Care” **הִשָּׁמֵר** keep watch, guard yourself

Borgman: “Take heed;” warning not to trust in self or man; Deut. 4:15; Joshua 23:11; we are tempted to trust in the arm of flesh; Heb. 3:12;

1 Samuel 19:2 “So Jonathan told David saying, “Saul my father is seeking to put you to death. Now therefore, please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself.”

Deuteronomy 4:9 “Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.”

- b. “Be Calm” **וְהִשְׁקֵט** be quiet, undisturbed; only NT usage

Borgman: Rest! **Is. 30:15** “In repentance and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength. But you were not willing.”

Is. 57:20-21 “But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet (rest). And its waters toss up refuse and mud. ‘There is not peace’, says my God, ‘for the wicked.’”

Motyer: “Be careful to do nothing.” The issue was not one of politics but of faith. If only Ahaz could be persuaded to do nothing, to keep clear of compromising alliances, the Lord could be trusted to keep his promises to David and to deal with the Assyrian threat (as indeed he ultimately did; see **37:36-38**). The issue is as clear-cut as that: will Ahaz seek salvation by works (politics, alliances) or by simple trust in divine promises?

This exhortation would be similar to “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.”

2. Two Negative Commands

- a. “Have no fear” most common command of Jesus in the NT

Genesis 15:1 to **Abraham**: After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.

Genesis 26:24 to **Isaac**: And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham.”

Genesis 46:3 to **Jacob**: “And He said, ‘I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.’”

To Moses, to Joshua, etc.

Deuteronomy 20:1 *"When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you."*

Isaiah 8:12 *"you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it."*

Isaiah 35:4 *"Say to those with anxious heart, 'Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; the recompense of God will come, but He will save you.'"*

Isaiah 41:10 *"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."*

Borgman: the call not to fear is always related to some aspect of God's character and what He will do for you; look away from the danger to the one who has all power to deliver you from all danger; Matt. 10:28 – only fear God

b. *"Do Not be fainthearted"* –weak of heart

Deut. 20:3-4 *"Hear O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."*

Borgman: these 4 commands are all faith words; **Rev. 21:8** – God casts the cowardly into hell; the opposite of faith is "cowardly and unbelieving"; instead be stout hearted; put your trust in God; should stir us up to take risks for God

III. (:4b-9a) ENCOURAGEMENT -- THE VICTORY OF FAITH MUST BE REINFORCED WITH GODLY ENCOURAGEMENT / THE FEARFUL PANIC OF UNBELIEF CANNOT SEE PAST THE PRESSURE OF THE PRESENT CRISIS

3 Encouragements to Trust God in the Present Crisis:

A. (:4b) Understand the Limitations of God's Enemies – Smoke Without Fire

"because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands, on account of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram, and the son of Remaliah."

Two blazing sticks pulled out of the fire that could be used as torches ... but have burned down to the point where they are just smoldering – more smoke than fire left

Psalms 2 – we see *"The kings of the earth take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!'"* How does that work out for them?? Lord not impressed by their fierce anger – makes fun of them

B. (:5-7) Understand Whose Plans Get Carried Out

"Because Aram, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has planned evil against you,

saying, 'Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,' thus says the Lord God, 'It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass.'"

Prov. 19:21 "Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand."

Ps. 33:10-12 "the Lord nullifies the counsel [plans] of the nations" – don't worry about the evil plans of the nations today

James 4:13-17 – we see the plans of self-sufficient, self-confident worldly business executives – making plans to add to their stockpile of wealth – "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.' But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil."

C. (:8-9a) Understand Who Governs with Ultimate Authority

1. Authority Structure in Syria

"For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin (now within another 65 years Ephraim will be shattered, so that it is no longer a people),"

God raises up nations and brings them down in defeat; Ephraim won't be around much longer

Rom. 13:1 "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God."

Daniel 4 – King Nebuchadnezzar had to learn the hard way "the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes . . . He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"

If you fail to recognize God as your ultimate Head and Sovereign, you are destined for destruction; align yourself in submission under the supreme sovereign; don't try to maintain control of your life in rebellion against God

Motyer: the 65 year reference (735-670 BC) is to the fact that in 671 Esarhaddon imported foreign settlers into the area of the former northern kingdom (cf. 2 Ki. 17:24; 2 Ch. 33:11; Ezer. 4:2). At that point those deported after the fall of Samaria (722 BC) were bereft of a land to return to and thus finally ceased as a sovereign people.

2. Authority Structure in the Northern Kingdom – Israel

"and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah."

3. Authority Structure in Judah – God's Kingdom – by application: in the Church
Unspoken – but implied

IV. (:9b) WARNING -- THE VICTORY OF FAITH MUST RESPOND TO DIVINE WARNINGS / THE FEARFUL PANIC OF UNBELIEF HARDENS THE HEART ON THE PATH TO CERTAIN DEFEAT

“If you will not believe, you surely shall not last.”

Play on words here – different forms of the same word

Beall: The Hebrew has a beautiful word play here, as the Qal and Hiphil of the same verb are used in juxtaposition to one another (אם לא תאמינו כי לא תאמנו) “if you do not *believe*, surely you will not be *established*”).

2 Sam. 7:16 *“Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”*

Think of the warnings in the Book of Hebrews about the need for perseverance in the faith

CONCLUSION:

4 WAYS TO REINFORCE THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

- History Lesson
- Command
- Encouragement
- Warning

1 John 5:4 *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why was Ahaz so stubborn about refusing to turn to God for help?
- 2) In what ways do we tend to rely on the arm of the flesh?
- 3) How do we try to deal with anxiety and worry and stress?
- 4) How do we tend to give our spiritual enemies too much credit?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: Note the lineage that Isaiah records for both Ahaz and Pekah. Ahaz is a scion of the Davidic dynasty. Only one family ever ruled in the south. Pekah's father, Remaliah, was not the previous king of the north. That king was Pekahiah, whom Pekah slew (2 Kings 15:25), and

then took his throne. The pattern was not infrequent in the north; no less than eight different families held the throne. This contrast is the first of several indications we will see of the importance of dynastic succession. . .

Note the repeated emphasis on this dynastic tension:

- the reference to Pekah, who took his throne by coup rather than by descent, as “the son of Remaliah” (2 Kings 15:23), reminding Ahaz of how tenuous his hold on authority is
- describing Ahaz personally as “the house of David” in v. 2
- the death of Ahaz's favorite son Maaseiah in 2 Chr 28:7
- now the threat of being replaced by one not of the line

Understanding this dynastic threat is a key to understanding the verses to follow. Isaiah has discerned Ahaz's deep inner fear, and lays it out in the open. . .

True peace and security come only through trusting in the Lord. In particular [same verb] used initially in 2 Sam 7:16 to promise the perpetuity of the Davidic line. This is yet another index of the dynastic emphasis of the chapter.

Borgman: Ahaz's Crisis and the Immanuel Promise – Part 1

Chap. 7 begins a new section in Isaiah; the unfolding of Isaiah's commission in terms of his hardening mission; we see a very frightened Ahaz; Assyrians moving down as a threat to northern kingdom and to Syria; they make an alliance during days of Jotham and try to bring Judah into the alliance; 2 Kings 16:1-4 talks about wicked background of Ahaz; :5 phase 1 of this war; 2 Chr. 28 we see why they were unsuccessful in their attack; sounds like Ahaz was conquered but the Lord intervened through his prophet Oded; all of this account is packed into vs.1; you would think that in light of God's intervention, the heart of Ahaz would be turned to the Lord; but not so; the Arameans turn around and decide to come back and finish off Ahaz; the southern army was greatly weakened at this time; he had reason to be frightened; “*the house of David*” shook – the house that had God's covenant promises; God's faithfulness to the house of David; Ahaz has a hardened heart; has turned his back on the God of his fathers; God sends a prophet; peculiar request to take along your son; symbolic name – almost illustrating the word becoming flesh; the message is in the son; his presence was a message to Ahaz himself; word of hope and faithfulness; they are the holy seed that will not be stamped out; you will not be wiped out; Who saved you last time? He will do it again; trust God and trust His promises;

Gives him 3 supporting arguments as to why he should obey this command to be a man of faith:

- 1) :4 -- these two enemies are already spent
- 2) :5-6 -- these evil plans by these evil men have been nullified by God – Ps. 33:10-12
- 3) :8-9 – clinching argument – God will shatter one of these nations; importing prisoners of war to water down the blood line of the northern kingdom; creating a half breed race = Samaritans; what is left unsaid is most important = the head of Judah should be God

Scott Hathaway: How to Kill Your Fear

All of us live with fear; Welcome to the human race! Yet God commands us not to fear; the most common command of Jesus in the NT; Worry = take our fears and project them into the future with the worst possible consequences; at least worry is usually a false prophet; to compensate we plan more or work harder; we think that if we had more info it would help; many times if we had more facts we would be more afraid because the facts are not always good;

psychosis = a little fear that takes over and begins to dominate our life; “I’m stressed” sounds better than “I’m a coward and I am afraid of failing and afraid of what others will think of my performance; How do we overcome worry and fear? To be more afraid of God than anything else; kill our fear with the fear of God; Psychology wants us to control our fears so that they don’t dominate our life; Jesus calls us to a higher standard of not even fearing but trusting in Him;

Douglas Van Dorn: Trees Shaking in the Wind

Need to understand the historical setting of the prophecy; major player is Ahaz; makes a covenant with Assyria; ends up being the beginning of the end for Judah; recognizing the Assyrian gods as the ones he is going to worship; rips up the biblical covenant and signs a new one; Ahaz ends up even more set against God and his heart hardened after this confrontation with the prophet; Ahaz is making an alliance with an evil empire that he didn’t need to make; repentance still remained as option for southern kingdom; God sending his word to harden the king; chaps. 7-39 Whom will you trust? God or the wicked nations? Ephraim is one of the southernmost tribes of Israel; Ahaz concerned about water supply; son is a living object lesson; God uses weak young children to accomplish his purposes; Is 10:20-222 – remnant passage; Judah will not be totally wiped out; God knows Ahaz is not going to listen to Him; The longer you sit in church and reject God’s word the more your heart may be hardened; the fact that Christ will return is the hope of the believer; the fact that Christ has not yet returned is the hope of the unsaved; don’t delay; the longer the clay sits in the sun the harder and more brittle it becomes

TEXT: Isaiah 7:10-16

TITLE: MESSIANIC PROMISE OF VIRGIN BIRTH OF IMMANUEL

BIG IDEA:

GOD SOVEREIGNLY EXTENDS HIS GRACE IN THE FORM OF PRECIOUS MESSIANIC PROMISES THAT ENSURE THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS KINGDOM OBJECTIVES AND MEET OUR NEED IN TIMES OF TRIAL

INTRODUCTION:

Sometimes we look at our lives and things seem so random and meaningless. What are we accomplishing? Why are we here? How did we even get to this point in the circumstances of our life? Who is really in charge? When will we see any progress in terms of the fulfillment of God's promises for the future? Where are we headed?

In this passage which looks like it spells the end for the Davidic dynasty – the successive reigns of the sons of David on the throne over the nation of Judah, God proclaims the fulfillment of His kingdom objectives. God has a plan and He is working that plan. He is in control and still fulfilling His gracious promises. Ahaz may reject God's grace and prove unfaithful, but God remains faithful to His covenant promises.

The key theme throughout the Book of Isaiah is **Where Will We Turn for Help in Times of Trouble?** Where did you turn this past week? Maybe you received some difficult news. Maybe all is not right with your job situation, or your health, or your family relationships, or your finances, or your dreams for serving the Lord in what seems to you to be a significant role – Where do you turn for Help? Maybe you have heard of others who are struggling. How can you encourage them to turn to the Lord for help?

King Ahaz faced that question in his time of crisis and failed miserably. But God's gracious word of promise comes to us this morning.

GOD SOVEREIGNLY EXTENDS HIS GRACE IN THE FORM OF PRECIOUS MESSIANIC PROMISES THAT ENSURE THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS KINGDOM OBJECTIVES AND MEET OUR NEED IN TIMES OF TRIAL

I. (:10-11) THE OFFER OF GOD'S GRACE COMES BY WAY OF REVELATION

Nature of God's Grace:

A. (:10) Undeserved

“Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying,”

Why should God speak to wicked king Ahaz?

God owed nothing to Ahaz.

Ahaz had already committed to a political alliance with the king of Assyria to try to rescue him from the invasion of the King of Syria and the King of Israel – his trust was not in the God of the covenant. **2 Kings 16:7** *“So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser King of Assyria”*

God's revelation comes to us as a gracious invitation for us to learn the mind of God; to see our true condition before God; to repent and trust in His provision for our deliverance.

What a sad state of affairs when God is silent and does not speak.

B. (:11a) Beneficial

“Ask a sign for yourself”

Van Parunak: Similarly, in ch. 38, Hezekiah asks for a sign (v. 22), and the Lord moves the shadow on the sundial backwards (v. 8).

Oswalt: In the Bible, signs may be **miraculous**, as in the deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 6:22) or the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:14), but they may also be a **symbolic means** whereby a prediction is made memorable. In this way they provide a benchmark for the fulfillment to be recognized (Num. 16:38; Ezek. 12:6; Isa. 8:3, 4, 18; cf. 1 Sam. 2:34 and Luke 2:12, where no symbolism is involved, but where the evidential aspect is). Delitzsch well says that “signs authenticate divine causality retrospectively or divine certainty prospectively.”

Here God is commanding Ahaz to pick out a sign that will be meaningful to him and helpful to him in confirming God’s Word

C. (:11b) Sovereign

“from the LORD your God;”

God can always keep His commitments. What a comfort when directing our prayers and requests to Him. What an encouragement when we study His gracious promises.

D. (:11c) Limitless, Spectacular, Striking

“make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven.”

God’s grace always comes to us in ways that exceed our imagination or expectations.

Just look at the emphasis on the riches and abundance of God’s Grace in the book of Ephesians: (first 3 chapters – doctrinal section)

Ephes. 1:3 We have been *“blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”*

Ephes. 1:7 *“in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace”*

Ephes. 1:18-19 *“so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe”*

Ephes. 2:4 Look at the infinite resources of God: *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us”*

Ephes. 2:7 *“so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”*

Ephes 3:8 ministry of Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles *“to preach to the Gentiles the*

unfathomable riches of Christ

Ephes. 3:20 “*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think*”

[Could have asked for anything – cf. TV commercial – gets to ask for one wish – removal of spare tire; many wishes (wishes), etc.]

Our expectation should be that God intends to deliver a spectacular sign here; something that will confirm the truth of His Word and His promise that He has just made to Ahaz; remember the end of vs. 9 – you must stand fast in faith in order for things to go well for you

“if you will not believe, you surely shall not last”

Remember that crisis that Ahaz was facing

II. (:12-13) THE REJECTION OF GOD’S GRACE TESTS GOD’S PATIENCE (BUT NEVER FRUSTRATES HIS PURPOSES)

A. (:12) Smokescreen of Excuses and Rationalizations

“But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!’”

Sounds pious; trying to appeal to Scripture about the folly of testing God; feared finding out that the Lord would stand by His word; had his own agenda and did not want to submit to the control of God

Van Parunak: His refusal is phrased in pious terms. He refuses to “tempt the Lord.” The phrase is meant to recall Israel's experience in the wilderness (Exod 17:2), when they demanded that Moses give them water. . . **Deut 6:16** *“Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.”*

Trying to hide a heart of rebellion and lack of faith
Disobeying a direct command from God

Remember Paul’s address to the philosophers at Athens – they loved to debate various theories – but Paul presses upon them their accountability before God:

Acts 17:30-31 *“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”*

Repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus are commanded; not an option to just consider among many

B. (:13) Slap in the Face of God’s Grace and Patience

“Then he said, ‘Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?’”

Isaiah the prophet is the one speaking here; Ahaz has wearied the prophet as well as the Lord; Turns attention away from Ahaz to the house of David – the sign will be given to them;

Van Parunak: Now Isaiah, instead of addressing Ahaz as the house of David, addresses himself more widely. He bypasses the head, as though he were already irrelevant.

Do not presume against the patience of God

Rom. 2:4-5 *“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart [perfect description of King Ahaz] you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”*

Application: How do we respond to God’s grace in ways that are really a slap in the face of His grace and patience?

- I can’t change the way I am ... I am not really a new creature in Christ ... just a poorly reformed old creature
- God doesn’t expect me to be perfect; as long as I try to obey Him in the big things, He will look the other way on my pet minor transgressions
- When I face pressure, I immediately assume that God has forsaken me or forgotten about me and I scramble around to see where I can find help and relief

We must persevere in faith when under trial and ask God for wisdom – James 1; run to God and cling to Him rather than run away and look elsewhere

III. (:14-16) THE SOVEREIGN EXTENSION OF GOD’S GRACE CENTERS ON MESSIANIC FULFILLMENT OF KINGDOM OBJECTIVES

A. (:14a) Sovereign Sign

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign.”

We should expect something pretty dramatic and miraculous

Beall: אֲדַנִּי, stressing the sovereign power of God, not the covenantal relationship

B. (:14b) Virgin Birth

“Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son,”

Really definite article – “*the virgin*”

Not much of a spectacular sign if just an ordinary woman gives birth through ordinary means; Matt. 1:18-23 makes plain that this is a reference to the virgin birth of Jesus Christ

Beall: Does עַלְמָה really mean “virgin”? Many scholars deny that עַלְמָה may mean virgin, asserting that בְּתוּלָה should have been used instead. But עַלְמָה occurs 7 times in Scripture (including Isa 7:14), and all probably mean “virgin.” In Gen 24:43, it is clear that Rebekah is a virgin (she is also called a בְּתוּלָה in the same chapter--24:16). The other passages are: Exod 2:8 (used of Miriam); Ps 68:25 (“the damsels playing with timbrels”); Song 1:3, 6:8; and Prov 30:19 (“The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a

maid."—unsure what this verse means!). Furthermore, בְּתוּלָה may be used of a married woman (Joel 1:8: “Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.”); hence, its use here would be ambiguous. In addition, the Ugaritic *g'lm*t is used of a woman who is not yet married (i.e., a virgin).

Finally, the LXX translation (pre-Christian) of עַלְמָה with παρθένος indicates clearly that this word had the connotation of “virgin” in pre-Christian times (and the NT is decisive on the matter). . .

Who is in view as the fulfillment of this prophecy?

- 1) Certainly could not be Isaiah’s second child spoken of in chap. 8; he already had a son and that second child was not named Immanuel . . .
- 2) Certainly could not be a reference to a son of Ahaz = Hezekiah – he was already born a few years earlier
- 3) Certainly could not be a more general reference to just children being born in general with some type of application of God being with the nation in showing His favor in a general sense
- 4) Must be something spectacular and striking and significant given the buildup here; could not be just a normal birth
- 5) Matt. 1:23 makes plain that the reference is to the virgin birth of Christ; the use of the definite article; the language of *almah* allows for this interpretation as does the interpretation of the LXX
- 6) **Beall**: speaks of a **pregnant virgin** (not a virgin who will *become* pregnant, but one who already is pregnant): this is an impossibility apart from the miraculous working of God. Hence, Isa 7:14 speaks only of Christ's birth. [not some type of double fulfillment – because there is no immediate birth that really fits the mold well enough to serve as a type of the ultimate fulfillment]
- 7) The name Immanuel can only be a reference to Christ

What then do we make of vs. 16 which seems to have immediate historical reference to the crisis facing Ahaz? How could something that happened centuries later have any significance for Ahaz? Save that answer for a little later in the message

[Significance of male son vs female daughter; look at Bible translations that try to do away with gender distinctions]

C. (:14c) Incarnation of the God-Man – “*God with Us*”

“and she will call His name Immanuel.”

Amazing in light of Isaiah’s **vision in Chap. 6** where he was overwhelmed by the great gulf between God’s infinite and majestic holiness and man’s sin and bankruptcy

John 1 – *Word became flesh and dwelt among us*

Van Parunak: We should first recognize that while “Jesus” and “Immanuel” are distinct names, their meaning overlaps. Immanuel emphasizes God's presence with his people, while Jesus (Joshua, “Jehovah is salvation”) emphasizes his function. He cannot save his people if he is not with them, and his presence with them would be terrifying if he did not come to save. The two are intertwined.

Motyer: In **8:8** we read *your land, O Immanuel*. Nowhere else does the Old Testament exemplify “land” with a possessive pronoun accompanied by the subject of the pronoun in the vocative. Furthermore, the singular possessive is linked with “land” as a political unit only in the case of kings (e.g. Dt. 2:31; 2 Sa. 24:13), Israel personified or some other personification (e.g. Je. 2:15; Ho. 10:1), or of the Lord (e.g. 1 Ki. 8:36; Ezk. 36:5). Immanuel cannot be simply any

child whatever. Also, how could any “ordinary” child become the ground of security of the Lord’s people against the onset of the nations (8:10)? Finally, it is impossible to separate this Immanuel from the Davidic king whose birth delivers his people and whose complex name includes the designation Mighty God.

D. (:15-16) Immediate Intervention and Judgment

“He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.”

Don’t fear Syria and Israel – God is bringing swift judgment upon them

Van Parunak: As 7:21, 22 show, this is a desert diet, resorted to by migrant people like the Bedouin, those who cannot grow crops. A cow or goat can eat all sorts of rough vegetation and turn it into milk from which one can make thickened milk (yogurt), and honey is gathered from wild bees. These are choice foods indeed. Abraham, who lived in tents, served it to his heavenly guests (Gen 18:8). But for a people accustomed to live in villages and farm the fields, they are usually supplements to other food (1 Sam 17:17, 18; 2 Sam 17:28-29). . .

Grain, wine, and oil (Deut 7:13), not butter and honey, are the marks of a peaceful society. The time before the destruction of Syria and Ephraim will not be one of abundance for Judah, but one of impoverishment, when their settled way of life is disrupted and they are forced into a migratory lifestyle, living off of the land.

The reference of the prophecy in our Lord's life would be to the migration of the holy family to Egypt to escape Herod. Their settled life was disrupted, and they had to live on the road.

Brian Vos: When did Jesus eat curds and honey? Those who are left in the land after the exile experience a deprived existence under the curse; Jesus will sit in this land with his people and enter into their state of deprivation; Did Jesus have to learn to refuse the evil and choose the good; **Heb. 5:7-8;** He learned obedience through suffering; not that he was imperfect in any way; but He perfected His work in suffering; What Adam failed to do in Paradise and what Israel failed to do in the Promised Land (when they had everything going for them), Christ obeyed even as He was being made a curse for us and had nothing going for Him; rendered to God that perfect obedience; brought Ahaz a message for his present circumstances;

What are we to make of vs. 16 – **seems that the Immanuel child will be a contemporary of Ahaz;** the point is rather that the infancy of the Messiah is made the measure of time that will pertain to the resolution of Ahaz’s situation; only a few years at most and those kings which you so dread will be wiped off the face of the earth; reference to resolution of present trials; also speaks of the future in vs. 17ff; Ahaz may endure the present trial but there is a judgment that is coming that will prove his undoing; the very one in whom he put his trust will become the agent of his destruction;

CONCLUSION:

Where do you turn in hard times? Immanuel – God with us – always – and especially in our trials and difficulties; He is sufficient and all powerful; The riches of His grace surpass our expectations and fulfill His kingdom objectives

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why did the Lord continue to interact with Ahaz when he had already determined to seek help from the King of Assyria?
- 2) What are the theological implications of the virgin birth – why is it essential to maintain this fundamental truth?
- 3) How is the deity of Christ prophecied in the various Messianic prophecies of Isaiah?
- 4) How do you draw comfort on a daily basis from the truth that God is with you right now?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: The curds and honey of v. 15 is a diet of a nomadic people, i.e., an unsettled, devastated people. That would be the state of Judah at the time of the birth of the Messiah, and it apparently could be traced back to the Assyrian threat in the eighth century B.C. The devastation wrought by Assyria upon Israel and Judah at that time is the end of Israel as a nation; while it is true that Judah limps along for another century or so before the Babylonian captivity entirely crushes her kingly line, the Assyrian threat is really the beginning of this process of devastation, and at the time of Christ's birth Judah is still a devastated, broken people (compare also Keil, pp. 224-28).

The age meant by this statement is variously debated: does it mean moral discernment, i.e., 12-20 years, or simply a simple understanding of good and evil that a child has, i.e., 2-3 years? Either way, the prophecy of vv. 15-16 coincides well with historical events, since in 732 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser III destroyed Damascus and Samaria was largely devastated, and in 722 B.C. (12 years after the prophecy) Samaria was destroyed entirely.

Van Parunak: objection has three main reasons. First, it is argued that *ðîîä*, the word here rendered “virgin,” doesn't really mean “virgin,” and that Isaiah would have used a different word, *áúâä*, if that is what he meant. Second, it is argued that an event still over 700 years in the future would be irrelevant to people of Isaiah's day. Third, it is argued that the miracle of a virgin birth is irrelevant to Ahaz; the sign depends only on the short time that remains until Syria and Ephraim are destroyed, a time measured here by the time necessary for a child to be conceived, born, and come to understanding. . .

Actually, Hebrew has no word that means “virgin” in the strict sense of the English word. But every instance of *ðîîä* in the OT refers to a woman assumed to be unmarried. The alternative word, *áúâä*, means simply a woman of marriageable age, without regard to whether or not she is married. It is applied in Joel 1:8 and Job 31:1 to a married woman. One could also conclude this from Gen 24:16, which adds the phrase “whom no man had known” to clarify Rebekah's status, after she has been called by the other word. It appears that in fact “virgin” is a perfectly acceptable translation in our text, and the only word that is consistently used of virgins in the OT. . .

The Immanuel prophecy is uttered as a sign of judgment, after Ahaz has hypocritically refused to ask for a sign. It marks the end of Ahaz's dynastic hopes. Ahaz will not live in the promised king. It is a virgin who will bear this God-child. He will have no human father, and in particular, he will not be the son of Ahaz. That line will end.

Motyer: From the time of Ahaz there never was again a “*house of David*” in the true sense but only a line of puppet, pretend-kings under alien domination until, at the exile, even they disappeared into the sand of history never to re-emerge. The name of the overlord power would change, from Assyria to Babylon to Persia to Greece and finally to Rome, before Immanuel would be born, but when he was born it was to share the poverty of his people, to inherit a non-existent throne and to feel the full weight of the oppressor. The blame for all this rested on Ahaz and his failure to believe the Lord’s word. The promise awaited its time but the threat was immediate.

Phil Johnson: His Name Immanuel

Name gives us a hint of his **deity**. The Messiah who was promised to be the deliverer for the nation Israel would be no mere man but God incarnate come to earth in human form. [Also Is. 9:6-7 and Micah 5:2.] Does not fit into theology of Jewish rabbis who only see the transcendence of God.

The Context of this passage: given in the middle of a national crisis that occurred more than 600 years before Christ was born; must have seemed like God had abandoned the wicked, divided kingdom: unbelieving nation of Judah; all the northern kings described as evil; capital was Samaria; sometimes called Ephraim; impure race and religion; only 2 tribes remained faithful to the Davidic dynasty = Judah; Messiah promised through the line of David; Joseph was a descendant of David through the kingly line;

I. A Promise --

II. A Warning –

Rejecting good news from God; Isaiah angered by this rejection;

A young woman of marriageable age like maiden; look at OT usage; look at Jewish translation in LXX; Hezekiah born before this prophecy; neither son born of a virgin;

God gave Ahaz a long range prophecy that would pertain to future generations; God would faithfully perpetuate the Davidic line of kings despite Ahaz;

Warning of judgment to come; Assyrians will end up overthrowing the kingdom; 8:7; reference to Immanuel’s land is obvious reference to Messiah;

David Silversides: Immanuel, God With Us

1. Christ is Immanuel – the reassurance of a sign would have increased the obligation of Ahaz to trust in the Lord instead of in the king of Assyria; vs. 14 switch from *Jehovah* (covenant God) to *Adonai* (powerful, sovereign God); liberal scholars refer prophecy to son of Ahaz or Isaiah; RSV and NEB translate as a “young woman”; does not believe in any double reference (evangelical accommodation); Gen. 24:16 both words used in reference to Rebekah; *bethulah* given explanatory explanation; 24:43 *almah* is used without clarification; so *almah* is stronger word that could stand on its own; Ex. 2:8 used of Miriam; used twice in Song of Solomon; this birth was meant to be a sign that would be an unusual and striking and outstanding marvel

2. God’s Purpose of Salvation cannot be Frustrated – Ahaz showed his unbelief in the whole covenant of God; despised the truth but the truth will still prevail;

3. Christ is fully a Man – butter and honey he shall eat; unsolid food for the very young?? That He may come to the point of age of accountability; he shall proceed from infancy to boyhood; development of his human, sinless nature

4. Short Term Deliverance but no Everlasting Salvation – in the same type of short space of time the two kingdoms threatening Judah would be gone – Syria and Israel; although the immediate threat would be dealt with, no real deliverance at this time for the nation; King of Assyria would come in judgment; Ahaz was not interested in Immanuel

Oswalt: Possibly, then, it is the **dual focus** of the oracle that explains the use of *alma* here. In the short term, the virgin conception does not seem to have had primary importance. Rather, the significance is that a child conceived at that moment would still be immature when the two threatening nations would have been destroyed. . . . But if a virgin overshadowed by God's Spirit should conceive and give birth, it would not only be a sign of God's presence with us. Better than that, it would be the reality of that experience. So Ahaz's sign must be rooted in its own time to have significance for that time, but it also must extend beyond that time and into a much more universal mode if its radical truth is to be any more than a vain hope. For such a twofold task *alma* is admirably suited. [Oswalt takes a dual fulfillment type of view.]

Brian Vos: Immanuel

Remember end of vs. 9 – if you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm and stand at all; now the Lord speaks to Ahaz again; He knows the rebellious heart of Ahaz and yet gives him his promise and offers him a sign besides; How longsuffering is the Lord to rebellious sinners; sign to make God's word and promise more certain to Ahaz; privilege of naming the sign; you name the sign and I will give it; he acts like he is so concerned about offending the Lord; rebellion cloaked in guise of piety; God had revealed Himself as the great king of His people; had entered into covenant with His people; promised to be their protector and defender and savior; but they in turn must obey His law and serve Him and trust Him and not turn to other gods and nations; Ahaz renounces and revokes his covenant status; ("We have no king but Caesar"); Isaiah cuts right through the hypocrisy; sees through the sham; reminds him that he sits on David's throne; remember the Davidic covenant; God is wearied with the rebellion of sinners (at least in human terms); God is no longer the God of Ahaz; Does this mean that God's covenant with David will no longer stand? Does it mean that God's Word has failed? Does God's covenant depend on the faithfulness and obedience of men? The name cannot be applied to anyone who is not God. . .

Ahaz, how could you be so foolish? Why didn't you believe and trust? Life gets difficult for you; where do you turn? You struggle with temptation and sin, where do you turn? You doubt your salvation, where do you turn? This is a timeless message; He is giving us an answer to all of our present trials; The answer is Immanuel = God with us! His Word and promises are True; If you want signs to make that more certain – look to the resurrection and the symbolism of the sacraments; God has not promised you a life of wealth and ease and good health;

TEXT: Isaiah 7:17-25

TITLE: SHOCKING JUDGMENT COMES FROM THE HAND OF THE LORD

BIG IDEA:

THE HAND OF THE LORD USES WICKED INSTRUMENTS FOR JUDGMENT TO BRING ABOUT ALMOST TOTAL DESOLATION (BUT STILL SUSTAINS HIS PEOPLE IN THE MOST DIFFICULT OF TIMES)

INTRODUCTION:

It's been a week of **disasters** for our nation. We can make a distinction between the wicked atrocities inflicted by the evil Boston Marathon bombers and the unexplained tragedy of the industrial accident that leveled the area surrounding the fertilizer plant in Texas. One is an atrocity; the other is a tragedy. But in both cases there were significant injuries and multiple loss of life. There is still mourning and sadness and difficulty coping. What a sad week for our country. Our heart goes out to those who have been directly impacted and who are suffering and who are struggling to recover. **Is God still in control** in tumultuous and troubling times like these?

Our passage predicts unparalleled times of devastation and destruction that will come from the hand of the Lord. But in the case of Ahaz and Judah, there is a direct connection to God bringing **judgment for sin**. I want to make plain the distinction -- I am not attributing our country's circumstances this week to God's hand of judgment. There are multiple reasons why calamity befalls us in this sinful world. Sometimes it is for judgment; sometimes it is for pruning so that we grow and bear more fruit for Him; but always it is ultimately for His glory.

But the connection I want you to see is that even where the instrument of destruction is wicked in itself like the cruel nation of Assyria, **God is still in control** and directing all of the circumstances of our life. That is what gives us **hope**. God still makes provision for His people and sustains us even in the most difficult of times.

We must hold on to the truth of the **Sovereignty of God** over all nations; over all of our external circumstances; over everything that happens to us. This in no way eliminates the moral responsibility and culpability of God's instruments to accomplish His purposes --
Note **Hab. 1:11** "*But they will be held guilty.*"

THE HAND OF THE LORD USES WICKED INSTRUMENTS FOR JUDGMENT TO BRING ABOUT ALMOST TOTAL DESOLATION (BUT STILL SUSTAINS HIS PEOPLE IN THE MOST DIFFICULT OF TIMES)

(:17) SUMMARY: UNPARALLELED BAD TIMES COMING FOR AHAZ AND JUDAH

A. Shocking Administrator of Judgment -- Supreme Sovereign Orchestrating the Judgment

"The LORD will bring"

Threefold repetition of this theme -- "*the Lord will whistle*" (:18) and "*the Lord will shave*" (:20)

No accident; Ahaz has not been targeted in error

The Lord working against His own people; taking the initiative to bring them low;

There is no escaping this judgment

B. Shocking Targets of Judgment – All 3 Associated with Ahaz

1. Ahaz – “*on you,*” – despite your haughty self confidence and independent spirit
2. Nation – “*on your people,*” the elect nation; the people of the covenant; the circumcised
3. Household – “*and on your father's house*” – dynastic succession and prosperity for the royal family was so important to them

Remember the circumstances we have been studying about Ahaz’s unbelief and disobedience. He clearly deserved God’s judgment.

C. Shocking Extent of Judgment -- Unparalleled Bad Times

“*such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah,*”
Split of the kingdom was a truly sad day for the nation

Young: With the coming of the Assyrian king an entire new order of things is introduced. With Tiglath-pileser III the destruction of the theocracy began and a new period was introduced. What set in motion the train of events leading up to the exile and the abolishing of the theocracy was the coming of this particular Assyrian king. From this time on, nothing would be as it had been before. The end of the theocracy was now in sight. By his refusing to obey the Lord, Ahaz was responsible for the introduction of this entirely new order of things.

D. Shocking Instrument of Judgment -- Terrifying Adversary – a turning of the tables

“*the king of Assyria.*”
The very one to whom Ahaz had turned for help would be his antagonist

Oswalt: By depending on himself rather than God, Ahaz has unleashed a whirlwind (cp **Hos 8:7**) which will not be content to devour his troublesome northern neighbors. Led by the God he has disdained, it will come sweeping over him and his nation as well. . . Whatever a man trusts in place of God will one day turn to devour him.

Structure: Followed by **4 statements of amplification** with the same introductory formula:
“*and it will come about in that day*” vs. **20** just has the shortened form of “*in that day*”

John Martin: “*in that day*” denotes a time of judgment on the nation of Judah. Often this phrase (s in 4:2, e.g.) is used eschatologically to refer to the time of extreme judgment in the Great Tribulation just before the Messiah will return to establish the millennial kingdom. But sometimes as here (7:21) it refers to a judgment to come on the nation soon. The near judgment pictures the extreme judgment to come at the end of the age.

I. (:18-19) INVASION BY PERVASIVE, CRUEL ENEMY DIRECTED BY THE HAND OF THE LORD – TWO IMAGES OF SWARMING INSECTS – FLIES AND BEES

A. (:18) Enemies Summoned by God

1. **Fly = Egypt** – from the Southwest

*“And it will come about in that day, that **the LORD will whistle** for the fly that is in the remotest part of the rivers of Egypt,”*

whistle – **Is. 5:26** – when the Lord summons, the hired nation comes swiftly; Who here has the best whistle?? Gets attention of people

great swarms of flies that would gather around the many rivers flowing into the Nile; river floods and then recedes and you have marshland with swarms of nasty flies; remember plague of flies under Moses (cf. cicadas invading)

Deut. 17:16 – warning against ever turning to Egypt for help – *“You shall never again return that way”*

Is. 30:1-5 Judah in days of Hezekiah warned against considering making any alliance with Egypt

2. **Bee = Assyria** – from the Northeast – Relentless Pursuit

“and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.”

Have you ever been chased by a bee?

Young: The bees are a picture of cruelty and danger.

Deut. 1:44 *“The Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do, and crushed you from Seir to Hormah.”* – relentless pursuit; aggressive

Deut. 7:20 *“Moreover, the Lord your God will send the hornet against them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you perish.”* – no place to hide from the bee

B. (:19) Enemies Settle In All Places in the Land – the most inaccessible; the most critical
Four places mentioned specifically:

1. *“And they will all come and settle on the **steep ravines**,”*

“Settle” = swarm

2. *“on the **ledges of the cliffs**,”*
3. *“on all the **thorn bushes**,”*
4. *“and on all the **watering places**.”*

II. (:20) INSTRUMENT OF HUMILIATION – IMAGE OF HIRED RAZOR = CRUEL ASSYRIA UNDER THE SOVEREIGN DIRECTION OF THE LORD

A. Hand of the Lord Administering Judgment

*“In that day **the Lord will shave** with a razor”*

B. Horror Associated with the Identification of the Hired Adversary

“hired from regions beyond the Euphrates (that is, with the king of Assyria),”

C. Humiliation Inflicted by the Enemy

1. Shaving of the **Head** – *“the head”* – Mourning over loss of life and devastation

Van Parunak: Is. 22:12; Jer. 16:6; Ezek. 7:16-18; Amos 8:10;

2. Shaving of the **Pubic Hair** – *“and the hair of the legs;”* – Shame / Disgrace

Moyer: a euphemism for private parts (cf. 1 Sa. 24:3-4; and is indicative of the indignities heaped on the conquered. The contrast between head and feet and between the hidden hair of the body and the visible beard expresses totality.

3. Shaving of the **Beard** – *“and it will also remove the beard.”* – Disrespect / Immaturity / Foolishness

PreceptAustin: In the ancient Middle East, a man's beard was a badge of honor and respect and thus this passage predicts Judah's utter disgrace and humiliation at the hands of the Assyrian "barbers"! (cp Isa. 15:2; Jer. 47:5; 48:37; Ezek. 7:18; Amos 8:10; Micah 1:16;

You end up looking silly and ridiculous like David's servants in **2 Sam. 10:4-5** -- incident where Hanun cut off half of their beards

III. (:21-22) IMPOVERISHED DIET BUT SUFFICIENT PROVISION – CURDS AND HONEY

“Now it will come about in that day that a man may keep alive a heifer and a pair of sheep; and it will happen that because of the abundance of the milk produced he will eat curds, for everyone that is left within the land will eat curds and honey.”

PreceptAustin: Coagulated milk (like cottage cheese) reflects a diet of poverty as one would see in a land that had been overrun by enemy forces.

Largely a diet of a migratory people rather than a settled society

The size of the flock represented here might seem somewhat average to us city dwellers; but when you compare some of the flocks mentioned in Scripture you can see that this is only a subsistence level of existence. When the soldiers swept through and seized all of the property for themselves, the best a household could do was hang on to a few animals.

(BUT STILL SUSTAINS HIS PEOPLE IN THE MOST DIFFICULT OF TIMES)

IV. (:23-25) IMPOVERISHED LAND – BRIARS AND THORNS

Threefold repetition of Briars and Thorns:

A. (:23) Worthless Wilderness – Briars and Thorns -- Devalued

“And it will come about in that day, that every place where there used to be a thousand vines, valued at a thousand shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns.”

In chap. 5 – choice vines = what the Lord had planted; displaced by briars and thorns; impact of sin on the environment

No longer enjoyable to work as the fulfillment of how God has created man to function; instead we must toil and sweat and fight against an environment that is fallen and is our enemy; does not cooperate with us; we labor against briars and thorns;

People expect work to just be some pleasant fulfillment of their creative dreams; sadly naïve; never underestimate the negative impact of sin

B. (:24) Wild Animals Dominate – Briars and Thorns -- Dangerous

“People will come there with bows and arrows because all the land will be briars and thorns.”

You need protection; you had better bring with you your bows and arrows; wild animals roaming around; you can’t just go for a nice stroll in the beautiful meadow

C. (:25) Wasteland Not Suitable for Cultivation -- Desolate

“And as for all the hills which used to be cultivated with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place for pasturing oxen and for sheep to trample.”

A far cry here from the Garden of Eden;

Man commanded to have dominion over the earth; here because of sin the briars and thorns are having the dominion

CONCLUSION:

Choose the gracious promise of **Immanuel** rather than the threat of Tiglath Pileser III; Trust in God’s provision rather than the arm of the flesh.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do events of chaos and terrorism shake your confidence in the Lord’s sovereign control?
- 2) Why would the Lord choose to use wicked instruments for inflicting judgment on His people?
- 3) What type of ruin is brought about by unbelief and disobedience?
- 4) How frustrating is it to live in an environment dominated by briars and thorns?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Matthew Black: Ichabod – The Glory of God has Departed

Northern kingdom called Ephraim; Ahaz panicked in tough times and called on Assyria; the punishment of Ahaz and Judah; the glory and presence of God utterly departs from the people of God; we want to be a church where God's glory and presence is evident; 1 Sam. 4:19 – Ichabod; same situation in our text; wicked king who claimed to follow the Lord but fed his children to Molech; are their golden calves of idolatry in your life?

I will call for those pagan nations and they will have a field day with you; you will feel the consequences of your sin; each year the flooding of the Nile brought swarms of flies to the land; prophecy of cruel Assyrian army; God will give you up to your own sin; sin consumes like a swarming insect; sin will leave you shorn and humiliated; it will make us look like young schoolboys; whoever commits sin becomes a slave of sin; the reality of sin; the results of sin = poverty; land of promise has become a land of cursing; keep yourself pure and holy; they lost all their crop and all their cattle; all they have left is a few cows to live off of; sin gives no return; all they got back was briars and thorns; now no peace and protection; everything trampled underfoot; don't ever take your life out of the protection of God (out of a local church – no accountability)

Brian Borgman: Unparalleled Desolation Predicted

Fall of Pekah and Rezin is not ultimately good news for Ahaz because his kingdom will fall as well; vs. 17 is summary statement of :18-25; Lord Himself will bring the judgment and calamity and destruction to the southern kingdom; Luther calls it God's strange work; Judge of the world is committed to doing what is right; civil war and bloodshed and conspiracy and chaos during days of Jeroboam and Rehoboam; presence of God withdrawn; with Assyrian captivity comes 700+ years of domination by series of foreign powers: Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece, Rome; little tiny windows of liberty; but no long-lived – cf. Hezekiah, Maccabees, etc. Unparalleled in terms of 800 years of oppression and domination;

“the king of Assyria” -- Every time liberal scholars see something abrupt they assume that it must have been an insertion by a later gloss; they have prejudiced presuppositions as if abruptness could not have been a literary device;

“in that day” – speaks of entire period of God's judgment upon His apostate people; God whistles and like a dog Assyria comes running; God's easy sovereignty; Assyria is not a conscientious servant of God; one of the cruelest armies ever assembled; used to wear sandals with spikes – as they trampled their enemies they utterly decimated their bodies; God sovereign over evil nations and their atrocities and over evil terrorists; no window for chance and luck in biblical world view; things don't just happen; Hab. 1:5-12 God raises them but they will be help guilty – sovereignty and responsibility;

On all the places that you would try to find hiding from enemies, they will already be resting there and waiting for you; no safe place of refuge; absolute horror to be invaded and there are so many of the enemy that you could not find one single hiding place

Shaved with a hired razor – **2 Kings 16:7-8** Ahaz had tried to pay off Assyria; traitorous language: I am your servant and son; talking about a lot of gold and silver in this payoff; biting irony here; God is really hiring him and using Ahaz's money; incident with David and Hiram's sons

Remnant hope – scarcity but at least provision – plenty of curds and honey; God still remembers

His elect and sustains them in time of poverty and scarcity; this is like the manna in the wilderness; Enroll in seminary and you will experience provision in the midst of poverty and scarcity

Nobody to work the vineyards; become overgrown with thorns and briars; become unproductive; vineyards used to be sustenance and now are habitat for dangerous wildlife; you best be armed; overrun; hostile; Lev. 26:27-33 – part of the covenantal curse

Conclusion: all of this destruction, desolation and judgment comes because of Ahaz's unbelief and disobedience; Ahaz followed path of human wisdom and arm of the flesh instead of the promise of God; don't trust in political solutions

Van Parunak: curds; yogurt; fermented milk product; characteristic of a diet of a migrant people; dwell under your own vine and your own fig tree is picture of settled prosperity; these require constant care; you will eat wheat and rye and barley; villages have been destroyed; fields have been ravaged; time of impoverishment for the nation; quite a few parallels to Is. 5; Lord bringing judgment upon His vineyard; Isaiah being called to deliver a very negative message of judgment to the nation; the disaster that is coming is under the Lord's control; He will take care of His own;

Summary statement: Ahaz has been told that his dynasty is at an end; Messiah will come from a virgin; Tiglath-Pilezer and other pagan kings are coming; you are going to get what you asked for = the king of Assyria; not going to be for your benefit but for your harm; Not coming on account of invitation of Ahaz but summoned by the Lord;

3 Amplifications: introductory formula: "*it shall come to pass in that day*" = the day of the Lord; why does Isaiah recount events that took place back in seventh century B.C.? we are just seeing the trailer (the picture of a foreign power coming in to decimate the land) for the full day of the Lord; all nations will ultimately be gathered together against Israel;

1) (:18-20) 2 graphic images

A. Swarms of Insects

Lord will whistle for them like for a dog; Ahaz tried to summon them with money and with diplomatic approach; parallels to hissing (5:26); you will be annoyed and tormented by these invaders; Ezra 6:22; Assyria represents Babylon here as well; Insects annoy you where you live

B. Barber with razor

When the razor cuts your hair off; you will be shaved off and removed from the land;

- Shaving the **head** is a sign of mourning –people are going to die; it is going to be sad
- Shaving the **beard** – Hebrew word for elder = bearded one; if you are shaven you look immature; no experience; you look foolish; 2 Sam. 10 incident; they really looked ridiculous; Judah will look really, really stupid
- Shaving the **pubic hair** – disgraceful image; Lord is going to shame them

2) (:21-22) – Butter and Honey -- Poverty

1 young cow and 2 sheep – is that a few or a lot??

Job 1 – look at all he had = a large herd; 11,500 animals

Nabal – 1 Sam. 25 – 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats

This is what he has managed to hang on to; the hungry soldiers have grabbed all of the other animals

Lord will be gracious to sustain remnant with these abundant provisions; not many people left in the land

3) (:23-25) – Briars and Thorns --

A shekel is 4 grams of silver; this would be a lot to pay for a vine; these are choice vines; 5:28; purpose of invasion is to render the land briars and thorns; where you used to go to cultivate the ground you will now avoid because of fear of briars and thorns; it will be so wild and thick that you won't dare set foot there; grazing lands for beasts;

It is God who is bringing this judgment on a rebellious nation and He will care for us; we are not in control;

Beall: V 17 is a two-edged verse: on the one hand it looks back to vv. 1-16 in explaining the agent who would render the threat of the two kings of Israel and Syria impotent; on the other hand, the object of the king of Assyria's wrath is not stated in v. 17 to be Israel and Syria, but rather you and your people and your father's house (note that the singular pronoun is renewed in vv. 16-17, as opposed to the plural in v. 14: here God is talking directly to Ahaz). Thus, v. 17 also looks forward to the subject of vv. 18-25, namely the devastation of Judah by Assyria. In Hebrew, the effect of v. 17 is even more dramatic, since the "king of Assyria" comes right at the end of the verse (leading some commentators– wrongly–to suspect a gloss).

Gleason Archer: The razor that is hired was the future king Sennacherib, who leveled most of Judah to the ground in 701, destroying forty-six cities (according to his own account) and leading captive some 200,000 people. The Assyrians were hired in the sense that they were first bribed by Ahaz to intervene in the West (II Chr 28:21).

David Silversides: The Right Confidence

1. False trust leads to ruin

2. There are worse things – Ahaz had been afraid of Israel and Syria; temporary deliverance is not a guarantee of long term safety; king of Assyria coming and land would be devastated; the only guarantee is in Christ; if He is our Savior all is well

3. There is still hope for those who listen – promise of Immanuel

Phil Pockras: Hard Discipline

God lowers the boom on Ahaz and Judah; after the short term deliverance announces long term horror; it will be extensive and horrific; Jerusalem barely spared when Tiglath Pilezer ravaged the land; then Babylon and Sennacherib arose to bring Judah into captivity; defining moment that led to centuries of defeat and oppression down through destruction by Rome in 70 A.D.

Picture of prisoner stripped naked and shaved from head to foot; shaved and shamed; all of this is by the design of God; none of this is outside of God's control; God not saying: "I wish I could stop this but I can't."

When disaster comes it is from Jehovah; this goes against the sensibilities of many; God wouldn't cause that to happen ... just chance?? Do I pray to a God who is helpless? How is God glorified by the devastation of Judah? The godly are delivered either from such disasters or through such disasters. God clears out the hypocrites and brings out the remnant.

TEXT: Isaiah 8:1-18

TITLE: TAKING REFUGE IN THE SANCTUARY OF IMMANUEL

BIG IDEA:

THE LORD BECOMES YOUR SANCTUARY FROM HOSTILE ENEMIES ONLY WHEN YOU FEAR HIM ALONE

INTRODUCTION:

We are still in the section of chapters 7-9 where the **promise of Immanuel** from 7:14 is prominent: “*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign; Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*” We have seen that the precious meaning of that name for the Messiah is “*God with us.*” This precious promise and sign bypassed King Ahaz who chose to reject faith in the God of the covenant and align himself with the political arm of the flesh – the power of the pagan nation of Assyria. Ahaz feared the powers of Syria and Israel which were intending to defeat Judah and install a puppet king to control that land. Ahaz should have feared the God who had demonstrated His faithfulness in the past to His beloved people. So in our text today, the Lord is going to give Ahaz a different sign – that of Mahershalalhashbaz = “*Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey.*”

We are going to concentrate today on the contrast between trusting in the **Arm of the Flesh** and where that leads, to **Taking Refuge in the Sanctuary of Immanuel**. To appreciate the truths here you need to have some identification in your life of where you are tempted to trust in the arm of the flesh. Obviously if you have never turned to Christ for salvation, you have the ultimate futility of seeking to establish righteousness before a holy God on your own terms. But what about for believers? How do we wrestle every day with trusting in the arm of the flesh? It comes down to our dependency for day to day living. Do we think that we are capable to do something on our own and go about our day without conscious dependence on our new life in Christ? Do I prepare this sermon, confident in my analytical abilities and the experience of having prepared hundreds before this one? Or do I humble myself and admit my own bankruptcy and need for the Lord’s grace? Do you pursue your job or school responsibilities in your own strength or drawing upon the power of God’s grace. Do you look down in contempt on those who are falling prey to temptation, not regarding the word of God which says “Take heed, lest you fall too ... there but for the grace of God go I.”

One reason the Lord brings trials and hostile enemies into our comfort zone is to shake us up and force us to more intensely examine our faith choices – are we trusting in the arm of the flesh or in the Lord?

THE LORD BECOMES YOUR SANCTUARY FROM HOSTILE ENEMIES ONLY WHEN YOU FEAR HIM ALONE

I. (:1-4) THE ARM OF FLESH (ASSYRIA) CAN LOOK IMPRESSIVE –

**THE IMMINENT PLUNDERING OF JUDAH’S IMMEDIATE ENEMIES;
TEMPORARY RELIEF NO GUARANTEE OF LASTING DELIVERANCE**

A. (:1) Impressive Billboard Prophecy

“Then the LORD said to me, ‘Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters: Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey.’”

Lord has a bit of marketing flair to Him; knows how to get people’s attention; First billboard in recorded history; big huge sign in prominent place

Illustration: Komatsu had impressive billboard as you flew into Peoria and drove away from airport to visit the headquarters of Caterpillar – making a statement

Go big or go home; Lord does not hedge His bets; puts His prediction out there in a bold statement

“ordinary letters” – no fancy script – wants all people to be able to read the message

Borgman: write in big capital letters so everyone can see it

Beall: write the message with an ordinary stylus (lit., בְּחַרְט אִנָּשׁ, “with the pen of a man”), i.e., so that any normal person could read what he wrote.

Young: We are not told where the tablet was to be erected, whether in the Temple court or in the house of the prophet. It was, however, to be set up so that the inhabitants of Jerusalem could see it.

Motyer: It is intended to provoke questions, not to answer them. It combines “Speed” with such an assurance of conquest that the oncoming foe does not think of the fight but only of the booty.

John Martin: Soldiers would shout these words to their comrades as they defeated and plundered their foes.

B. (:2) Impressive Authentication by Objective Witnesses – Those Aligned with Ahaz

“And I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.”

Liberal scholars love to accuse prophecies as having been uttered after the fulfillment ...

Borgman: We tend to assume these are allies of Isaiah; not so; Not in Isaiah’s camp – but a pagan priest; a religious yes-man for Ahaz; these both are probably supporters of Ahaz

Beall: These witnesses are Uriah the priest (probably the same priest mentioned in **2 Kings 16:10-16** under Ahaz, who obeyed Ahaz's orders to modify the altar to correspond to the one at Damascus) and Zechariah (possibly the father-in-law of Ahaz [**2 Kings 18:2**; 2 Chr 29:1, 13], though since Zechariah was a common name we cannot be certain).

Young: These witnesses would be able to testify that the prophet had written and exhibited the prophecy a long time before its fulfillment. When the fulfillment did come, then they could point out that Isaiah had already written thereof. There were some men whose word the nation could trust, and such would these witnesses be. In the eye of the people, they were faithful and trustworthy.

C. (:3) Impressive Authentication by the Sign Provided by the Lord = Son of Isaiah
“So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, ‘Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz;’”

Was she called prophetess just because she was married to the prophet?? No – but because the Lord used her in her own prophetic ministry – maybe that ministry was focused on the sign of the child that she gave birth to – out comes the intended word of the Lord

Oswalt: cf. Exod. 15:20; Judg. 4:4; 2 K. 22:14; Neh. 6:14

Differences between Mahershalalhashbaz and Immanuel: **Van Parunak:**

Immanuel, 7:14-16	Maher Shalal Hash Baz, 8:3-4	Contrast
14 therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,	3 And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son.	Birth after vs. before sign announced.
and shall call his name Immanuel.	Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz.	Mother vs. father gives the name Name declared before vs. after birth Name is positive vs. negative in content
15 Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.		Desolation of Judah not mentioned with MSHB
16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good,	4 For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother,	Criterion: know good and evil (adolescence) vs. be able to say “mama, daddy” (~1 year)
the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.	the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.	Event: overthrow of monarchy vs. spoiling of the country.

Van Parunak: The usual custom in the OT is for the mother to name the children (see Notes). In fact, this is what happens with Immanuel. The father gives the name only under exceptional circumstances, for example, when Jacob disapproves of the name that Rachel gives Benjamin (Gen 35:18). Here and in Hosea 1, the father, who is also a prophet, is commanded to give the child a name as part of a divine oracle.

D. (:4) Impressive Fulfillment by the Wonders Performed by the Lord – using the king of Assyria

“for before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father ' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.”

Vine: His prophecy was not designed to be, nor was it actually, a comfort to Ahaz, for the success of the Assyrian King would be only the stepping-stone to his attack upon Judah

John Martin: In about a year and nine months (nine months for the pregnancy and one year of the child’s life), Assyria would plunder both Damascus (Aram’s capital city) and Samaria (Israel’s capital). This happened in 732 B.C., which confirms the date of 734 for Isaiah’s prophecy.

How does the Arm of the Flesh look impressive to us?

- **Education** looks impressive – credentials that gain you respect; open doors of opportunity

- Character should be the credential; important that church leadership gets this right
- **Beauty** looks impressive – inward more important
Don't idolize Hollywood with its façade of beauty and fame; man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart
 - **Wealth** looks impressive – especially as you near retirement
Dependency on the Lord is key;
 - **Authority and Power** look impressive – but ask Nebuchadnezzar how that can work out
Servant heart is the key

Fleeting nature of wealth or prosperity:

Understand that the Arm of the Flesh tends to look impressive to us; we have a tendency to make decisions from the wrong frame of reference; Ahaz did not think that the invisible God could deliver him from such formidable hostile enemies ... so he turned to Assyria for help

II. (:5-8) THE ARM OF FLESH WILL ULTIMATELY DESTROY YOU --

THE DEVASTATING SPILLOVER IMPACT ON THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM

A. (:5-6) Two Reasons for the Lord's Judgment

1. Rejection of His gracious provision and edifying governance

“And again the LORD spoke to me further, saying, ‘Inasmuch as these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah,’”

“these people” – I take as a reference to the northern kingdom because of the parallel to “them” in vs. 7; but applied to Ahaz as well since the judgment will apply to both

Van Parunak: Instead, they are following a pagan king (Rezin) and a murderer and usurper (Pekah).

Shiloah = “that which is sent”

Motyer: Shiloah was the stream from the Gihon spring into Jerusalem. First, it stood for the Davidic monarchy (for it was at Gihon that the monarchy passed from David to his sons; 1 Ki. 1:33-34, 45), and secondly, it stood for Jerusalem as the city of faith. In 7:3 Ahaz, under threat of invasion and siege, was looking at his vulnerable water supply. Though Jerusalem occupied one of the most impregnable sites of the ancient world, its source of water was outside the city walls and the supply ran over ground in conduits into the city. To live in Jerusalem, therefore, required faith that the Lord would stand by his promises that this was the city he had chosen and which he would defend.

2. Rejoicing in the temporary, deceptive results of the arm of the flesh

“And rejoice in Rezin and the son of Remaliah;”

Application:

- What do you reject and why?
- What do you rejoice in and why?

B. (:7-8b) Two Images of Hostile Attack and Devastation – fierceness and extend of invasion
Mixed metaphor

1. (:7-8a) Image of Hostile Raging Waters – cannot be contained

“Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, Even the king of Assyria and all his glory; And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks. Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, It will reach even to the neck;”

Young: The Lord, the sovereign God, the One who had the power to give Ahaz a sign, that powerful Lord is about to act. He will bring up – for only He can move nations at His will – upon those who with contempt have rejected His mercies something that Judah did not wish. From the waters of Shiloh Judah had turned away. Well and good! Judah should have waters, not those of Shiloh which flow slowly, but waters of the Euphrates. No slowly flowing waters, but great and powerful waters, which will not nourish Jerusalem but will overflow her, bringing harm and damage in their wake.

2. (:8b) Image of Fierce Bird of Prey – spreads its wings over the entire land

“And the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land;”

Flexing his muscles

C. (:8c) Glimmer of Hope = Land Ultimately Belongs to Immanuel

“O Immanuel.”

The hope of the house of David; surprising to see him address Immanuel here

Borgman: almost a plea for help; God always brings His people low before He lifts them up; God’s word to the remnant in the midst of the overwhelming flood

III. (:9-15) THE ONLY HOPE FOR REFUGE IS IMMANUEL – A HOLY SANCTUARY FOR BELIEVERS OR A STONE OF STUMBLING / SNARE FOR THOSE WHO REJECT HIS RULE

A. (:9-10) God is with Us -- So the Plans of Men will Fail

“Be broken, O peoples, and be shattered; And give ear, all remote places of the earth. Gird yourselves, yet be shattered; Gird yourselves, yet be shattered. Devise a plan but it will be thwarted; State a proposal, but it will not stand, For God is with us.”

“it will not stand” – remember 7:7; take your best shot – you cannot succeed in opposing God and His people and His promise of Immanuel

Van Parunak: The next section is marked by pairs of commands. In each case, the first command is an ironic invitation to sin, while the second describes the judgment to follow, as though the sheriff were to say to the bad guys, “set foot in Dodge again, and die.” The meaning is clearly, “If you do A, you will experience B.”

Oswalt: To the extent that the plans of the nations are the result of their own rapacious arrogance, they will not stand, for God is with us.

Beall: The prophet here seems to go beyond simply the Ephraim/Syrian or the Assyrian threat to

any assaults upon Israel (“all you from far countries”), possibly ultimately referring to the end-time battle of Armageddon.

B. (:11-12) Reject Worldly Mindset

1. False Cries of Conspiracy leveled against God’s Prophet

“For thus the LORD spoke to me with mighty power and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying, ‘You are not to say, It is a conspiracy!’ In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy,”

Where Jehovah speaks in vv. 11-15 you could say that Immanuel is speaking

Three possibilities for understanding “conspiracy” here: something treasonous

1) The context has emphasized the Conspiracy that was in play with Syria and Israel aligned against Judah ... but that does not seem the focus here

2) The people were accusing God’s prophet of being involved in a conspiracy against his own people because his message was not what they wanted to hear = my preference

Vine: The reference here is not to the alliance between Pekah and Rezin. Isaiah and his associates were being accused of a conspiracy against Ahaz and Judah under him, because of the prophet’s denunciation of the alliance with Assyria. This kind of calumny was what prophets had to endure whenever they opposed an appeal by God’s people for the help of Gentile aid (Amos 7:10).

Young: Throughout the history of the church, those who have sought to call the church back to her God-given mission and away from her man-made “programs” have been treated as troublemakers.

3) More general reference:

Oswalt: it is not necessary that the reference is to a specific conspiracy. Rather, the prophet may be talking about a general approach to the explanation of events, especially unpleasant and trying events. How easy it is, when situations go against us, to become paranoid and react accordingly. Isaiah challenges his people to reject paranoia and see God’s hand in the events of their tie. To refuse to do so is to become more and more fearful, more and more unstable, for it means that our lives are ultimately in the hands of unknown powers, too devious for us to know or control. This in turn leads us toward the occult in an effort to gain control over these unknown and devious powers.

2. False Fears

“And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it.”

Psalm 56

TITLE: WHEN I AM AFRAID I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN THEE

BIG IDEA: ONLY FAITH IN GOD CAN CONQUER FEAR OF MAN

INTRODUCTION:

Fear is a powerful, paralyzing force

I. (:1-2) FEAR OF MAN IS THE NATURAL REACTION TO PERSISTENT OPPRESSION

A. How does it feel to be Trampled Upon all day long?

“Be gracious, O God, for man has trampled upon me”

“My foes have trampled upon me all day long”

B. How does it feel to be Oppressed all day long?

“Fighting all day long he oppresses me”

“For they are many who fight proudly against me”

That is why we need the Grace of God!

II. (:3-4) FAITH IN GOD IS THE SPIRITUAL REACTION TO FEAR OF MAN

A. Faith in God Requires an Active Commitment

"When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee"

B. Faith in God Produces an Attitude of Invincibility

"I shall not be afraid.

What can mere man do to me?"

That is why we need the Word of God!

Refrain: *"In God whose word I praise"*

III. (:5-7) PERSISTENT OPPRESSION CREATES A VERY REAL DANGER

Don't underestimate the danger of the situation

A. The Tactics of Oppression

1. Misrepresentation

"they distort my words"

2. Malicious Schemes

"their thoughts are against me for evil"

3. Manifold Variations

a. Open Attack

b. Secret stalking

B. The Overturning of Oppression

1. *"cast them forth"*

2. *"put down the peoples"*

That is why we need the Wrath of God!

IV. (:8-11) IF GOD IS ON OUR SIDE MAN'S ATTACKS ARE FUTILE

A. God is Totally Aware of Our Pressures and Trials

"Thou hast taken account of my wanderings"

"Put my tears in Thy bottle"

B. God Will Respond to Our Cries for Help by Frustrating Our Enemies

C. Key to Victory = God is on Our Side

"God is for me"

That is why we need the Word of God!

Refrain: *"In God, whose word I praise,*

In the Lord, whose word I praise"

Review (:11)

Faith in God Requires an Active Commitment

"In God I have put my trust "

Faith in God Produces an Attitude of Invincibility

"I shall not be afraid"

V. (:12-13) THANKSGIVING IS THE ONLY RESPONSE TO DELIVERANCE

A. Thanksgiving Because God Keeps His Promises

"Thy vows are . . . upon me, O God"

B. Thanksgiving Because God Has Delivered Us

"delivered my soul from death"

"Indeed, my feet from stumbling"

C. Thanksgiving Because God Allows Us to Continue to Live In His Presence

"So that I may walk before God in the light of the living"

That is why we need the **Promises of God!**

C. (:13) Fear the Holy One Alone

"It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, And He shall be your dread."

Fundamental attribute = Holiness

Vine: To sanctify the Lord is so to live that He has absolute authority and control over the heart and will, over every activity of the life, to walk in His fear, dreading to displease Him.

Oswalt: That which is holy is distinct from the common or ordinary. Thus to sanctify God is to demonstrate that he is *"high and lifted up"* (6:1) in power and in character, as well as in his very essence. To fail to sanctify him is to make him appear helpless, indifferent, and unimportant (Lev. 22:32; Num. 20:12; Ezek. 36:20, 21; Amos 2:7). This is exactly what the Judeans did when they sought to solve the riddles of their times according to human explanations and means: they made God appear insignificant. Rather, Isaiah calls upon them to make God the most significant fact of their existence, demonstrating by their attitudes and behavior that God is indeed holy.

E. (:14-15) Contrast between Refuge and Defeat

1. Image of Refuge = Sanctuary for Believers

"Then He shall become a sanctuary;"

Characteristics of a wildlife sanctuary:

- Safe haven – no one can hunt you or harm you
- Provision of all your needs in friendly environment appropriate to your nature
- Fellowship with creatures of the same nature
- Bucolic worshipful environment
- You must stay within the borders of the sanctuary to remain protected

Vine: Just as the Temple was designed to be to Israel the centre of their spiritual life, their joy in worship and praise, a place of holiness and peace as well as a defence, so Christ Himself is to the believer.

2. Two Images of Defeat for Those Who Reject His Rule

"But to both the houses of Israel,

a. Stone to Strike / Stone of Stumbling

"a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,"

"And many will stumble over them, Then they will fall and be broken;"

b. Snare / Trap

"a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

“And They will even be snared and caught.”

Motyer: The figure expresses a watchful divine providence whereby the sinner receives exactly what is due but does not do so without a warning having been raised to halt him on his disaster-course. It is as if a rock were put across a road to block the traveler from danger but, in carelessness or scorn, he refuses the warning and stumbles to his death. The stress in these verses is that what gives most offence to the sinner and what at the same time constitutes his greatest danger is the presence of the divine. The same God in his unchanging nature is both sanctuary and snare; it depends on how people respond to his holiness.

Beall: Both Paul and Peter use v. 14 to refer to those who reject Christ: Paul combines this verse with Isa 28:16 in Rom 9:32-33 to indicate that Israel stumbled over accepting Christ (“Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. 33 As it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”); and Peter writes that Christ is a precious stone to those who believe, but a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to those who are disobedient (1 Pet 2:6-8, citing also Isa 28:16 and Ps 118:22 [“And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.” 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, “THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,” 8 and, “A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”]; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.”]).

IV. (:16-18) THE SIGNS AND WONDERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROMISE OF IMMANUEL ENCOURAGE US TO ANTICIPATE DELIVERANCE

A. (:16) Preserve the Prophecy as you await fulfillment

“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.”

B. (:17) Eagerly Await the Promise of Immanuel

“And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.”

Who is speaking in vv.17-18 Isaiah or the Messiah? Does it have to be the same person?
I take the speaker to be Isaiah

Grogan: Perhaps it is best to view Isaiah and his disciples here as foreshadowing Christ and his church, especially as Christ himself was a prophet and his disciples, who formed the nucleus of the church, were -- like those of Isaiah -- themselves a remnant of Israel, committed to God’s word in him whom others had rejected.

John Martin: Because Hebrews 2:13 ascribes Isaiah 8:17c-18a to Christ, some interpreters feel that all of Isaiah 8:16-18 was spoken by the Messiah. Certainly the attitude conveyed in these verses was that of the Lord Jesus Christ. But in the context of Isaiah 7-9 these words should be

ascribed to Isaiah (with the writer of Heb. applying them to Christ). This was the prophet's attitude in spite of all the opposition he saw around him.

Oswalt: This waiting upon God is often a prerequisite to receiving his blessing, for in the act of waiting we confess our own helplessness and our complete dependence upon him. Without these characteristics, God's work is both hindered and misappropriated (cf. Acts 1:8).

C. (:18) Take confidence in the Signs and Wonders Provided by the Lord

“Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.”

CONCLUSION:

- The Arm of the Flesh will always be an enticing option;
- But understand that it leads to destruction.
- The promise of Immanuel must be our focus – Fear God alone and sanctify Him in our hearts.
- Immanuel will either be to you a refuge and sanctuary or a stone of stumbling and a snare.
- Eagerly look forward today to the blessed hope of the coming again of Immanuel – never losing sight of the fact that every day right now we enjoy the blessing of “*God with us.*”

THE LORD BECOMES YOUR SANCTUARY FROM HOSTILE ENEMIES ONLY WHEN YOU FEAR HIM ALONE

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What images come to your mind as you think of a sanctuary or a refuge?
- 2) Give examples throughout church history of where men with discernment and conviction were treated as treasonous conspirators by the established church of the time.
- 3) How does the fear of God remain a prominent theme in the NT as it was in the OT? Cite specific passages.
- 4) What comfort do you take from Immanuel's secure dwelling on Mount Zion which is characterized as “his land”?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: Structure of 8:9-22

- A1 International collapse (9)
- B1 Fruitless consultation (10)

- C1 Isaiah set apart from the people by the word of the Lord (11)
 - D1 The fear of the ungodly (12)
 - E1 The fear of the godly (13)
 - E2 The privilege of the godly (14a)
 - D2 The fate of the ungodly (14b-15)
- C2 Isaiah and the group separated unto the word of the Lord (16-18)
 - B2 Fruitless consultation (:19-20)
- A2 National collapse (21-22)

The advantage of displaying a passage in this way is that it exposes the central truth or, as Watts would say, the “keystone.”

Beall: V 3 records the birth of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz to Isaiah and his wife, and v. 4 gives the sign aspect of the birth. There are many similarities in these verses to Isa 7, but also several notable differences. The similarities are the birth of a child and the sign aspect involving the child and signifying the end of the Syrian/Ephraimite threat.

The differences are:

1) the woman in 7:14 is called “the virgin,” whereas the woman of 8:3 is clearly identified as Isaiah's wife, who was not a virgin (see 7:3) unless this is a second wife (called a prophetic sign role in the birth of her son [the Mishnah calls the wife of a priest a priestess—for example, Ketuboth 7.1]);

2) there was a prophecy of a birth in 7:14, but an actual birth in 8:3;

3) the names of the children are different: one is to be called Immanuel, the other MSHB (meaning “hasten the booty, hasten the spoil”);

4) the mother is to name the child in 7:14, but the father in 8:3; and

5) the signs are different—in 7:16 the sign has to do with the child knowing good and evil (at least 3 years old and possibly much older), whereas in 8:4 the sign is simply the ability to cry Daddy and Mommy (the first words a child speaks, usually by the age of 1).

Thus, it seems that the prophecy in chapter 8 occurs perhaps a year or so later than the historic visit with Ahaz in chap. 7. It deliberately calls to mind the previous prophecy given in Ahaz's presence, and now the Lord reiterates the prediction in the presence of Ahaz's court, using Isaiah's child as the evidence of fulfillment of the sign. In no way, however, is 8:3 the fulfillment of the sign.

given in 7:14: they are closely related, but different signs.

Van Parunak: Unbelievers sometimes bring up unhappiness in the world as evidence that God is not with us. They presume that God must be unfailingly loving and kind. But these verses present a much richer, more nuanced view of our Lord. He is indeed a sanctuary, yet he is also a fearful judge. He is with us, but he brings with him his standards of holiness. When we meet him in the sanctuary, as Isaiah did, we must first face our fear, before we can be assured of his forgiveness. But if we will truly fear him, we will be set free from all fear of men.

Brian Borgman: Assyrian Oppression, The Remnant and the Glorious Hope (:1-15)

This will be such an easy fight for the Assyrians, their thoughts will only be on the spoils of war; they are going to take everything you own;

Sign child will be a measuring stick to Ahaz just as Immanuel was to Judah;

This sounds like good news to Ahaz; his enemies are going to be plundered; looks like political power pays off in the end; but then he finds out he will be up to his neck in hostility from Assyria; Ahaz's wish to get help from Assyria will backfire; "reject" = despise

A steady, small water supply; Shiloah stands for the Davidic monarchy, the covenant of promise; Ahaz rejects the covenant of promise – does not look impressive based on outward appearances; the Euphrates is impressive – it always floods; Ahaz rejoiced in the mighty arm of the flesh; we always gravitate towards doing that which seems more impressive to the eye; God always uses the weak things of the world; 1 Cor. 1; then the only boasting must be in the Lord;

That which we put our trust in God ends up using as a scourge to discipline us;

Separate yourself from their ways and from their thinking; they are claiming that Isaiah is unpatriotic and a conspirator; they are afraid of the northern kingdom and Syria coming in;

1 Pet. 3:14-15 – Isaiah ends up being a type of the Messiah; Peter quotes Is. 8:13 and applies it to the Lord Jesus Christ; just as those in Isaiah's day were to regard Jehovah as holy so you are to sanctify the Lord Christ; the only true fear that God's people should have is of God Himself; there is a sense of holy dread that goes beyond fatherly reverence and respect; no problem harmonizing love for God and Fear of God; no matter the circumstances around us; no matter how overwhelming the flood around us, you only need to fear God;

Brian Borgman: Treasuring God's Truth (:14-16)

Immanuel promise of 7:14 had come and would bypass unbelieving Ahaz; in the midst of desolation God would remain faithful to His elect; Mahershalalhashbaz is the sign for Ahaz; at first seems positive, but then Isaiah reveals that Assyria will spill over as flood waters and roll right over Judah as well; then there is a word of comfort to the remnant; in vv. 11-15 we have Immanuel speaking; tabernacle and temple find fulfillment in the flesh of the Son of God; we present Christ as a sanctuary or a stone that will roll over and crush you; either people will love us or hate us; Jesus said, "*Woe to you when all men speak well of you.*" Isaiah's voice in this section is in essence the voice of the Spirit of Christ (1 Pet. 1).

To bind up the testimony is to preserve the prophetic truth that has come through Isaiah; John 17:6, 14, etc. I have manifested your truth to my disciples; Jesus is binding up the testimony here; Luke 24 – instruction on road to Emmaus to two disciples – example of binding up the testimony in the hearts of His own disciples; Ps. 22:19 – in Is. 8:17 we have the Messiah talking; cry of abandonment from the cross;

TEXT: Isaiah 8:19-22

TITLE: DARK SIDE OF THE OCCULT

BIG IDEA:

IN SEEKING COUNSEL AND DIRECTION, AVOID ALL CONTACT WITH THE DARK SIDE OF THE OCCULT

INTRODUCTION:

We are treading on some **dangerous ground** today. The Holy Spirit wants to expose for us the dangers of the occult. The term *occult* implies a "*secret knowledge*" or something which is hidden and beyond normal understanding. But God doesn't want us to go diving too deeply into this subject. You would be naïve to think that you are insulated from occult influences. The context in Isaiah involves presenting the dark backdrop for the contrasting revelation of the coming Light of the Messiah who will bring blessing and a dominion of righteousness that will supplant the powers of darkness. We are making preparations here at the end of Chap. 8 for another precious Messianic Prophecy in 9:6.

Contact with the occult is more prevalent today than any of us would like to think.

- It can penetrate to the highest levels of our national government. Do you remember Nancy Reagan's reliance upon soothsayers? Decisions regarding our country's future were quite possibly influenced by fortune telling and horoscopes.
- It certainly lies behind the motivation for some of the more heinous crimes that have occurred.
- You drive through our local neighborhoods and you see multiple establishments advertising some form of fortune telling or tarot card reading. I used to remember the car always parked outside of one such establishment on Pulaski highway just down the street from Alban's headquarters: (obviously belonging to the fortune teller herself) a white car with a black top. I thought the symbolism was appropriate – black on top of white.

What are some of the practices associated with the occult? Some overlap here

Eric Barger: Nine Forbidden Practices

- 1) **Human Sacrifice** – Wicked Ahaz had established the worship of Molech (savage god of Ammonites) on Mt. of Olives east of Jerusalem in Valley of Hinnom; burning children as offering to this god; **2 Kings 16** – we have looked at that passage previously; Who would sacrifice their children and have them burned in the fire to try to appease the spirits? Well, who would commit abortion on their innocent babies who cannot speak on their own behalf??
- 2) **Divination** – The Heart of the occult. Manipulation from demonic sources.
Ouija boards, Tarot cards – trying to gain insight into “hidden things” – we don't want too much intimate knowledge of these practices
- 3) **Astrology** – We either trust God or the Zodiac but not both! – [look at newspapers devoting valuable space every day to horoscope – there must be a lot of interest; roots way back in ancient pagan cultures – worshipping the sun and the stars] – Chinese fortune cookies seem innocent enough – just don't go further down that path looking for divine insights
- 4) **Enchanter** – Someone satanically endowed to produce seductive spells.—I would be leery of hypnotism – anything where you give over control of your mind to something outside of yourself
- 5) **Witchcraft and Witches** – Includes its modern, organized counterpart, Wicca.—lots of

modern activity in this realm; lots of TV shows and movies exalting this aspect of the occult; Maybe “I Dream of Jeannie” was not so innocent and just tipping open the door to more emphasis here; go to foreign countries like Haiti and you see how prevalent practices such as Voodoo are today

6) **Charmer** – One who manipulates objects or beings via demonic power.—snake charmers, etc. – TV show Ghost Whisperer – can communicate with ghosts

7) **Consulter with Familiar Spirits** – One who gleans knowledge from demonic contact.

Prevalence of Satanism – actual worship of Satan

8) **Wizards** – Practitioners of magical arts –cf. “The Wizard of Oz;” look at the conversion of those in Ephesus in **Acts 19:19** who were involved with this – How do you repent? Burn all of your associated paraphernalia -- they burned their expensive books of magic because they recognized their potential evil impact on themselves and others; remember Pharaoh had his wise men and his magicians – **Ex. 7:11**

9) **Necromancers** – Those who claim to be in contact with the dead. Seances – trying to call up a dead relative and communicate with them

<http://www.ericbarger.com/9prac.htm>

8 REASONS TO AVOID ANY CONTACT WITH THE OCCULT

I. CURIOSITY REGARDING THE OCCULT OPENS THE DOOR TO DEMONIC POWERS AND LEADS TO IDOLATRY

“And when they say to you, “Consult the mediums and the spiritists”

Understand first of all that the OT clearly forbids all such contact with the occult:

Deut. 18:9-12a *“When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire [an ancient occult practice], or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination [detestable] to the LORD...”*

Judgment by stoning to death was the only prescribed form of contact with such individuals

Lev. 20:27 *“Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.”*

[Cf. 2 Kings 21:6; Isaiah 44:25; 47:12; Jeremiah 27:9; Ezekiel 13:18, 20; Micah 5:12; Acts 8:11-24; Revelation 9:21]

God is a supremely **Jealous God**:

Michael Bradley: The Reasons God Does Not Want Us to Engage With the Occult

The Bible says that God the Father is a jealous God, a consuming fire. Here are two verses specifically telling us this:

1. **“For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God ...” (Exodus 20:5)**

2. **“For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” (Deuteronomy 4:24)**

Because God is very jealous and possessive over His own children, He wants all of us coming directly to Him if we have any problems with our future, or what He might have in store for us in

our future. People are consulting fortunetellers, psychics, horoscopes, and Ouija boards for guidance and information on what the future may hold for them.

The Bible says that it is the job of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth and teach us all things in this life. God wants to be the Guide and Teacher of your life. He does not want you going to others to seek out this type of divine guidance because of His intensely jealous nature. The Bible says that there is only one God – and only He knows all things about you – which includes all of your past, present, and future.

Read more: <http://www.bible-knowledge.com/dangers-of-the-occult/#ixzz2RzKyyWqN>

Curiosity can be a dangerous thing: College illustration – séance experience

Temptation will be there to check out what the fortune tellers have to say:

Look how often investigators of major crimes involve some type of spiritist in their probe.

Example of **Celebrity psychic Sylvia Browne** who has been in the news just recently:

In the days since Amanda Berry, Gina DeJesus, and Michelle Knight emerged from their decade-long captivity in a home in Cleveland, Ohio, celebrity psychic Sylvia Browne has come under scrutiny for her incorrect prediction regarding Berry's fate.

In 2004, the year following the then 16-year-old schoolgirl's disappearance, Browne appeared on "The Montel Williams" show and told Berry's distraught mother Louwana Miller – who died from heart failure a year later – that her daughter was "in heaven and on the other side" and that her last words were "goodbye, mom, I love you."

Turns out Browne was wrong, and thousands of people have flooded her [Facebook page](#) to tell her what they think.

"Sylvia is a con artist and commits fraud for financial gain," commented one, as another weighed in: "You should be ashamed of yourself...why would anybody believe anything you have to say after this?? All you do is rip money off the weak minded people." Another wrote "YOU are the worst kind of predator, offering people hope where there is none," while several called Browne everything from a "fraud" and a "lying rat" to a "scammer" and a "fake."

"Sylvia sees dead people," wrote another. "Only they're not dead."

Browne has created quite a business as a spiritual leader: she's published 45 books over the years, runs the "Sylvia Browne Hypnosis Training Center" in Northern California, and has phone psychic reading fee of \$850, currently discounted to \$550.

In response to the criticism, Browne's rep released a statement asserting that for nearly six decades, Browne has dedicated her life to helping individuals, families and law enforcement agencies on hundreds of high-profile criminal investigations, and received numerous commendations for her the "positive impact her contributions have provided."

"For more than 50 years as a spiritual psychic and guide, when called upon to either help authorities with missing person cases or to help families with questions about their loved ones, I have been more right than wrong," Browne herself insisted. "If ever there was a

time to be grateful and relieved for being mistaken, this is that time. **Only God is right all the time.** . . .

Amongst the intense backlash, there were at least a few fans defending Browne's psychic abilities.

“You can't be right all the time. You would have to be God,” observed a Facebook follower, as another noted that “everyone makes mistakes.”

<http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2013/05/09/celebrity-psychic-sylvia-browne-under-fire-for-telling-amanda-berrys-mom-was/>

Not talking about remote hypothetical situations here – these are events ripped from today's headlines

You don't want to **open the door** to Satan and his demonic forces; they do have power; we must recognize we are in a spiritual battle involving forces we cannot see – very real warfare
Ephes. 6:11-12 “*put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*”

Ephes. 4:27 “*do not give the devil an opportunity*”

Scriptures make a direct connection between the **occult and idolatry**:

MacArthur: idolatry is worshiping demons; **1 Cor. 10:14**; “*Flee from idolatry*” – they sacrifice to demons; **Ps. 96:5** “*all the gods of the nations are idols [demons];*” **Lev. 17:7**; **Deut. 32:16** “*new gods who came newly up*” from that lower demonic realm; **Ps. 106:37ff**; to worship anything but the true God is idolatry – whether money or self or . . .;

II. REVELATION FROM THE OCCULT CANNOT COMPARE TO REVELATION FROM GOD (FAR INFERIOR IN TERMS OF QUALITY AND RELIABILITY) – RAISES MORE QUESTIONS THAN IT ANSWERS

“*familiar spirits, mediums*” = Greek translation means *ventriloquist*

Oswalt: It was apparently a common belief in the ancient Near East that the dead spoke in birdlike, whispered voices”

Is. 29:4 “*Your voice will also be like that of a spirit from the ground, and your speech will whisper from the dust.*”

A. Associated with Shameful Advisements – “*who whisper*” **Peep** – high tones vs. open and transparent communication

Lord's revelation is like that open and public billboard He had Isaiah display in the opening verses of chapter 8.

Apostle Paul made a special point to emphasize the openness and clarity of his communication of God's truth: **1 Cor. 14:6-12** in the context of spiritual gifts; speaking of the need for interpretation; there must be a distinct and understandable message;

Paul did not come with fancy or confusing speech; he spoke the gospel clearly and directly

B. Associated with Satanic Ambiguity – “*and mutter,*” **Growl, moan** – low tones
vs. clear and distinct communication
the snake in the garden tries to confuse the woman regarding the clear revelation of God

Oswalt: Having lost the only real source of confidence, belief in an all-wise and all-loving creator, they turned to more limited but supposedly less-demanding sources.

III. CONTACT WITH THE OCCULT CONSTITUTES SPIRITUAL ADULTERY AGAINST THE GOD OF TRUTH

“should not a people consult their God?” this should be the final answer

Vs. allegiance to personal relationship with God; we have **direct access** to God the Father through the one Mediator, the perfect God-Man, our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ; Why would we want to inquire at the feet of other intermediaries??
This should be the end of the issue. What are Christians thinking when they dabble with the occult?

We must be firmly convinced of the **Sufficiency of Scripture:**

This is why we advocate for biblical counseling rather than secular psychologists. Where there are medical and chemical concerns, we understand the need for doctors. But in matters of morality and behavior, the basis problem is spiritual. *“Should not a people consult their God?”*

Many OT examples where the children of Israel turned elsewhere for counsel
Cf. King Saul seeking help from the medium rather than from God = one of the reasons God judged him with death (**1 Chronicles 10:13-14**).

Where do you turn for counsel regarding the future and how to live?

IV. REVELATION FROM THE OCCULT FOCUSES ON THE DEAD RATHER THAN THE LIVING

“Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?”

No Victory over death and dominion of Satan when you seek his influence

Jesus came and proclaimed Himself as “*the way, the truth and the life*” – He is the one who provides resurrection from the dead; they empty tomb showed His victory over death; we need to come to Him for counsel

Cf. strange Roman Catholic practices of almost idolizing the dead saints or Mary, the mother of Jesus – falls into this same category of consulting the dead

ChristianAnswers.net: **Astrology** (predictions by the planets or moon; horoscopes; sometimes referred to as “observing times” in the Old Testament)

Although the Bible does not go into great detail about astrology, it certainly makes its position clear. We should never trust in astrological beliefs or predictions. Astrology is an ancient, heathen practice that leads to disaster. Our lives are not determined by the stars or movement of

planets. The Bible warns against the false predictions of astrology (Jeremiah 10:2; 27:9-10; Daniel 2:1-4; 4:7; 5:7-9) and repeatedly condemns the associated practice of worshipping the sun, moon and stars (or “deities or demons associated with them”) (Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:2-5; 2 Kings 21:3, 5; Zephaniah 1:5; Job 31:26-28; Jeremiah 8:1-2).

V. (:20) REVELATION FROM THE OCCULT BELONGS TO THE DOMAIN OF DARKNESS (RATHER THAN THE LIGHT OF GOD’S WORD)

“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.”

Young: The law is the revelation of God expressing His will for man’s obedience, and the testimony is His revelation expressing His will as a system to be believed. These are the standards by which all opinions and utterances are to be judged.

Easy to test the message of a prophet

False prophets make a show of giving lip service to the Word of God – but really have very little use for it – cf. Joel Osteen – throw out a couple of verses or references here and there ... then preach his false message of personal fulfillment and prosperity – no different than how political leaders like to adorn their speeches with a verse or phrase taken out of context – just something that sounds nice to serve their purposes at the time; not submitting themselves to obedience to the Word of God

Message of John 1:4-9; 3:19-21

Message of 1 John 1:5-6

People today don’t want doctrine and sound teaching

Ps. 19:8; Ps. 36:9; 119:105; Prov. 6:23; 2 Pet. 1:19;

VI. REVELATION FROM THE OCCULT LEADS TO THE JUDGMENT OF DIFFICULTY AND DEPRIVATION

“And they will pass through the land”

Van Parunak: That is, **the land**. The clause “*pass through it*” is the language of pilgrims traveling through an alien land. It echoes the reports of the spies in Num 13:32; 14:7, describing their journey through a land that they did not yet possess, and is the language of Israel’s request to traverse other lands during their wandering.

Beall: or through the condition of darkness = antecedent of “it”

A. All Types of Difficulties – “*hard-pressed*”

B. Extreme Deprivation and Hunger – “*and famished,*”

In Isaiah, God sarcastically rebukes Israel for practicing astrology,

“...For you have trusted in your wickedness... Therefore evil shall come upon you... trouble

shall fall upon you... Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, And the monthly prognosticators stand up and save you from what shall come upon you. Behold, they shall be as stubble, The fire shall burn them; They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame... ”

-Isaiah 47:10-14a

VII. CONTACT WITH THE OCCULT EXPRESSES ITSELF ULTIMATELY IN BITTER ANGER AND FRUSTRATION (WITH NO HOPE FROM HEAVEN ABOVE OR THE EARTH BENEATH)

A. Reaction of Bitter Anger

“and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged”

Van Parunak: *“they shall fret themselves,”*--The simple verb (Qal) means *“to be angry.”* This is the only place that it is used reflexively. The second characteristic of those who have rejected the Lord and his law is that they stir themselves up to anger. Their anger is not a justifiable response to an external wrong, but something they cultivate in themselves.

Chiastic structure in these next few phrases

1. Directed Against Human Leaders

“and curse their king”

2. Directed Against God

“and their God”

B. Reaction of Hopeless Frustration -- No Hope or Relief or Deliverance

1. From Heaven Above

“as they face upward.”

2. From the Earth Below

“Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish;”

Look at the **worship of Mother Earth** in our day; environmentalists put a supreme priority on our responsibility to be the caretaker of earth’s limited resources; We are not advocating irresponsibility with the quality of our air and water ... but neither are we paranoid as if we somehow control the fate of this earth; God is going to blow it all up in His timing and create a new heaven and new earth; we are not going to be able to preserve this earth – and why would we want to when God has something better in store for us!

VIII. REVELATION FROM THE OCCULT ENDS IN CONSIGNMENT TO PERPETUAL DARKNESS

“and they will be driven away into darkness.”

Intensifying cycle of darkness ending with eternal judgment in the lake of fire where you get to have contact with the occult -- instead of the God of Holiness and Truth – for all eternity

Motyer: The prevailing motif is darkness, for which Isaiah uses here three different words. They

had loved darkness, the darkened rooms in which they consulted the shrouded dead, and divine justice has given them what they loved: darkness all around and a dark future ahead, the nemesis of abandoning their God and of refusing his testimony and law.

Where do those who give themselves over to the occult end up?

- No victory and freedom in life
- No meaning or purpose
- No evolution into higher forms of existence
- No bright future

Revelation 21:8 says of “...those who practice magic arts ...their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur... the second death” (NIV). Those who practice witchcraft (sorcery) will not inherit the kingdom of God (**Galatians 5:20-21**).

CONCLUSION:

Curiosity can be a dangerous thing. Just in these short verses we have found 8 reasons to avoid all contact with the occult.

“Should not a people consult their God?” Let’s rejoice in the sufficiency of God’s revelation and His wisdom in giving us direction and guidance as His beloved children.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Can you think of any situations where you might be tempted to conclude that God’s revelation in His Word is not sufficient for your immediate needs? Those are the times you would be especially open to seeking counsel elsewhere.
- 2) What books and movies and TV shows feed the natural appetite we have for curiosity about the occult? How friendly really is **Casper** as a ghost for little children? Think of Charles Dickens “**A Christmas Carol**” – we have been exposed to more such plots than we might think
- 3) How did the apostles and their missionary teams interact with those who were involved in occult practices?
- 4) If Satan has his demonic forces masquerade as children of the light, how can you expose them as evil and belonging to the dark side?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Chuck Missler: Forms of the occult can include mediums, channelers, clairvoyants, psychics, spiritists, diviners, mystics, gurus, psychic and holistic healers, astral travel, astrology, mysticism, Ouija boards, Tarot cards, contact with the dead, UFOs, and thousands of other practices which almost defy cataloging—even Harry Potter books and movies can lead innocent

children into the occult.

Occultism also includes Satanism, Kabbalah, Gnosticism, theosophy, witchcraft and many forms of serious magic. It includes activities seeking the acquisition of “hidden” things—which are expressly forbidden by God in the Bible.

<http://www.khouse.org/articles/2011/1016/print/>

ChristianAnswers.net:

Today, many people dabble in the mystical, occultic arts. Is there anything wrong with being involved in these practices? Yes, the Bible takes a clear position on this subject, strongly denouncing these practices. God created us and therefore owns us. He has a right to set the rules for our lives. God’s Word indicates that these practices are part of Satan’s strategy of evil tricks and deception, designed to lead us astray. Satan and his demons are real beings set on our destruction.

Research has shown that occult magic is often fraudulent and deceitful illusion—counterfeit miracles. Many books have been written on this subject. In some instances, occult magic or divination are a manifestation of demonic powers or the result of demon possession (Acts 16:16). Of course, the power of Satan and his demons is extremely limited compared to God’s power. Those who follow the path of the magic arts are on the wrong path - a road that leads away from God, not toward Him. In one way or another, the end will be disaster. The evil Queen Jezebel practiced witchcraft (2 Kings 9:22) bringing catastrophe on herself and all Israel.

The Bible tells how the apostle Paul once dealt with one of these deceivers, a sorcerer and false prophet who led people astray. “Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.’ And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand” (Acts 13:9-11).

The Bible strongly warns people not to consult mediums and spiritists for the truth, but to inquire of God (Isaiah 8:19). Clearly, if those who practiced these arts have any power (beyond being great deceivers), it is not a gift from God (as some falsely claim). The Bible condemns and forbids these practices several times (Deuteronomy 18:9-14; Isaiah 44:25; Jeremiah 27:9; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:24). Divination and spiritism were despised practices of the heathens (Ezekiel 21:21; Isaiah 19:3; 1 Samuel 28). Scripture says that one of the reasons King Saul died was “because he consulted a medium for guidance” rather than God (1 Chronicles 10:13-14).

The Bible provides examples showing the folly and failures of those who claimed the ability to predict the future based on their own powers or those of spirits (Daniel 2:27, etc.). God calls the word of diviners “nonsense,” “lies” and “deception” for foolish people (Ezekiel 13:8; Jeremiah 14:14; Isaiah 44:25). God said, “Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!” (Ezekiel 13:3). If an Israelite lived the deceitful practice of being a medium, it was punishable by death (Leviticus 20:27). The presence of a medium or spiritist among God’s people of Israel was considered a defilement (Leviticus 19:31). All these practices take people further from their Creator, the true and living God.

We are not to look to omens or “signs” to direct our lives. The Bible reprimands people for doing this. It is an “abomination” and foolishness (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Look to God and His instructions for life as provided in the Bible. To do otherwise is to foolishly deceive yourself, or

allow Satan and others to deceive you.

MacArthur: The Savior is Born

Most classic prophecy regarding the coming of Jesus Christ; Isaiah's day was much like our day; we announce a similar light in the context of a dark world; context of Christmas is happy merriment but as you look around the world nothing to be merry about; basically a commercial enterprise. Jesus has become a marketing fad – the world is mocking Him; Men have always wanted a Deliverer who could make things right; God sent a Savior but men refuse Him; loved darkness rather than light; sent at the right moment in history; **Gal. 4:4** “*in the fullness of time*”; **Is. 49:8** “*in an acceptable time*” God will send the Deliverer; **2 Cor. 6:2**; even though the world will not receive, the announcement of His birth must still be made faithfully

4 Features Isaiah pointed out about the coming of this Deliverer:

1) The Pathetic Scene of Demon Worship – (8:19-22) gives us the backdrop of the prophecy; what was going on in Israel that prompted this; such darkness and sin that the godly needed to be assured that God was still on the throne and ungodly needed to be offered a Deliverer;

Wicked Ahaz had established the worship of Molech (savage god of Ammonites) on Mt. of Olives east of Jerusalem in Valley of Hinnom; burning children as offering to this god; **2 Kings 16**; superstition was everywhere; shut the temple and barred the door so that the building deteriorated; true worship extinguished; Ahaz never would listen to Isaiah; what resulted was the worship of demons and evil spirits; this backdrop of blackness is stage for Isaiah speaking of glorious coming of the Messiah; mediums are people who contact demons; *familiar spirits* = ventriloquist in Greek translation who peep and mutter – they can communicate in high tones and low sounds; devils can speak; preoccupation with the demon world; cf. Bishop Pike contacting his dead son who had committed suicide;

vs. 20 = the reason men are in darkness – you forsook the truth of God;

vs. 21 = what happens to people in this situation = picture of despair; instead of receiving God's salvation, they look up and curse God – having removed God from their society; cf. American Pie song = total despair;

vs.22 – preoccupation with Ecology -- deterioration of earth; look what they find; ecology is the new god; but no hope;

2) The Crown of Salvation (9:1-5)

The Promise – (vs 1) -- NASV has it translated better than the KJV; coming a time when the doom will be over and the distress will end; historical lesson; area around the Sea of Galilee – God had brought punishment because of sin; the Daystar will rise there; later God will make that little place glorious; Why doesn't God choose Jerusalem? Galilee great example of God's recent wrath and will be great example of God's mercy; Messiah will arrive in Galilee; Jewish people have not done much colonization here – area always had a bad taste; a border province next to Gentile country; populated largely by Gentiles; had been born in Bethlehem and moved to Galilee; the salvation promise was not connected necessarily to temple worship; new day dawning; not tied to Jewish institutional worship; Savior of the whole world;

The Contrast – (vs. 2) – John 1:9; prophecies of Messiah always come against a pitch black background; cf. Gen. 3 – seed of the woman after the Fall; cf. Passover; Is. 28:16 the cornerstone – the foundation of Israel rotted with sin; Is. 23:4:5 – righteous branch vs the rotten sin of the leaders of Israel; Ezek. 34; Matt. 4:12;

The Messianic Kingdom (9:3-5)

Kingdom is coming with joy and victory but postponed; Christmas 2;

3) The Perfect Savior (:6)

Perfections of this king:

His Nature reveals His perfections:

- *Child is Born* -- Humanity – took upon himself flesh; tempted like we are; felt what we feel; able to be sympathetic high priest; to take upon himself sin of men
- *Son is given* – Deity – Divine in human form; to defeat sin and death; Is. 7:14 = “*God with us*” – perfect one; only hope for our dark world; promise of the ages;

His Names reveal His perfections:

- *Wonderful Counselor* – men seek help everywhere and never get it; why not turn to Jesus; He knows everything; knows all about you and the needs of your heart; gives you wise counsel; knows what you need
- *Mighty God* – able to energize you; has power you need; people never do what you counsel them to do; counsel can only go so far; resurrection power; creative power
- *Everlasting Father* – Father of Eternity; both the son and the Father; child in time but father in eternity; He fathered eternity; fathers eternal life for all who will believe; source of everlasting life; no ordinary babe; from everlasting to everlasting He is God;
- *Prince of Peace* – came to bring peace
 - o Between man and God
 - o Inner rest in your heart
 - o Will come again to bring a kingdom of Peace; **Ephes. 2:14** “*He is our peace*”

4) The Peaceful Sovereign (:7)

Brian Borgman: Treasuring God’s Truth

Vs. 19 transition back to period of apostasy; instead of listening to Messiah, they consult mediums and spiritists. Deut. 18:9-14 condemned as crime punishable by death; trying to gain access to some type of supernatural voice; cf. Saul in 1 Sam. 28:6-7 – sought a word from the Lord and he didn’t get it so he sought out a medium; power of darkness behind them; conjuring up the dead; there is spiritual power but it is from the devil; mumbled words and messages from the other side; he throws away fortune cookies and won’t even look at it; rank unbelief if you indulge in such messages against the warnings and threats of God; rank unbelief in the providence and sovereignty of God over all of the details of your life; your tomorrow is in His hand; you need to consult the divine mind and will of God from going to the law and to the testimony; that is where you go; sufficient rule of faith and practice; everything you need for life and godliness has been entrusted to you in writing in God’s holy word; “*dawn*” – always go with the interpretation that is the simplest = answers the most questions and leaves the least problems; emphasis on light; they have no light in them; Ps. 19:8; Ps. 36:9; 119:105; Prov. 6:23; 2 Pet. 1:19; famine in the land because of the judgment; yet they don’t turn in repentance to God; Wake up ... God is trying to get your attention! Disaster doesn’t soften their heart but hardens them so they end up cursing God; would be true for all of us apart from the grace of God; unwilling to part with their sins; look up to heaven not to cry out for mercy but to curse God; look to the earth for some sort of hope and only find darkness; driven away into more darkness

Ron Lewis: The Hopeless Backdrop of Darkness

The Target Audience: 2 groups of people – 1 John 5:12; you are in one or the other category; no middle ground; speaking for the sake of the godly remnant first – everything looks so black and

hopeless – they needed some assurance that God was still on the throne; but also for the unbelievers who needed to know that light was available if they were willing to repent; but the gate is small and way is narrow that leads to life; John 1:9-12; most are rejectors; we must continue to hold up the light;

Two major divisions:

8:19-22 – Hopeless Backdrop of Darkness = today’s message

9:1-7 – Announcement of Great Light = next week’s message

4 Characteristics of his day: parallel to our own day almost to the letter

1. (:19) Preoccupation with demonic things

Israel’s idolatry led them to the worship of demons; one and the same thing; disregarding revealed truth from God; psychic hot lines; horoscopes; ouji boards; etc. empty lives; mediums practice necromancy = bringing up people from the dead; really calling upon a demon to impersonate that person; Greek translation means ventriloquist; high tones like chirping and low tones like moaning and groaning and growling sounds; asks 2 rhetorical questions;

2) (:20) Overall Rejection of the Word of God

Three cheers for the Word of God; how can you be going to mediums now? Greatest darkness is shown in hypocritical false profession of faith; look at the lack of exposition of the Scriptures – would empty out some of those mega churches that have no interest in doctrine – look at Joel Osteen;

3) (:21) Live in the Midst of Prevailing Emptiness and Despair

They get frustrated with the whole deal; the god thing not working for them; especially when things get tough; looking up and shaking their fist at God; no reality in their relationship with God; Song “American Pie” – tragic commentary on emptiness and despair – God had deserted him; couldn’t even kill himself because no water in the levy; nothing left when you reject the truth

4) (:22) Hopeless Striving to Find Something of Meaning in the Earth

After you reject God, either kill yourself or stare at the crumbling earth – those are your options; Mother Earth; Ecology; Save the whales; world obsessed with this stuff; God wired us to worship; they need to worship something; ozone is full of holes and water is dirty; we are to be concerned to some degree but not obsessed with saving the earth; don’t throw your garbage in the river; but we are not going to burn this earth up before God is through with it; He will burn it up in His timing; just hit the bottom of the barrel; darkness intensified;

Van Parunak: The Hebrew of this section is extremely complex, and in a number of cases the AV translators have not captured the sense.

The speaker has now changed, showing that the oracle of 8:12 is over. Note how Isaiah now describes God's affliction of Zebulon and Naphtali and his later kindness to them in the third person in v. 1, and the second person verbs addressing God in vv. 3, 4.

The section can be divided into three parts, based on the fortunes of Israel that the verse describe.

- 8:21-22 are universally negative.
- 9:3-7 are universally positive.
- 9:1-2 look back to the darkness and ahead to the coming light.

As we observe the transition from darkness to light, from judgment to salvation, it is important to observe that the people do nothing. We have already seen them turn from God's revelation to wizards, rejecting the law and the testimony. In 21-22 they shake their fists in anger at God when

his judgment falls. Yet once he has shown his wrath, he graciously turns their darkness into light. They do not deserve his salvation, but he provides it out of his own free grace.

TEXT: Isaiah 9:1-7

TITLE: FROM GLOOM TO GLORY

BIG IDEA:

GOD WILL TRANSFORM HIS PEOPLE FROM GLOOM TO GLORY BY THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION:

This portion of the book of Isaiah which began in Chapter 7 and continues thru Chapter 12 features a couple of the most famous Messianic prophecies in all of the Old Testament. You remember the Immanuel promise from **7:14** as wicked King Ahaz rejected the opportunity to ask as sign from the Lord: *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel”* – which means *“God with us.”* This same emphasis on the dual God-Man nature of the coming Messiah child continues in **9:6** *“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”*

This section which promises the entrance of the Light of the World is set against the dark, gloomy backdrop of the depths to which the nation had sunk in their rejection of God’s Word and rule. They had even resorted to taking counsel from mediums and spiritists. We saw last week **8 Reasons to Avoid Any Contact with the Dark Side of the Occult** – perhaps best summarized in the prophet’s biting sarcasm: *“Should not a people consult their God?”*

Oswalt: In this segment Isaiah reaches the climax of the section begun at 7:1. In place of an unfaithful monarch whose shortsighted defensive policies will actually plunge the nation into more desperate straits, there is lifted up the ideal monarch who, though a child, will bring an end to all wars and establish an eternal kingdom based upon justice and righteousness.

As we come to this amazing prophecy which encompasses both the First and Second Comings of the Messiah [Remember the intervening gap of the Church Age was not visible from the OT perspective], the grace and mercy of the sovereign covenant-keeping God of Israel is at the forefront. *“The zeal of the Lord of hosts”* will accomplish the ushering in of this righteous kingdom. The blessing is announced when the people are least deserving. They can do nothing to bring about the deliverance they so desperately need. The Jews should be amazed at the faithfulness of a God who assures them He will keep all the promises He made to Abraham and to David.

GOD WILL TRANSFORM HIS PEOPLE FROM GLOOM TO GLORY BY THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH

Are you living in Gloom or Glory today? If you have been delivered out of the realm of darkness by the light of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, you should already be experiencing the joy of all of the spiritual blessings God has bestowed on His elect – regardless of your present physical circumstances. But the glory that awaits us in the physical realm will be every bit as real as that glory we already experience in the spiritual realm – and it will last for all eternity.

(:1) THESIS: GOD WILL TRANSFORM HIS PEOPLE FROM GLOOM TO GLORY BY THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH = THE GREAT GALILEEAN

A. Glorious Future for Distressed Land

*But there will be no more gloom
for her who was in anguish;
in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with
contempt,
but later on He shall make it glorious,*

What a tremendous promise! No more gloom or anguish but a glorious future make light; treat with contempt the tribes surrounding Sea of Galilee on North and West; most paganized and corrupted; areas attacked first by invasions

Beall: That region of Galilee was indeed dealt with severely by Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria in 733, as is mentioned in 2 Kings 15:29 (Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maachah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria). The annals of Tiglath-Pileser confirm the biblical account as well (“the cities of . . . Galaza, Abilakka [=Abel Beth Maachah], which are on the border of Bit-Humria [Omriland] . . . the wide land of Naphtali in its entirety I brought within the borders of Assyria” [ANET, 283-84 cited in Montgomery, ICC, 452]). This began the humiliation of Israel which was to last for many years.

Motyer: Isaiah rests his vision on the devastation of the northern lands about 733. The poem must be dated at this time. It would not have been appropriate to single out this one area after the whole northern kingdom had been deported in 722 or at any later date. Rather, in the first hurt of seeing homelands alienated and fellow-Israelites carried captive people would have looked to the prophet for a word from the Lord. His reply that where darkness had fallen light would shine received the most glorious fulfillment.

Van Parunak: The two verbs are often used (though in Piel rather than Hiphil) in contrasting senses, “to despise” and “to honor” (cf. 1 Sam 2:30). In this case, the first verb still refers to the coming invasion(s), but the second points to a later restoration. This contrast would go with a longer-term understanding of “afterward” in the first contrast.

1 Sam. 2:30 “*for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.*”

“*Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*” **Matt. 4:12-17** makes reference to the fulfillment of this at the First Coming of Jesus as He moved from Nazareth into Capernaum to begin His ministry

B. Geographic Reference for the Promised Messiah

“by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.”

Van Parunak: “*Beyond Jordan*” would refer to the land east of the Jordan river. The phrase “*way of the sea*” appears elsewhere only in **Ezek 41:12**, where it is a directional reference, “toward the

west,” and may balance “beyond Jordan” in bounding the region.¹ This description differs from “Zebulun and Naphthali” in two ways. First, it emphasizes its mixed character rather than its Israelite heritage. Second, its extent is broader, extending all the way from the sea to the other side of the Jordan, potentially including Asher and Dan.

The invading king from Assyria does not get to write the final chapter in Israel’s history

Motyer: “*Galilee of the Gentiles*” – introduces the involvement of the Gentiles in this time of future hope. . . the Messiah is for the world

Bracketed by end statement in vs. 7 – emphasis on the Lord as the agent who will take the initiative and accomplish this transformation

“The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.”

4 DESCRIPTIONS OF THIS PROMISED MESSIAH TO SUPPORT AND AMPLIFY HIS THESIS:

I. (:2-3) HIS RADIANCE -- DESCRIPTION OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF GOD’S PEOPLE

A. (:2) Transformation From Extreme Darkness to Extreme Light

*“The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.”*

Van Parunak: In the first half of the verse, the darkness is associated with the people and their conduct. Here it becomes a characteristic of the land, languishing under God's judgment. When the people walk in darkness, their land becomes darkened.

We read these passages identifying Jesus as the Light of the world in previous weeks:

John 1-3 Light associated with **Holiness** and contrasted with deeds of darkness and evil

John 8:12 “*I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness but will have the Light of life.*” Light always associated with **Life**

Remember at the conversion of Saul on the Damascus Road in **Acts 9**, he was struck with a light from heaven

1 John 1

Heb. 1:1-3 “*He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature*” – Light associated with **Glory** and **Revelation**

Psalms 27:1 “*The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear?*”

2 Cor. 4:4-6

It would be a shame for believers who have access to the Light to continue to walk in darkness.

It would be unnatural for light to try to have fellowship with darkness.

It would be foolish to choose darkness over light in any context.

B. (:3) Transformation From Extreme Sadness to Extreme Gladness

*“Thou shalt multiply the nation, Thou shalt increase their gladness;
They will be glad in Thy presence as with the gladness of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.”*

2 similes introduced here from 2 very familiar realms of life:

- Joy at **harvest time** – important for an agricultural society
- Joy upon the occasion of **military victory** where you get to enjoy the spoils – not motivated by medals of honor; not so interested in the strategic side of things; very interested in who gets what at the end of the day

Beall: The source of the great change is given in v. 3—it is God Himself who would cause (prophetic pft.) the nation to increase (from a small remnant—this increase in the nation is a part of the Messianic promise—Gen 12, 15; Isa 26:15; 66:8; Zech 14:10, 11), increasing its joy . . . The Lord is the only true source of lasting joy (see Ps 16:11; 27:4-6). The simile of a harvest is appropriate, for this is a harvest of people. The picture is quite a contrast from the time of famine in 5:10 and 8:21. The second simile is that of rejoicing over booty from a great military victory, again a contrast from the Assyrian conquest where Israel was the spoil (8:1-15).

Van Parunak: Ps. 126:5-6 -- the sowing and reaping are meant as a figure of the captivity. Israel was sown among the nations, to all appearances destroyed just as seed sown upon the earth is wasted. But the years in captivity were, in God's providence, a fruitful field that brought forth fruit, a revitalized nation

II. (:4-5) HIS RESCUE -- DESCRIPTION OF THE VICTORIOUS MISSION OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH

A. (:4) Deliverance From Cruel Bondage for the Oppressed of the Kingdom

*“For Thou shalt break
the yoke of their burden
and the staff on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor,
as at the battle of Midian.”*

Imagery takes us back to the days of Israel’s bondage in Egypt before God’s glorious deliverance – God shall deliver His people in even more spectacular fashion in the last days

Beall: the emphatic words in Hebrew are the yoke, the staff, and the rod—these come first, before the verb

Van Parunak: The first reason for victory is the end of their oppression. Isaiah recalls three implements of oppression.

- The *yoke* is placed on the neck of an animal so that it can pull a burden.
- The *staff* is used to beat a slave into submission.
- “*Rod*” here probably has the sense of “scepter” (cf. the contrast in Isa 14:15, though the English translations are not the same), and reflects the fact that the people are not independent, but under the rule of someone who wants to abuse them.

God will render all three ineffective against them. They will no longer be oppressed.

Motyer: no more burdens, blows, tyrants

Former victories should encourage us regarding the Lord’s power and resources – breaking the yoke of the oppression of the Midianites

Vine: “*day of Midian*” was the time of Gideon’s victory. God saved the nation, not by its military power or prowess, but by His own choice of a small company and by means far otherwise than that of human might, so that they could not boast in their own strength. So in the

coming day, it will be all the Lord's personal act, for the nation will be in the extremity of weakness.

B. (:5) Execution of Righteous Wrath Upon Kingdom Oppressors

“For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.”

Van Parunak: You pile it up and burn it. This is what will become of the stomping boots and bloodstained garments of the oppressors. With the end of oppression, the equipment of those who abused them will be burned up.

Refers to the final **Battle of Armageddon** when the kings of the whole world gather together *“for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.”* **Rev. 16:14**

Is. 63:3 *“I also trod them in My anger and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment.”* – but in Is. 9 we are talking more about the blood soaked garments of the oppressors

Here we have a picture of the end of hostilities – if even the war garments are burned, how much more the weapons of warfare will be beat into plowshares and pruning hooks

Is. 2:1-5 Don't forget the ground Isaiah has already covered

Silversides: Finality and Completeness of victory and deliverance; looking beyond the deliverance from Assyria in immediate context; much greater and lasting deliverance spoken of in this context

III. (:6) HIS ROLE -- DESCRIPTION OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH HIMSELF

Silversides: extraordinary means of deliverance – by a child

A. His Nature as it Benefits His People

1. Son of Man – *“For a child will be born to us”*
2. Son of God – *“a son will be given to us”*

Van Parunak: It is used 9x with God as subject, to emphasize that the birth of a child is due to his gracious provision. Five of these times are with reference to Solomon, taking us again back to the royal history of David's house. The child to be born is indeed a gift of God's promise, going back to the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam 7. . . in two senses: the fulfillment of the promise to David in 2 Sam 7, but also the Son of God, delivered up for sacrifice for the redemption of his people.

Motyer: The emphasis falls not on what the child will do when grown up but on the mere fact of his birth. In his coming all that results from his coming is at once secured.

B. His Governing Role in Relationship to the World – all the nations

“And the government will rest on His shoulders;”

He has broad shoulders; He can handle the load

Doesn't shirk His responsibilities – King of Israel – will reign over all the world

Would be futile to try to resist His rule; yet man persists in wanting to control his own life; refusing to yield submission to the one who rightfully has the rule

C. His Names in Relationship to His People and His Governing Role

“And His name will be called”

1. *Wonderful Counselor* – Do you know Him as your wonderful counselor?
Addresses issues of guidance, direction, comfort, emotional strength

This king needs no counselor; He Himself is the ultimate counselor
All wisdom dwells in Him

Beall: *“Wonder-worker Counselor”* -- The English word “wonderful” does not really do justice to the concept behind this Hebrew word. As Victor Hamilton notes in the Theological Wordbook of the OT, “preponderantly both the verb and substantive refer to the acts of God, designating either cosmic wonders or historical achievements on behalf of Israel. That is, in the Bible the root פִּלְאֵי refers to things that are unusual, beyond human capabilities” (p. 723). This word is used in Judg 13:18 where the Angel of the Lord tells Manoah that His name is פִּלְאֵי, i.e., incomprehensible to man.

Alternate view:

Van Parunak: So, following the Massoretic accentuation, we will take the first name, *“Miracle,”* as a summary of the four to follow. God is giving the nation a child, who will bear the government on his shoulder, and his name is “Miracle.” More specifically, there are four ways in which he is a miracle. . .

“Counselor” -- We are likely to think of this word as referring to a psychologist or social worker, someone who helps people work through their problems. But in the Bible, it refers specifically to a member of the government, someone who advises a ruler: 2 Sam 15:12 . . . The Child's relation to God as Counselor is what allows him to be our high priest (Heb 4:15), our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1), the one mediator between God and men (1 Tim 2:15). He is a partaker of our flesh and so is sympathetic with our weakness, yet by his obedience has earned the attention of the Most High and can sway him to spare us.

2. *Mighty God* – Do you know Him as your mighty God?
Addresses issues of weakness

Beall: As Young points out, in Isaiah the term אֱלֹהִים is used exclusively of God (for example, Isa 31:3: Egypt is a man, and not God [אֱלֹהִים]). Furthermore, everywhere the phrase occurs elsewhere in Scripture it clearly refers to God (**Isa 10:21**—this reference is especially notable in that it occurs only one chapter away from Isa 9:6; Deut 10:17; and **Jer 32:18**). The quality of “might” is another of the attributes given to the Messiah in 11:2 (גִּבּוֹרֵתָהּ). As Ridderbos notes, the two qualities given in the first two titles, wisdom and power, constitute “the two cardinal qualities of the King. Power uninformed by wise counsel, and counsel powerless to act, are both unfruitful” (p. 102).

Van Parunak: God--“Mighty” is a term commonly applied to warriors. It describes someone who is warlike, heroic, able to prevail in conflict.

3. *Eternal Father* – Do you know Him as your eternal Father?

Addresses issues of loneliness, insecurity

4. *Prince of Peace* – Do you know Him as your Prince of Peace?

Addresses issues of anxiety, worry, fear, strife, turmoil, stress

Van Parunak: It is important to remember that the Hebrew word שָׁלוֹם , commonly translated “peace,” has a much broader meaning than just the end of hostilities. It denotes prosperity in every way.

IV. (:7) HIS REIGN -- DESCRIPTION OF MESSIAH’S PERPETUAL REIGN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PROSPERITY

Chiastic Structure once again

A1. Duration -- Perpetual Reign

“There will be no end”

B1. Characterization -- In Righteousness and Prosperity and Peace

“to the increase of His government or of peace,”

C1. Identification/Scope -- Fulfillment of Davidic Kingdom

“On the throne of David”

What promises constitute the Davidic Covenant?

C2. Identification/Scope -- Fulfillment of Davidic Kingdom

“and over his kingdom,”

B2. Characterization -- In Righteousness and Prosperity and Peace

“To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness”

No more cycling of world kingdoms with their rise and fall; this is the end game culmination

Van Parunak: Judgment refers to the exercise of the processes of government. The first failure of government is neglect. . . The second way that government can fail is when its processes are executed, but against a false standard (such as pleasing the ego of a dictator, or gratifying the fleshly lusts of the majority). Messiah's government is based upon **righteousness**, conformity to the nature and will of God, who (Psa 145:17) is *“righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”*

A2. Duration -- Perpetual Reign

“From then on and forevermore.”

CONCLUSION:

“The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.”

Only God can bring about such a transformation

Beall: The identical phrase is repeated in **Isa 37:32**, when the Lord prophesies that He will defeat Assyria and spare Jerusalem.

Learned that God is a **Jealous God** – won't tolerate His people fooling around with the occult; God is also a **Zealous God** – will accomplish His kingdom objectives

Oswalt: Zeal and Jealousy are two sides of the same concept. Both bespeak a kind of concern for someone that desires an exclusive place in that person's affections.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What causes God to respond with such gracious deliverance to a people who were so mired in spiritual adultery and idolatry?
- 2) What comfort and encouragement can you draw from the names of the promised Messiah?
- 3) Why the emphasis on the "*throne of David*" if God's future kingdom does not have a Jewish foundation and orientation?
- 4) Are you more concerned about what you can accomplish for God or what God has accomplished for you?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: God is often described as jealous, when people give to themselves or to other gods the things that belong to him. He does not send the Messiah primarily to bless us, but to vindicate his claims over the earth. Satan seduced our first parents, whom God had made his viceroys over the earth, and thus gained control over God's creation. Now the Lord, moved by jealousy, is already preparing a plan to send "*the second man*" (1 Cor 15:47) to win back that dominion.

In **Isa 59:17**, his jealousy is part of the armor that he dons to come into the world and set right the lack of judgment and justice.

*For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with **zeal** as a cloak.*

Thus it is appropriate for us to see here a reminder that the coming Child is "*the mighty God*," coming to do battle with his enemies and to recover his rightful property from their control.

Dr. John Whitcomb: An Amazing Voice

Lord Jesus grew up for 30 years in Nazareth of Galilee; Will usher in the kingdom with Israel at its centerpiece; supernatural, sudden, spectacular – total destruction of all international opposition; 2 natures, one person; one man will rule whole world for 1000 year period; look at His credentials; Wonderful, divine, mysterious, miraculous; Preincarnate Son is also the Eternal Father – cares for us, watches over us; millennial kingdom is merely introductory period of

eternal state; physical descendant through Mary of one of the sons of David;

Gil Rugh: Characteristics of the Messiah

a fuller, brighter revelation than had ever been given; first and second comings merged together in this view; born as the King of the Jews to fulfill the promises given to David; right now the world is in rebellion against God; not happening yet; descriptive names of His character – reveal Him for who He is: mark him out as totally unique

Wonderful Counselor – could take these together or as a pair; the supernatural one; the one who can't be described in human terms; **Ps. 78** – the miracles that God did through Moses to deliver His people; goes beyond human description; **Judges 13:18** – the angel of the Lord here is a preincarnate manifestation of Christ – appears to mother and father of Samson – they want to know his name; incomprehensible; the miraculous one; **Ps. 139:6** “*such knowledge is too wonderful for me*”; infinite wisdom and knowledge so He can give the best counsel; **Rom. 11:33** – quoting from Is. 40 – how unfathomable His ways; nobody can offer counsel to Him; **1 Cor. 1:24** Christ the *wisdom of God*; **Col. 2:2** Christ is God's mystery – truth not before revealed; vs. 3 – *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; all the fullness of deity dwells in Him in bodily form vs. 9; people spend great sums of money for counseling;

Mighty God – clear declaration of deity of Jesus Christ; Is. 10:21; comes as the very expression and manifestation of God; John 1; Heb. 1; Is. 7:14 – God with us; Heb. 1:8 quoting Ps. 45 – God the Father addressing God the Son; Davidic throne promised in 2 Sam. 7;

Eternal Father – eternally a father; has the character of being a father to those who come to trust in Him; watching over; providing; **Is. 63:16** “*For you are our Father*” – **Ps. 103:13** those who are forgiven become part of His family and then experience His care; aspect of His compassion highlighted; He is an understanding Father; **Micah 5:2** Messiah will be born in Bethlehem and will go forth to be a ruler; His eternality stressed here;

Prince of Peace – the one who will bring peace to the heart of individuals; to this earth; peace with God -- **Rom. 5:1**; James 4 tells us where wars come from – our own inner turmoil and lusts; Christ resolves that; then we can experience the peace of God – **Phil. 4:9**; world is not going to solve its own problems;

Moves on in vs. 7 – only God can accomplish this; **Is. 2:2** kingdom will center in Jerusalem; **Is. 11:3-5** rule in righteousness;

David Silversides: Christ the Light of the World

1. Our greatest need and where deliverance is found – don't preach what people think they need, but what they actually need; the cry of relevance needs to be ignored; the gospel is relevant whether it seems to be or not; the woman of Samaria thought she knew what she needed; church becomes irrelevant when it is driven by the perceived needs of the lost;

2. Why Hope is Only in Him – wonder and marvel at God becoming a man; utterly unique; performed wonders – What manner of man is this -- even the wind and the waves obey Him; they were astonished at His teaching – Never a man spoke as this man – with authority; kings have counselors; this King is the Counselor – nobody gives Him counsel; has the spirit of wisdom and understanding

TEXT: Isaiah 9:8 – 10:4

TITLE: THE UNRELENTING WRATH OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

THE UNRELENTING WRATH OF GOD EXECUTES WAVES OF JUDGMENT AGAINST A PEOPLE THAT PERSIST IN REJECTING HIS COUNSEL

INTRODUCTION:

A good title for our message this morning would be “*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*” – but Jonathan Edwards still owns the rights to that impactful phrase. We have been bouncing back and forth in our study of these early chapters in the book of Isaiah between **Gloom** and **Glory** – between dark promises of impending judgment and brilliant glimpses of hope regarding the coming of Messiah and the righteous reign of the millennial kingdom.

Most of the attention since 7:1 has been on Isaiah’s interaction with wicked King Ahaz and how God will deal with Judah – the southern kingdom. Ahaz had the opportunity to turn to the Lord in repentance and faith. He was invited to seek a confirming sign from God. He chose to go his own way and rely on his foolish political alliance with Assyria to protect him from the dual threat of Israel and Syria. So the Lord did an end run around Ahaz and initiated His own dramatic sign to the people of Judah – the virgin birth of the Messiah – a promise expanded in chap. 9 where we learned last week more about the character and role of the child that would be born, the son that would be given. Now the attention turns to **Israel** and the northern kingdom of 10 tribes – sometimes referred to by its largest tribe Ephraim, its capital Samaria or by Jacob. What will be their fate – given their rebellion and apostasy?

Van Parunak: The focus since 7:1 has been on Judah, and references to the judgment on the northern kingdom have been due to their role in opposing Judah . . . Now Isaiah turns his indictment against the North for their own wickedness. . . The four stanzas each include both sin and judgment, though only the fourth explicitly echoes the “woe.” Then, 10:5-31 gives the most detailed description yet of the coming Assyrian invasion.

The passage addresses sin and judgment on a **national level** – but we can make application to our personal lives as well. We have studied earlier sections that speak of the signs of a society that has so degenerated into wickedness that it should expect the imminent judgment of God. We have seen that our society fits those sobering criteria. Here the **structure** of the section is made obvious for us – four stanzas ending in the same **refrain** which echoes the theme of our study for today. **9:12; 9:17; 9:21; 10:4**

THE UNRELENTING WRATH OF GOD EXECUTES WAVES OF JUDGMENT AGAINST A PEOPLE THAT PERSIST IN REJECTING HIS COUNSEL

(9:8-9a) PRELUDE: Rejection of the Counsel of the Lord Leads to Judgment

*“The Lord sends a message against Jacob; and it falls on Israel.
And all the people know it, That is, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria,”*

Van Parunak: First, he sends only **one word**, not “words.” When someone sends “words,” the reference is to a message that the recipient is intended to understand . . . But when God sends a single word, it is a command that has its effect, whether or not anybody understands it: **Ps. 147:18; Is. 55:11.** Thus the point here is not that he spoke to Jacob, but that he uttered a command concerning them. . . **What did they know?** The only reasonable reference is that they knew that the Lord had decreed judgment against them. **2 Kings 17:13-15** recalls all the prophets that the Lord sent to the Northern Kingdom to warn them about their sin and its consequences. “All the people knew” that they were sinning, but they would not admit it outwardly.

Young: All the people, the entire Israel, **will know as a result of experience.** The word has reached them and accomplished its end. Until now they have paid no attention to God’s threatenings, but the word has reached them. Experiencing the divine chastisement, the entirety of the people will obtain knowledge, but even so will continue in hardness of heart.

Oswalt: Those who have thought they were independent will know the truth of God’s word (Hos. 9:7; Ps. 14:4; Job 21:19), for through it they will come up against the unshakable fact that they are finite; there are limits to their abilities and potentials.

4 WAVES OF JUDGMENT THAT TARGET THE CRITICAL SINS OF A CULTURE THAT HAS REJECTED GOD’S COUNSEL

FIRST WAVE OF JUDGMENT TARGETS:

I. (9:9b-12) CRITICAL SIN OF PRIDEFUL SELF RELIANCE

A. The Sin Problem – The Foundations Have Crumbled

“The bricks have fallen down”

For the nation of Israel – especially the ten northern tribes – we have seen that their society has disintegrated; they have rejected the Lord and turned away from following His Word; their foundations have crumbled; they are way off track when it comes to serving their covenant God; they are like that derailed train this week over in Rosedale – they are already burning and the clouds of dense black smoke are visible everywhere – “Houston, we have a problem” – it cannot be denied; How will the nation respond?

How do you respond when the foundations crumble?

Where have the foundations crumbled in your life? Or maybe just some of the bricks are starting to come loose – some of the bricks in your walk with the Lord – some of that closeness and intimacy – or some of the bricks in your marriage or family relationships – or some of the bricks in your career or in your health – there are many ways in which our life seems to break down and crumble

B. The Sinful Response = Self Reliant Reconstruction – “We will rebuild”

1. Image of a Building

“we will rebuild with smooth stones;”

Self Help program; self reclamation; self reformation

“Can a leopard change its spots”

2. Image of a Forest

“But The sycamores have been cut down, But we will replace them with cedars.”

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.”

Beall: Cedars were tall stately trees that often stood for the **pride of Israel** (since they were imported by Solomon at the height of the kingdom—see Isa 2:12-17; Jer 22:6-7, 13-17, 23-25; Ezek 17:3, 11; 2 Kgs 14:8-10—Jehoash, the king of Israel, mocks Amaziah [Uzziah's father] by calling him a thistle, while Jehoash is the cedar.

This response is the typical response we see in our country today to any type of calamity. [Not dealing here with trying to make any such direct link to the calamity and **divine judgment** – that is a more complicated issue for us..] The flood or the hurricane or the tornado strikes and there is unbelievable devastation. But immediately our leaders step forward and in **self reliance** proudly proclaim, “We will rebuild” – “We will make it even better than before.” Isn’t that the message that we hear all the time? As if we have the power in ourselves to make this happen apart from the grace and providence of God. If God chooses, He can send a second tornado right along the same path as the first. As fast as we can construct a Tower of Babel, God can knock it down, if He so chooses. Our mindset in terms of priority should be to seek the Lord and rely on His grace and resources. Karen and I always shrink back from those public figures that have achieved success in some realm and put themselves out there with the motivating message: “You can do anything you set your mind to do” – really? Is that what the Bible teaches? Our society is permeated with these positive self help messages – “We will rebuild”

Look at the Root Motivation:

C. The Root Motivation: Pride and Arrogance

“Asserting in pride and in arrogance of heart.”

Motyer: “*Pride*” from word meaning “to be high”; “*Arrogance*” from word meaning “to be great”; to depict one who stubbornly backs his own judgment, trusts his own responses, depends on his own resources and puts his own policies to work. . . an awareness that “things are falling apart” met by a spirit of self-confidence towards the future, never stopping to read the lessons of the past. Not only will the set-back be overcome but the future will outshine the past as *dressed stone* and *cedars* surpass (mud) *bricks* and (common sycamore) *fig-trees*.

Oswalt: **the sin for Israel, the source of all other sin, is the pride which exalts humanity above God, which makes God but a tool for the achievement of our plans and dreams.**

The Lord hates pride in any of us; the Lord hates pride in any nation; if we refuse to humble ourselves before Him, He has unlimited ways to humble us and show us His sovereignty and majesty and dominion and power

D. The Response of the Lord in Further Judgment – Sending Stronger Enemies to Oppose Them

“Therefore the LORD raises against them adversaries from Rezin, And spurs their enemies on, The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west; And they devour Israel with gaping jaws.”

Adversaries *from* Rezin (from Syria) or adversaries *of* Rezin (= Assyrians)

Beall: the expression could be either a rival party in Syria (so Martin, Ridderbos, Vine—see v. 12) or Assyria.

The Syrians (their former allies in the confederacy against the Assyrians) on the east and the Philistines (their permanent nemesis) on the west.
It sounds like all nations are now against Israel.

Van Parunak: What event does Isaiah have in mind? TP3 subjugated Syria in 734-733, when he destroyed Damascus. Pekah was overthrown by Hoshea (2 Kings 15:30). 2 Kings 17:1-6 records how Hoshea ruled for nine years. At first he was a vassal to Assyria, but then he rebelled and turned to Egypt for aid. In punishment for his treason, Shalmaneser V besieged Samaria (2 Kings 17:5), which fell to Sargon II three years later in 722. This passage appears to have been written during this nine year period, when the first blow has fallen, but not the second.

You remember the **movie Jaws**? Here you have enemy nations rising up and devouring Israel in their jaws like they were just a little snack, an appetizer – nothing more than a mouthful. No contest; nothing that Israel could do to mount a defense; where is their pride and arrogance in the face of such strong foes?

Who is driving this judgment? The Lord Himself – personally, directly

E. Refrain of the Unrelenting Wrath of God

“In spite of all this His anger does not turn away, And His hand is still stretched out.”

Isa 5:25 *“On this account the anger of the Lord has burned against His people, and He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets. For all this His anger is not spent, but His hand is still stretched out.”*

Wrath of God not satisfied; man cannot make propitiation for his sins

Image of stretched out hand can remind you of parental corporal punishment of young children – paddling them for their stubborn, willful rebellion – continuing to extend that hand until they yield – at that point you want nothing more than to embrace them and verbalize your love and commitment to them – but Israel would not repent and the Lord in His wrath would not relent

Wave #2

II. (9:13-17) CRITICAL SIN OF BLIND LOYALTY TO GODLESS LEADERS

A. The Sin Problem – Failure to Depend on the Lord for Leadership and Direction

*“Yet the people do not turn back to Him who struck them,
Nor do they seek the LORD of hosts.”*

Hard times intended to drive us back to the Lord; that should be the effect of discipline;
We are dealing here with an impenitent people; no repentance on their part

B. The Sinful Response – Relying on Human Leadership – both in the Political and Religious Realm

1. The Head – Respected Politicians Providing the Decision Making

“The head is the elder and honorable man”

Come to believe that they are above the law; they are not accountable

2. The Tail – Lying Prophets Providing the Input

“And the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail.”

Book of Jeremiah has much to say about the false prophets – the Lord did not send them; they do not speak His truth; they speak what the people want to hear

Van Parunak: “Head and tail” represents the entire animal. “Branch” (the lofty palm frond) and “rush” (growing in the marsh) represent the highest and lowest plants. The prophet is describing a devastation of the land that has touched the entire society. Historically, the likely reference is to the preliminary deportation of Galilee around 732, described in 2 Kings 15:29.

Oswalt: That pride and arrogance which exalts humanity issues in an adulation of the “great” men of a society. But that very adulation renders them less and less able to lead their people. For just leadership can only come from persons who know their own weaknesses and corruptibility.

C. The Root Motivation: Foolish Spirit of Godless Independence in Reliance on Human Wisdom

1. Their Incompetence -- Blind Leading the Blind

*“For those who guide this people are leading them astray;
And those who are guided by them are brought to confusion.”*

2. Their Wickedness and Foolishness

*“For every one of them is godless and an evildoer,
And every mouth is speaking foolishness.”*

D. The Response of the Lord in Further Judgment – Judgment Without Favor

1. Judgment

*“So the LORD cuts off head and tail from Israel,
Both palm branch and bulrush in a single day.”*

Beall: the palm branch (הַפֶּזֶז, the most honored branch) and the bulrush (בִּלְרֹשׁ; the most lowly). See Isa 19:15, where both pairs of words are again used in connection with the foolish leaders of Egypt. The idea is that the whole will be severed, from the least to the greatest. . . No doubt Isaiah is here mocking the prophets, who were no leaders, but rather told the kings what they wanted to hear (and thus are like a dog's wagging tail!

2. Without Favor

a. No Favor for the Strong

“Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure in their young men,”

b. No Provision for the Vulnerable

“Nor does He have pity on their orphans or their widows;”

Strong and surprising statement here – the Lord is known for His compassion towards orphans and widows – Yet here He turns His back on them – sounds harsh – but much of Scripture

sounds harsh if you do not understand the seriousness of sin; the nature of God's holiness and sense of justice; the inevitability of His judgment and wrath

E. Refrain of the Unrelenting Wrath of God

"In spite of all this His anger does not turn away, And His hand is still stretched out."

III. (9:18-21) CRITICAL SIN OF SELF PRESERVATION -- LACK OF BROTHERLY LOVE / LEADS TO ANARCHY IN SOCIETY

What's wrong with a preoccupation with self? With thinking only about your own life? Remember the warning of Jesus – the one who tries to just save his own life will lose it ...

A. The Sin Problem – Consumed by the Wickedness that Attracts Them

"For wickedness burns like a fire; It consumes briars and thorns; It even sets the thickets of the forest aflame, And they roll upward in a column of smoke."

Like the chemicals in the derailed CSX rail car on Tuesday that just continue to burn and send up plumes of dense black smoke

Van Parunak: The kind of fire to which Isaiah compares sin is one that can not only burn up the dry brush at the end of the hot summer, but destroy dense forest as well.

B. The Sinful Response – Retreat Into a Shell of Selfish Isolationism

"And they slice off what is on the right hand but still are hungry, And they eat what is on the left hand but they are not satisfied; Each of them eats the flesh of his own arm. Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, And together they are against Judah."

Manasseh and Ephraim were the tribes descended from the two sons of Joseph – had a history of some civil conflict – Judges 12

The only time the tribes can come together is to unite against Judah.

How pleasant it is when brothers can exist together in peace and unity.

Here: every man for himself; complete anarchy

Motyer: Under deficient leadership (13-17) the door is opened to unchecked self-seeking. This stanza exposes the betrayal of brotherliness (19), the essential barrenness of the acquisitive life (20) and the breakdown of social cohesiveness (21).

C. The Root Motivation: Preoccupation with Self / Self Absorption

"No man spares his brother."

D. The Response of the Lord in Further Judgment – Consuming the Land and the People

"By the fury of the LORD of hosts the land is burned up, And the people are like fuel for the fire;"

E. Refrain of the Unrelenting Wrath of God

"In spite of all this His anger does not turn away, And His hand is still stretched out."

Van Parunak: The alternation of time markers produces a kaleidoscope in which the past, present, and future blur together to make exactly the point stated in the refrain: The same zeal against sin that God has already demonstrated, will continue to operate in the future..

Oswalt: The “prophetic perfect,” in which the tense of completed action is used to describe future events of whose occurrence the writer is absolutely convinced, is common in the book. But here perfects, perfects with *waw* consecutive, imperfects, and imperfects with *waw* consecutive all occur together in such a way that all versions are required to emend the text in some way in order to produce any consistency.

IV. (10:1-4) CRITICAL SIN OF JUDICIAL INJUSTICE AND EXPLOITATION

A. The Sin Problem – Injustice and Exploitation

1. Injustice – on the part of those who make the laws and those who implement them

“Woe to those who enact evil statutes, And to those who constantly record unjust decisions,”

2. Exploitation of the Weak and Vulnerable

“So as to deprive the needy of justice, And rob the poor of My people of their rights,”

Remember the fundamental mission of government: to protect peoples’ rights; to reward those who do well and punish those who do evil; to provide a just and righteous environment where people can live in peace and security

B. The Sinful Response – Trying to Build a Secure Future

Nothing left to try – no recourse or place to turn for refuge or help

C. The Root Motivation: Greed and Insecurity

“In order that widows may be their spoil, And that they may plunder the orphans.”

D. The Response of the Lord in Further Judgment – No Place to Hide in Day of Judgment and Accountability –

1. Three Tough Questions

a. What will you do?

“Now what will you do in the day of punishment, And in the devastation which will come from afar?”

b. Who will help you?

“To whom will you flee for help?”

c. What benefit to you will be your money and prestige and power?

“And where will you leave your wealth?”

2. Two Bad Destinies

a. Slavery

“Nothing remains but to crouch among the captives”

b. Extinction
“Or fall among the slain.”

Nowhere to hide
Your Wealth does you no good

Van Parunak: Their judgment, according to the questions in v. 3, corresponds to their sin. They have deprived oppressed people of the protection that the nation's government should offer. Now the Lord will abandon them and leave them without protection.

E. Refrain of the Unrelenting Wrath of God

“In spite of all this His anger does not turn away, And His hand is still stretched out.”

Grogan: The refrain that has occurred at various points in this oracle is truly terrifying in its climactic position. If even physical earth does not satisfy the fierce anger of this holy God, what dread punishment lies beyond the grave?

CONCLUSION:

What can satisfy this unrelenting wrath of God that is unleashed against sin and ungodliness and wickedness? Only the **propitiation** accomplished on the cross by the substitutionary atoning death of the Son of God Himself – Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where is God dealing with you in the area of stamping out pride and arrogance?
- 2) What is the application in the context of church leadership to the need for discernment on the part of the people so that they don't worship their spiritual leaders and just blindly accept their direction?
- 3) How can we promote brotherly love in our church context and fight against the decaying spirit of selfish isolationism?
- 4) What are some examples in our country of oppressive legislation; of ways in which the lawmakers seek to enrich themselves at the expense of those who are vulnerable and weak?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: This four-stanza poem is a classic of biblical social analysis, impressive in its logic, frightening in its inevitability. The message (word) which the Lord has sent (9:8) has fallen on deaf ears and from this easily dismissed beginning everything else follows as certainly as night follows day. . . The four stanzas show a coherent development:

1. **National disaster** (:8-12). The Lord's word has been rejected in self-sufficient pride.

Internal set-backs (:10) will be followed by external attack (:11).

2. **Political collapse** (:13-17). Since there has been no repentance (:13), the Lord will undermine the leadership (:14-16). There will be widespread suffering (:17).

3. **Social anarchy** (:18-21). Divine wrath manifests itself in a spirit of total self-concern (:19) bringing with it no satisfaction (:20). The nation tears itself apart, united only in hostility to Judah (:21).

4. **Moral perversion** (10:1-4). The basis of morality, safeguarded by law, is overturned. The suffering of the helpless (:2) brings as its reward the helplessness of its perpetrators in the day of judgment (:3-4).

Van Parunak: Literal Warning of Sin and Judgment – 4 stanzas:

- 1) Arrogance brings Oppression
- 2) Corrupt Leaders bring Divine Desertion
- 3) Wickedness brings Fraternal Strife
- 4) Injustice brings Destruction

“we will rebuild” --

This arrogant boast, over 2700 years old, has a strikingly modern ring.² It is ominously similar to President Obama's words in his address to the joint session of congress on Tues Feb 24, But while our economy may be weakened and our confidence shaken; though we are living through difficult and uncertain times, tonight I want every American to know this: We will rebuild, we will recover, and the United States of America will emerge stronger than before.

Even the most secular analyst recognizes that our current economic crisis is due to the selfishness and greed of the nation, not only among bank presidents, but among ordinary citizens who borrowed more than they could afford in a frenzy of consumerism. Yet we refuse to see our current crisis as the judgment of God upon our covetousness. We should be confessing our national sin and turning to the Lord. Instead, we defiantly insist that we will rebuild.

Oswalt: This structure is shown not only by the use of the refrain at the end of each strophe (vv. 11, 16, 20 [Eng. 12, 17, 21]); 10:4) and by the internal arrangement of the strophes (4 lines in each, except v. 14 [Eng. 15], on which see below), but also by the content, which moves from pride through false leadership and the loss of brotherly love to social injustice. These are the great themes of Isaiah's book (see on chs. 2, 3, 5; cf. also chs. 13, 14, 28–31), and it is completely in keeping with his reasoning that the root cause of human problems is arrogance, which then leads to the other problems, the end of which is oppression. Thus, in a brief but powerful way, the prophet reminds his hearers of that human behavior for which we stand condemned at the bar of God and as a result of which nations go down to destruction).

Brian Borgman: Judgment on Israel and Assyria

Context starts in chapter 7 where the evil king Ahaz is approached by the prophet and given an opportunity to put his trust in the Lord. But Ahaz is going to do things his own way. God does an end run around Ahaz – if you won't accept a sign I will give one to the tribe of David. God is going to bring judgment upon Judah. God will still be faithful to the Immanuel promise. Roller coaster from heights of Messianic promise to depths of impending judgment. Repeated refrain marks out this section and provides its theme.

1) God's judgment against self sufficient pride. Israel and Jacob are the same – both a reference to northern kingdom. Repeated threats of impending judgment; Parable of the Sower:

word is sown and it falls on the ground just as this word fell on Israel. Experiential knowledge – impacted and moved by these words of judgment; no one will escape the impact of this preaching; but their response is not that of good soil but they respond in self sufficient pride. They recognize that judgment is coming and things will fall apart; but unbelievable arrogance; they will rebuild what God has destroyed and make it even better; insolent pride; God’s demolition just paves the way for us to build something better. We will have a better life on the other end. God raises up evil pagan nations to be rods of discipline against His people. Habakkuk dealt with this moral dilemma. Israel will be swallowed in one mouthful. God’s wrath is unquenchable. But the people remain impenitent. Cf. rebellious child not responding to parent’s discipline; remaining stiff-willed; needs to be given more licks – don’t stop at that point but keep the hand extended

2) God’s judgment against Impenitence = refusal to repent. After discipline you want to reach out and embrace the child and have them embrace you in return. But here the people refuse to repent. Their will needs to be broken or the job is not done. They set their jaw; they dig in their heels; they lock their knees; stand there as resolute as a little Napoleon. They were seeking the counsel of the occult instead of turning to the living God. The tail was a despicable part of the beast; wagged at will by the head; the prophets spoke what the people wanted to hear and what the leaders wanted them to say; giving society what it wanted; Jeremiah: God’s judgment against false prophets; blind loyalty to any government is a stupid thing; people are so gullible; sticking the brain in neural and letting someone else tell us what to do; Young men represent strength and fertility as the pride of that generation; those whom God always pities are now the objects of God’s scorn and lack of pity; sounds harsh; very good reason: every one of them is godless; they are profane, irreligious; heathen-like; practical atheists; have been raised with Torah from the time they came out of their mother’s womb; practicing evil; speaking senselessness in an irreligious manner; sounds like people at work; their opinion about religion amount to profanity;

3) God’s judgment *for* and *in* wickedness. Self consuming nature of wickedness; The insanity of our depravity; sin is alluring and attractive; the closer we move to the sin we become consumed by it – pornography, drugs, illicit sex, etc. Once you become consumed with a sin, it is only a matter of time before you become consumed by that sin; Cognitively we know where these things lead; but we think we are above experiencing those drastic consequences;

Illustration: Sea gulls on patch of ice going over Niagara Falls while feasting on dead, frozen fish; they think they can just fly off, but their feet become frozen to the patch of ice; Navajo Indians killing wolves by putting blood of animals on a knife – wolf come and licks it until it is slit and consumed by it

Rom. 1:18-32 – 3 times God gave them up to more wickedness as a judgment
Fury = overflowing rage; civil war when Assyrians come in; mothers end up eating their children; social structure totally destroyed; Lev. 26:27-29 cannibalism a judgment for rejecting the covenant; depths of depravity

4) God’s judgment against unjust legislators and administrators. “*Woe*” introduces oracle of judgment and doom; total corruption of the legal system; both those who make the laws and those who implement them; Israel already had a rather thorough civil code book from God; serving their own purposes; cf. wickedness of our Supreme Court; courts making laws that line their own pockets; going against the revealed law of God; they end up exploiting the very ones

they are supposed to protect; God hates this; asks them some hard questions; you can run but you can't hide – Joe Louis in the boxing ring;

- What are you going to do in the day of judgment;
- Who will you go to for help;
- Where are you going to leave your glory?

The prestige and honor and wealth – what good will it do you then?

Neither option is appealing = hanging out at the bottom of the slave barrel or lying with the slain;

Conclusion:

- 1) What in the world will eternal punishment be like? We look at natural disasters and say, “Where was God?” Was He asleep at the wheel? Wrath of God is being revealed right now; yet with mercy; what will eternal judgment look like? God uses mayhem and violence as rods of administering His justice;
- 2) To reject the word of the Lord is to incur His wrath or at least His fatherly displeasure

Ian Wright: What Will You Do in Day of Reckoning

Is there a turning to God after natural disasters? Or the extolling of the wonderful spirit of man that is able to rebuild after such a shaking of the foundations; things will end up even better; lack of seeking God in face of adversity; singles out the politicians and the prophets; people quite willing to be led astray; got the leadership they deserved; lack of discernment on every level; Berean spirit needs to check things out with the Scripture; people are not excused because they have bad leaders; they were not interested in following men who were godly; the people are divided among themselves and turn on one another; no king in Israel and everyone does what is right in their own eyes when you take away the standard; fragmentation of society; not a pretty picture here; perversion of those making the laws; we need equitable laws that reflect the character of God and justice; they have lost any concept of being under the authority of God; they make up their own laws; mass murder of aborted infants acceptable to the law; not just content with making it permissible under the law but we have parades about it; Contrast between the darkness of man's rebellion and the light of the gospel; God has a zeal for the salvation of the lost

David Silversides: What Will Ye Do? 9:18-10:4

The one thing needful = when we appear before God in judgment that we be found in Christ; They had boasted that they could take what would come; competent to handle whatever came their way; did not need to turn to the Lord;

1) (9:18-21) God's judgment will fall – like a devouring fire; God would bring about internal strife within Israel as part of the judgment; picture of starvation and cannibalism; savage infighting; they will eat their own flesh and blood; close connection to patriarch Joseph who begat both Ephraim and Manassas; only able to unite against Judah; weakened and ready for Assyrians to take them; the judgment for sin arises from the consequences of that sin; yet here the wrath of the Lord brings about this judgment; judgment against sin does not just happen; it is ordained and carried out by God Himself;

2) (10:1-4) The Sin for which God's judgment will fall – national, official wickedness in view here; they legitimize wickedness and condemn righteousness; God judges national wickedness in this world; We as a nation are liable to the judgment of God; we need to wake up to the reality of our national danger [speaking of United Kingdom and Northern Ireland]; our leaders are eager to tolerate an intolerant Islam; they provide protection for homosexuality; true Christianity is utterly despised and regarded as something only suitable for fools; our nation is ripe for the judgment of God

3) God's Power to Judge Beyond Hope – picture of utter and absolute defeat; God visits on the one hand to bless but on the other hand to judge; God comes in order to act; day of visitation is inevitable; not a question of If but when; there is an appointed judgment that is certain; there is no escape; there is no recovery; there is no way back; all that they trusted in would be swept away from them; this is final judgment; your sins must be forgiven through Christ

TEXT: Isaiah 10:5-19

TITLE: *WOE TO ASSYRIA – THE EXERCISE OF GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY OVER WICKED WORLD RULERS*

BIG IDEA:

THE TOOLS USED BY GOD FOR HIS SOVEREIGN PURPOSES MUST NEVER IMAGINE THAT THEY FUNCTION WITH INDEPENDENT PURPOSE AND POWER

INTRODUCTION:

There is a vast difference between the Sovereign God who is working out His purposes in history and the wicked nations He uses as tools to accomplish His purposes. Here is some special insight for you: **There are no nations that are not wicked nations in the eyes of God.** How can I say that? When it comes to individuals, we know that “*there is none righteous, no not one.*” Every nation is just a union of wicked people. But the comforting thought is that God is in total control of every one of these wicked nations – from the least significant pauper to the chief rulers who might imagine that they are the king of the hill like the pompous Yertle the Turtle:

"All mine!" Yertle cried. "Oh, the things I now rule!
I'm the king of a cow! And I'm the king of a mule!
I'm the king of a house! And, what's more, beyond that
I'm the king of a blueberry bush and a cat!
I'm Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me!
For I am the ruler of all that I see!"

Reminds one of King Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel. Think of the wicked nations that made **world domination** their driving agenda. Where are those kingdoms now? Assyria was such a nation. They had a reputation for extreme cruelty in how they conquered other cities and how they treated their captives. Their soldiers would strap on to their feet sandals with spikes on the bottom so as they would trample over those who had fallen in battle, the blood would ooze up between their toes. Yet this was the wicked nation the Lord had chosen as His instrument of judgment against His own people Israel.

The larger theological issue in play is the age old tension between the sovereignty of God and the moral responsibility of those agents He chose to use. The Scripture clearly teach both truths. Many examples could be cited:

- Joseph being sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers – **Gen. 50:20** “*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.*”
- King David on the run from Absalom, being cursed by Shimei – **2 Sam. 16:9-14** “*Let him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has told him.*” God had sent and commissioned Shimei to curse David just as He sent and commissioned the Assyrians.
- Most famously, **Acts 2:23** “*this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death*” – How could God then find fault and hold these men accountable?

Yet **both truths** must be maintained without watering down either one – God is in control of even the wicked actions of wicked world rulers (even Hitler and barbaric rulers in our day); yet God holds all men morally responsible for all of their actions

PRELUDE:

“Woe to Assyria,”

Look at how God had already indicated that Assyria only acted on His command ... to carry out His decree of judgment against His people:

- **Is. 5:26** – earlier prophecies that God would raise up Assyria – whistle to summon them quickly;
- **Is. 7:18-19** *“whistle for the fly and bee”*; incredible vast armies of Assyria and Egypt;
- **Is. 8:7** *“the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates”*; call them just like a flood;

Yet God is here introducing an oracle of judgment and doom against this nation that had served as the tool of His judgment

“Woe” – is not a new word for us in this prophetic book – Isaiah had proclaimed such a Woe on himself back in Chap. 6 when he saw the vision of the holiness of God and his own sinfulness;

Chap. 5 was filled with Woes against the wicked for their many injustices;

Chap. 10:1 had concluded a section of judgment against Israel with a proclamation of “Woe”

Now the prophet turns his attention to Assyria

THE TOOLS USED BY GOD FOR HIS SOVEREIGN PURPOSES MUST NEVER IMAGINE THAT THEY FUNCTION WITH INDEPENDENT PURPOSE AND POWER

3 CONTRASTS FOLLOWED BY A DECREE OF JUDGMENT

I. (10:5-11) CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SOVEREIGN PURPOSE AND THE ASSYRIAN PURPOSE – GOD EXERCISED HIS SOVEREIGNTY IN USING WICKED ASSYRIA AS HIS TOOL OF JUDGMENT AGAINST ISRAEL

A. (:5-6) Sovereign Purpose for Assyria

1. Instrument to Execute Judgment for God’s Anger

“the rod of My anger”

“And the staff in whose hands is My indignation,”

Different words used for anger, indignation, fury

Motyer: The word translated *anger* is ‘*ap*, which means “nose” and hence hard breathing or the snort that betokens exasperations. It is, therefore, anger as a felt emotion. *Wrath* (*za’am*) is expressed anger, in word or deed (the verb means “to scold, hurl imprecations”).

Contrast between inanimate objects that have no thought process and the Sovereign God who wields these objects to accomplish His purposes

2. Directed Against Apostate Israel

“I send it against a godless nation”

“And commission it against the people of My fury”

No longer calling them the people of God

Utley: What irony, the covenant people are called “*godless*” and made morally equivalent to “*godless*” Assyria!

There is a *sending* and a *commissioning* that derives from the one who is in control

In terms of **our spiritual giftedness**, we are the ones who have been **sent** and **commissioned** by the Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ – must consider ourselves as His instruments – jars of clay – don't try to take credit; no room for boasting or pride in self; no reason to advance self in pride and arrogance; no justification for worshiping God's servants; we are a brotherhood and sisterhood; nothing hierarchical in our relationships

3. Intent on Disciplining Them Severely – 3 Expressions of Divine Purpose

“To capture booty and to seize plunder”

“And to trample them down like mud in the streets.”

Utley: “*To capture booty and to seize plunder*” As v. 21, “*a remnant will return,*” reflects Isaiah's first son's name (cf. 7:3), this reflects his second son's symbolic name (cf. 8:1,3).

B. (:7-11) Assyrian Purpose

1. Different from God's Purpose – Arrogant view of its own sovereignty

“Yet it does not so intend

Nor does it plan so in its heart,”

Nations exist based on power allowed to them and delegated to them by God

Look at what motivates their agenda:

2. Motivated by World Dominion – Over the top agenda

“But rather it is its purpose to destroy,

And to cut off many nations.”

Van Parunak: In their mind, Israel is just another nation to conquer. They intend to subdue many nations, one of which just happens to be Israel. The Assyrian's proud confidence is based in his assessment of three things: his strength of his own forces, the weakness of his adversaries, and the impotence of the gods of all the other lands.

3. (:8) Motivated by Top Dog Syndrome -- Promoting Pawns to Kings

“For it says, ‘Are not my princes all kings?’”

Van Parunak: The Assyrian king views his commanders as the equivalent of kings of other nations.

4. (:9) Motivated by Past Success -- Good Indicator of Future Performance

“Is not Calno like Carchemish,

Or Hamath like Arpad,

Or Samaria like Damascus?”

Motyer: Six cities are named in pairs. In each pair the first is further south than the second and the king is reasoning: “I took that; I can take this.” . . . The list is not a historical description of the march but an impressionistic expression of the idea of inexorable advance; disaster ever nearer – Samaria next.

Oswalt: In a masterful survey of recent history, the prophet has the Assyrian list his conquests, beginning at the Euphrates and coming steadily southward until the wave crests upon Samaria just to the north. . . The Assyrians had subdued Marduk and Hadad, Baal and El. What could the god of some out-of-the-way place like Jerusalem have over those great gods? In any event, Yahweh had already been defeated at Samaria, so Jerusalem was as good as lost.

5. (:10-11) Motivated by Faulty Theology -- Argument from the Greater to the Lesser
“As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, Whose graven images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?”

Van Parunak: So far is he from acknowledging that he is under the control of the God of Jerusalem, that he views his conquest as proving his superiority to that God.

Viewed Israel as just another nation trusting in their idols – and these idols were not even as physically impressive as those of other nations already conquered by Assyria

Application: Whose Purposes are you trying to accomplish in life??

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” – how am I fulfilling God’s kingdom objectives?? Right now Jesus Christ is concerned with building His church??

II. (10:12-14) CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SOVEREIGN POWER AND THE ASSYRIAN POWER

A. (:12) Perspective of the Sovereign Power

1. Accomplishing His Agenda in Accordance with his Timetable
“So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem,”

Van Parunak: The verb “perform” can have the special sense “cut off,” and in this sense might be understood of Assyria’s work. Hearing Assyria’s proud boasting, Isaiah exclaims, “Surely the Lord will cut off Assyria’s work in Jerusalem and Mount Zion.” That was exactly what happened, as we will see when we get to the history of Hezekiah. Rabshakeh threatened the city, but the Lord smote the army with a plague. God cut off Assyria’s work, and he did it at Jerusalem.

2. Addressing the Appropriate Punishment for the Arrogance of Assyria
“He will say, ‘I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness.’”

B. (:13-14) Perspective of the Assyrian Power

1. Over Inflated View of Assyria’s Own Power
“For he has said, ‘By the power of my hand’”
2. Over Inflated View of Assyria’s Own Wisdom
“and by my wisdom I did this, For I have understanding;”
3. Over Inflated View of Assyria’s Own Accomplishments

*“And I removed the boundaries of the peoples,
And plundered their treasures,
And like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants,”*

Grogan: The removal of national boundaries and the consequent mixing of peoples was one of the distinctives of Assyrian policy in the lands they conquered (cf. 2 Kings 17:6, 24).

Utley: The adjective's (BDB 7) basic meaning, "*strong*," can refer to

1. mighty/violent man, [Job 24:22](#); [34:20](#); [Jer. 46:15](#); [Lam. 1:15](#)
2. stubborn minded, [Isa. 46:12](#)
3. angels, [Ps. 78:25](#)
4. animals --

- a. bulls, [Isa. 10:13](#) may refer to a bull because a winged bull was the symbol of Assyria (i.e., on the sides of the Ishtar gates, cf. [Ps. 22:13](#); [68:30](#); [Isa. 34:7](#))
- b. horses, [Jdgs. 5:22](#); [Jer. 8:16](#); [47:3](#); [50:11](#)

4. (:14) Over Inflated View of Assyria's Easy Path to Conquest

“And my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest, and as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth; And there was not one that flapped its wing or opened its beak or chirped.”

No resistance

Van Parunak: Among people who survive by hunting and gathering, collecting the eggs of nesting birds is one of the easiest ways to gather food. Even children can do it. The king of Assyria compares his conquests to such an egg-hunting expedition.

Ordinarily, a nest robber must contend with an angry mother bird. But the Assyrian is so powerful that no one even posed such opposition. The nest is “left,” abandoned. No one flaps her wings at him, or chirps angrily, as a mother bird would to an egg-robber reaching into the nest. We would say today, “**It's like taking candy from a baby.**”

Application: Whose Power are you relying on day to day? God's strength is made perfect in our weakness

III. (10:15) CONTRAST BETWEEN THE PRAISE DUE TO THE SOVEREIGN LORD AND THE PRAISE DUE TO THE TOOL NATION

Who should get the Glory?

A. Incredulity

1. Illustration of the Axe

“Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it?”

2. Illustration of the Saw

“Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it?”

Van Parunak: The Lord compares the Assyrian with four passive implements: an axe, a saw, a rod, and a staff. Each of these is controlled by someone active.

B. Impossibility

1. Illustration of the Club

“That would be like a club wielding those who lift it,”

2. Illustration of the Rod

“Or like a rod lifting him who is not wood.”

Utley: Is the power in a scepter or in the one who lifts the scepter?

Application: Who is getting the Praise and the Glory for what you do day to day?

IV. (10:16-19) JUDGMENT EXECUTED BY THE SOVEREIGN LORD AGAINST HIS TOOL NATION FOR THEIR MORAL CULPABILITY – GOD WILL EXERCISE HIS SOVEREIGNTY IN JUDGING ASSYRIA

A. The Destroyer

“Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts,”

B. The Disease – chiasmic structure

A1 - Will send a Wasting Disease among his stout warriors

B1 - And under his glory a fire will be kindled like a burning flame

C1 - And the light of Israel will become a fire

C2 - And his Holy One a flame

B2 - And it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day And He will destroy the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden, both soul and body

A2 - As when a sick man wastes away

Oswalt: All the health, vigor, and glory in which Assyria exulted will be eaten away by disease or by fire. All that will be left will be a wasted, burned-out hulk.

* * * * *

Van Parunak: “*Glory*” is often used to describe the glorious wealth that people amass. The Lord will burn it up. . .

Note in particular how qualities that are so precious to God's people pose a threat to their adversaries.

- He is their holy one, but that holiness makes him alien and threatening to unbelievers.
- He is their light, but that light burns up those who reject it.

the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field,--In 9:14, we learned about the figure of speech called a “merism,” in which two extremes are used to refer to everything that they encompass.

Here is another instance of this figure. The inferno destroys both the wild land (the thick forest) and the cultivated field, and thus every sort of land.

both soul and body:--Another merism, and perhaps a step away from the metaphor and toward the literal truth. Forests and fields don't have souls and bodies, but people do. "Soul" here means "life." God will not only slay them, but also destroy their flesh.

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C. The Devastation

"And the rest of the trees of his forest will be so small in number that a child could write them down."

My favorite story about my daughter Jenny's college degree in Accounting – visiting with a family from her church; chatting around the dinner table; discussing her college program in Accounting; young daughter pipes up: "Is that counting with really big numbers?" Here you have counting with real little numbers

CONCLUSION:

My favorite **Dr. Seuss** book: Yertle the Turtle – kept building his throne higher by stacking up poor turtles and exploiting them so that he could be king of all he could see ... doesn't take much for the Lord to cause one little turtle in the stack to burp and send proud Yertle crashing down to be buried in the mud:

But, while he was shouting, he saw with surprise
That the moon of the evening was starting to rise
Up over his head in the darkening skies.
"What's THAT?" snorted Yertle. "Say, what IS that thing
That dares to be higher than Yertle the King?
I shall not allow it! I'll go higher still!
I'll build my throne higher! I can and I will!
I'll call some more turtles. I'll stack 'em to heaven!
I need 'bout five thousand, six hundred and seven!"

But, as Yertle, the Turtle King, lifted his hand
And started to order and give the command,
That plain little turtle below in the stack,
That plain little turtle whose name was just Mack,
Decided he'd taken enough. And he had.
And that plain little lad got a bit mad.
And that plain little Mack did a plain little thing.
He burped!
And his burp shook the throne of the king!

And Yertle the Turtle, the king of the trees,
The king of the air and the birds and the bees,
The king of a house and a cow and a mule...
Well, that was the end of the Turtle King's rule!
For Yertle, the King of all Sala-ma-Sond,
Fell off his high throne and fell Plunk! in the pond!

And tosay the great Yertle, that Marvelous he,
Is King of the Mud. That is all he can see.
And the turtles, of course... all the turtles are free
As turtles and, maybe, all creatures should be.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why was it important for the Lord to address His judgment upon Israel before turning His attention to judgment upon Assyria?
- 2) How do the names of Isaiah's two children impact the meaning and significance of this section?
- 3) What do we learn about the character of God in relation to His people from His names revealed in this section: "*light of Israel*", "*Holy One*"?
- 4) Where are we tempted to view ourselves or others as acting independently when really the Lord is controlling all the action?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: Vv 7-11 indicate, however, that Assyria does not recognize the source of her power. Instead of Assyria's heart being in tune with the Lord, as His servant, Assyria's heart is solely toward destruction and dominance over the other nations. In vv. 8-11 Isaiah gives a mock Assyrian speech, in which Assyria boasts that her princes have become kings, and the various cities are alike conquered by her: beginning north at Carchemish (350 miles north of Jerusalem, defeated in 717 B.C.), then Calno (=Calneh [see Amos 6:2], a city in Northern Syria probably near Aleppo, 50 miles south of Carchemish, defeated in 738 B.C. by Tiglath Pileasar), then Arpad (northwest of Calneh, conquered in 740 B.C., then Hamath (on the Orontes 100 miles south of Arpad, 100 miles north of Damascus, conquered in 738 by T-P and 720 B.C. by Sargon II), then Damascus in 732 B.C., and finally Samaria in 722 B.C. The order of cities is geographic, not chronological. Assyria's point is that all cities have been conquered with relative ease. Just as she had conquered the idols of Samaria, so also would she conquer Judah and her "idols"—including the living God! As Young notes, "the rod by which God expressed His anger now vaunted itself above Him" (p. 363). God is simply another of the "idols" that Assyria will vanquish. This is the ultimate boast, and the ultimate in stupidity.

Grogan: We have been given a glimpse into the mind of God; now we see the mind of Assyria. The two minds are at one only as to the acts of war themselves, not as to the ultimate purpose of those acts. Assyria and its boastful monarchs certainly had no intention of serving the punitive end of the God of Israel; rather they sought conquest and territorial expansions for their own glory.

Motyer: In 37:28-29 Isaiah uses the figure of the horse and its rider, which is the nearest the Bible comes to elucidating the mystery of sovereignty and responsibility. The Assyrians are the horse, the Lord is the rider. To the horse belongs all the restless energy and huge strength of its nature; to the rider belongs all direction and skill of management. The Assyrians give thought and then expression in action to the effectuation of that world dominion which expresses their

mind and matches their assumed abilities and rights, but the Lord rides upon world history for the accomplishment of holy purposes.

Brian Borgman: Judgment on Assyria

Passage with theological import; seemingly contradictory truths of sovereignty of God and moral responsibility of man; If you have a God who is in control of all things and has decreed all things then how can man be held responsible; Pelagius denied the sovereignty of God and asserted free will of man; Augustine soundly refuted this; In order to guard man's freedom they put limits on God's sovereignty; another extreme has been making man out to be no more than a robot; Both truths are inescapably true in this passage;

Last week we saw harsh judgment of God on His own people; now looking at those nations He uses to execute judgment on His own people; "*Woe*" – used in 10:1 – spoken against corrupt and evil rulers and lawmakers in Israel; a word that should cause us to tremble; the beginning of a judgment oracle; vs. Psalm 1 "*Blessed is the man*"; This woe is to Assyria; army was notoriously cruel and vicious in their manner of warfare; developed sandal strapped up to the knee that had spikes on the base so they could trample their enemies and the blood would gush up between their toes; you did not want to be captured by the Assyrians;

Tools of God's sovereignty; His wrath moved Assyria against Israel; God is the one who commissioned and sent them; contrast with commission to Isaiah in chap. 6; go and trample under God's feet God's people; Assyrians did not have a written command from God; command of God's decrees are eternal and invisible to accomplish his purposes; Is. 8:3 – son of Isaiah with prophetic name; **Is. 5:26** – earlier prophecies that God would raise up Assyria – whistle to summon them quickly; **Is. 7:18-19** "*whistle for the fly and bee*"; incredible vast armies of Assyria and Egypt; **Is. 8:7** "*the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates*"; call them just like a flood;

God takes complete responsibility for raising up the Assyrians; not working in just cooperation with the Assyrians; He has actively raised them up, set them against Israel and caused them to execute His judgment; If we stopped here we would conclude Assyria just a pawn on God's sovereign chessboard; yet look at vs. 7 (NIV); Assyrians not intending to serve the purposes of Lord God of Israel; not bowing under His sovereignty; it is their purpose to destroy and cut off many nations; they have totally **different motives**;

1) motivated by world domination; lust for power

2) spurred on by a sense of their own greatness; we will continue to conquer; perception of their own self greatness

3) motivated by its own theology – they have their own belief system; regional gods; 2 Kings -- after losing a battle -- next time we will fight them in the hills because their god in the plains turned out to be strong; we have seen the gods of the other nations and none is able to stop us; Jerusalem will not be able to stop us either; Our god is bigger than your god; no external coercion on the nation

Are they responsible for these thoughts, words and actions? Absolutely! We know people motivated by the same things; Yet God is control of them even though He is not coercing them; **Packer**: "**antinomy**" = not a paradox (2 seemingly contradictory things that you examine but find not to be contradictory at all) but no matter how hard you look at the two truths you cannot harmonize them but must conclude that they are both true ([Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God](#));

vv. 12-15 Lord's will vs. will of Assyrians – the certainty of the Lord's purpose "*when the Lord is done*" = completed His work; accomplishing the sifting of the remnant; I am going to turn around and whip Assyria; God uses the devil himself in the same way; even a worse character than king of Assyria; king here sounds like Nebuchadnezzar; I know military strategy;

I did this; this was a cake walk; nobody to stop me or even chirp at me with their little beak; seems here like his will was free and unfettered but actually under the control of God; he was not a neutrally moral agent but bound to his own sinful nature; How many of you chose to put on your left shoe first? Did you put your shoe on freely? Why did you do it in this order? We are creatures of habit; we have internal operations that coerce us to act in one way or another; we don't understand what drives us; importance of **Luther's** book on the Bondage of the Will; we can only make decisions compatible with our fallen nature; **Jonathan Edwards** – you will only choose what you desire most at any given moment; what makes us violate vow to never eat Snickers bar and to lose weight; the will acts in response to our strongest emotions and desires; God mocks the Assyrian king in **vs. 15**; the one exerting the axe is the one asserting his will; **Calvin** makes good observations here; God is not dragging men against their will but regulates all of the movement of men so that they still have the exercise of their will; king of Assyria is not an inanimate object;

v. 16 – Now we get to the scary part; Because of this Lord will send judgment; they have committed atrocities; because of their pride and arrogance and pomp; they have broken the law of God at every point; here we come back to the antinomy; ironic how God says He is going to do it; these are intimidating warriors with the best equipment; levels them not with sword but with a virus that is naked to the human eye – something so small they can't even see it; cf. microscopic kidney stone that puts any man on his knees; God uses the little tiny things to humble those who are proud; God will take the prosperity of the Assyrians and use it as a curse against them = fuel for the great conflagration (**Calvin**); that fire which ends up being judgment for Assyria turns out to be a light for God's people; God is a consuming fire; what side will you be on? The totality of what the Assyrians are and what they possess will be destroyed; in the aftermath a little child could come along and take a census; only enough for a child to count

Lessons:

- God is sovereign over all, even the wicked acts of men; orchestrated every pounding of the nail of Calvary (Acts 2:23)
- Man is morally responsible for all of his acts before God and will be brought to judgment and accountability
- **Spurgeon**: Asked: "How do you reconcile sovereignty and responsibility?" Responded: "I never reconcile friends"; Affirm both truths;
- God causes us to both will and to do His good pleasure

David Silversides: God's Sovereignty Over the Actions of the Wicked

God's Providence extends even to the wicked actions of wicked men and nations; nothing happens outside of and independent of the decree and providence of God;

1. The Wicked Used as an Instrument of Judgment

Assyria = The rod in God's hand to punish Israel

Gen. 50:19 – example of Joseph sold by brothers; cruelty towards their brother = evil actions; but God meant it for good; what took place was within the plan and purpose and decree of God;

2 Sam. 16:9-11 David fleeing from Absalom and Shimei cursing the king – the Lord is decreeing this cursing as part of God's correction and chastening of David; **Ps. 76:10** – "*Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee*" = will redound to God's glory; **Acts 2:23**; the reason God foresees is because of His foreordination; **1 Tim. 5:21** – even sinless angels needed sovereign power of God to keep them holy – election of angels; nothing comes to pass outside of the determinate purpose of God; **Ex. 9** – Pharaoh's heart hardened by the Lord; **Rom. 9:15ff** "*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy*";

2. The Wicked Intends Only Evil and does not Acknowledge God's Providence

King of Assyria views himself as absolutely in control; my princes are like everybody else's

kings; I am the king of kings with complete control and power; all these cities and the kingdoms they represent are all in the same boat; just one more kingdom with their gods that I will conquer; **2 Kings 18:33**; distinction between God's decreed will (His sovereignty over all and perceptive will (that which He commands man to do will – His holy character and authority); **Eph. 1:11; Matt. 7:21** – not everyone does His prescriptive will; no such thing as rightness apart from God; His creatures cannot question His rightness; right and wrong are terms that have no meaning in the mouth of an atheist;

3. The Judgment That Will Fall

Is. 37:24;

TEXT: Isaiah 10:20-34

TITLE: THE MIGHTY GOD'S MASTER PLAN FOR THE REPENTANT REMNANT

BIG IDEA:

THE MIGHTY GOD CARRIES OUT HIS MASTER PLAN FOR THE REPENTANT REMNANT BY CONTROLLING HISTORICAL CYCLES OF OPPRESSION, DELIVERANCE AND JUDGMENT

INTRODUCTION:

When it comes to the future of the nation of Israel, make no mistake, God has a master plan. He sovereignly decrees the events of history and the courses of nations. He also has a plan for each of us as individuals.

1. Understand the **Roots** of the nation of Israel – What had God promised?
 - Promises to Abraham
 - Promises to David
2. Understand the **Destiny** of the nation of Israel – How will they end up?
 - Concept of the Day of the Lord – Judgment and Purging
 - Return to the Lord as the believing remnant – “*All Israel will be saved*”
 - Entrance into the glorious Messianic kingdom on earth

Every plan has its **Genesis** – its beginnings

Every plan has its **Revelation** – its culmination in history

THE MIGHTY GOD CARRIES OUT HIS MASTER PLAN FOR THE REPENTANT REMNANT BY CONTROLLING HISTORICAL CYCLES OF OPPRESSION, DELIVERANCE AND JUDGMENT

Let's look at the Mighty God in Action:

I. (:20-23) WORD OF HOPE FOR THE OPPRESSED -- THE MIGHTY GOD OFFERS TARGETED HOPE TO THE REPENTANT REMNANT AFTER MASSIVE DESTRUCTION --

DON'T GIVE UP ON GOD AND HIS PROMISES

A. (:20) Oppression – The Mighty God Promotes Genuine Faith thru the Crucible of Oppression

“Now it will come about in that day that the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.”

Looks forward to the final Day of the Lord

Frame of reference – 2 Options??

- 1) Talking about the northern kingdom here (not talking about Ahaz in the south turning to Assyria)
- 2) Or talking about the entire nation here and focuses more on Judah specifically in the next paragraph – so this could be an appropriate reference to the misplaced trust of Ahaz = my preference – but still with an emphasis on the northern kingdom ...

Lot of hypocrisy – people who claim to rely on God (“lean on”) but do not

Motyer: The reference to the Lord as a Warrior God is suited to this context where the people have been under the heel of a conqueror and need liberation. He is a “God of warrior-prowess”, as in Joshua 5:13 – 6:27, and as Isaiah will see him again in 59:15b-20. Whatever his people’s need, since the Lord “*of hosts*” possesses every potentiality and power, he casts himself into the appropriate role.

But still maintain sense of deity – not just a mighty warrior but mighty God so that prophecy of Messiah in 9:6 maintains that emphasis on deity

B. (:21-22a) Deliverance -- The Mighty God Delivers the Tiny Repentant Remnant

“A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant within them will return;”

Shear-Jashub = “a remnant will return”

Hos. 3:5 “*Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days.*”

9:6 messianic promise of the Mighty God that would come

Cf. **Rom. 9:27**

Oswalt: despite the ring of Assurance that the people will not be annihilated, it is still true that the remnant will be but a fragment of the original. The promises to Abraham . . . cannot be used as a hedge to protect oneself from judgment (Luke 3:7-9), which is apparently what some were doing in Isaiah’s day. They were evidently arguing that God’s promises to multiply them would be kept to the extent that they would always be a numerous people.

C. (:22b-23) Judgment -- The Mighty God Executes Judgment Consistent with Righteousness

“A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord God of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.”

Overflowing with righteous judgment – getting what they deserved

Beall: The prophecy spans a large sequence of time, since it alludes to Ahaz's policy of depending upon Assyria for help (the issue in chaps. 7 and 8), and the ultimate dependence of Israel upon the Lord in the Millennium. Israel will depend on “the Lord, the Holy One of Israel” (יְהוָה קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל) rather than upon Assyria, who was an undependable “ally” that defeated Israel.

Van Parunak: The majority of commentators understand this to be an allusion to Ahaz and his policy of calling on Assyria for help, as we discussed in ch. 7. But this interpretation has two

flaws. First, it ignores the distinction between Israel in vv. 20-23 and Judah in 24-32. Second, it is imprecise. Assyria never smote Ahaz. It was only under Hezekiah that Assyria afflicted the southern kingdom.

As we observed in discussing the alternating verb tenses in 9:8-12, Assyria took many of Israel captive in the reign of Pekah, leading to a coup by Hoshea, who adopted a policy of submitting to Assyrian rule. He chose to “stay [lean] upon him who smote them.”

The remnant shall return,--In Hebrew, this clause is “Shear-Yashub,” the name of Isaiah's son from 7:3.

Beall: the remnant concept also has its negative side, since Isaiah reminds the nation that even if their people are now as numerous as the sand of the sea (language reminiscent of the Abrahamic covenant [Gen 22:17; 32:12]), only a remnant will return. The destruction of the rest will be an indication of God's righteousness: He will judge mankind.

II. (:24-27) WORD OF DELIVERANCE -- THE MIGHTY GOD PROMISES AMAZING DELIVERANCE TO JUDAH VIA THE COMING ANOINTED ONE -- DON'T FEAR (DESPITE HOW BAD THINGS MAY LOOK)

A. (:24-25) Oppression – The Mighty God Calms Our Fears by Stressing the Purpose and Brevity of Oppression

1. Present Oppression Will Come to an End Just as Former Oppression Came to an End

“Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, ‘O My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt did.’”

Matthew Henry: Considerations offered for the silencing of their fear.

1. The Assyrian shall do nothing against them but what God has appointed and determined. They are here told beforehand what he shall do, that it may be no surprise to them
2. The storm shall soon blow over
3. The enemy that threatens them shall himself be reckoned with.
4. They shall be wholly delivered from the power of the Assyrian, and from the fear of it

2. Allow the Anger of God to Accomplish His Purposes as He Redirects it Against Your Oppressors

“For in a very little while My indignation against you will be spent, and My anger will be directed to their destruction.”

Timothy Dane: “*indignation*” – used often for God's anger against His own people 10:5; 26:20; Dan. 8:19 “*the final period of the indignation*”; Dan. 11:36 “*for that which is decreed will be done*”

Ps. 30:4-5 “*Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name. For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.*”

B. (:26) Judgment – The Mighty God Executes Judgment in Accordance with Righteousness

1. Remember the Amazing Judgment of the Midianites

“And the LORD of hosts will arouse a scourge against him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb;”

Assyrians will not be able to escape; despite Sennacharib fleeing with small remainder of his army back to capital city of Nineveh; killed by his two sons

2. Remember the Amazing Judgment of the Egyptians

“and His staff will be over the sea, and He will lift it up the way He did in Egypt.”

Ex. 14 – Moses parted the waters by raising his staff over them; then the armies of Pharaoh perished

C. (:27) Deliverance – The Mighty God Breaks the Yoke of Oppression

1. Anticipate Long Awaited Deliverance From Oppression

“So it will be in that day, that his burden will be removed from your shoulders and his yoke from your neck,”

compulsion to render service to foreign oppressors

2. Look to the Coming Messiah for Deliverance

“and the yoke will be broken because of fatness.”

Van Parunak: “Rod” and “staff” in 10:5 recall the oppression mentioned in 9:4, “the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of his oppressor.” There, deliverance from that oppression was compared with “the day of Midian,” the great victory that God gave Gideon over Israel's adversaries, and here the same imagery emerges.

2 Options for translation of the word: “fatness” or “oil” (standing for anointed one)

1) fatness

a. In a negative sense

1) Related to Assyria

Beall: The last clause is obscure: the Heb. word means “fat” or “oil”—it probably means that the Lord would destroy the yoke of Assyria because of their pride and self-sufficiency—that is how the word is used in v. 16. [but is the fatness symbolic of Assyria or Israel (as **Young**)?]

2) Related to Israel

Oswalt: the picture drawn is of an ox who has eaten so well and been worked so little that the very fat of its neck breaks the yoke away (**Delitzsch** citing **Kimchi**).

b. In a positive sense – related to Israel experiencing the blessing and prosperity of the Lord -- **Timothy Dane:** strength of Israel

2) oil – used for anointing – reference to the coming anointed one

Van Parunak: Though modern versions like to refer this to fatness, the AV's association makes more sense. Israel's kings, unlike Assyria's, enjoyed the divine anointing symbolized by the oil. The Targum explicitly says that “the people [sc. the Assyrians] shall be broken before the Messiah.” In our next portion (v. 34), we will see another example of this assertion, when Assyria, pictured as Lebanon, falls by “the Mighty One.”

Cf. 9:4

III. (:28-34) WORD OF JUDGMENT -- THE MIGHTY GOD STRIKES DOWN THE ARROGANT ASSYRIANS BEFORE THEY CAN ADD JERUSALEM TO THEIR IMPRESSIVE LIST OF CONQUESTS -- DON'T SHAKE YOUR FIST AT GOD (AND ARROGANTLY ASSERT YOUR OWN AGENDA)

A. (:28-31) Waves of Oppression -- The Mighty God Hears the Growing Desperation of a Land Overrun by Progressive Conquests – the Wicked are on a Roll

“He has come against Aiath, He has passed through Migron; At Michmash he deposited his baggage. They have gone through the pass, saying, ‘Geba will be our lodging place.’ Ramah is terrified, and Gibeah of Saul has fled away. Cry aloud with your voice, O daughter of Gallim! Pay attention, Laishah and wretched Anathoth! Madmenah has fled. The inhabitants of Gebim have sought refuge.

The whole land invaded and overrun
Places located North and Northeast of Jerusalem

Oswalt: No literal attack is necessary for this account to serve its purpose in this setting. By means of short, hard-hitting phrases it depicts an army’s relentless progress southward from a point some fifteen miles north of Jerusalem until it finally stands overlooking the Holy City.

Young: The enemy approaches closer and closer to Jerusalem and the desperation of the local inhabitants becomes greater and greater.

B. (:32) Battleground for Divine Deliverance – The Mighty God Protects Jerusalem from the Arrogant Assault – the Wicked Shake Their Fists at God

“Yet today he will halt at Nob; He shakes his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.”

C. (:33-34) Severity of Judgment – The Mighty God Cuts Down the Arrogant Wicked – the Wicked are Abased

“Behold, the Lord, the God of hosts, will lop off the boughs with a terrible crash; Those also who are tall in stature will be cut down, And those who are lofty will be abased. And He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron axe, And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.”

Motyer: In contrast to the bogus sovereignty of the king, the real Sovereign takes centre stage.

[Some commentators think it refers to judgment upon Judah as an introduction to 11:1-2; but the context seems to fit better with Assyria being the target.]

Whole forest will be cut down – both the tall, majestic trees and the underlying growth of thickets

MacArthur: The OT equates Assyria to Lebanon (Eze 31:3; cf. 2:13; 37:24).

Constable: The prophet now changed his perspective as well as his figure. Even though Assyria would menace and, indeed, destroy Jerusalem, Yahweh of armies would cut the enemy down to size as a lumberjack trimmed branches off a tree and finally felled it. God's irresistible instrument would cut back Assyria's many lofty leaders. This would be a felling as colossal as the harvesting of Lebanon's vast forests (cf. Ezek. 31:3).

CONCLUSION:

THE MIGHTY GOD CARRIES OUT HIS MASTER PLAN FOR THE REPENTANT REMNANT BY CONTROLLING HISTORICAL CYCLES OF OPPRESSION, DELIVERANCE AND JUDGMENT

DON'T GIVE UP ON GOD AND HIS PROMISES – LIVE IN HOPE

DON'T FEAR (DESPITE HOW BAD THINGS MAY LOOK) – LIVE IN FAITH AND THANKSGIVING

DON'T SHAKE YOUR FIST AT GOD (AND ARROGANTLY ASSERT YOUR OWN AGENDA) – LIVE IN ANTICIPATION OF ACCOUNTABILITY

How different our lives would be!

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How is it that sins which seem so enticing turn around to actually strike us down?
- 2) What are the positive and negative implications of the emphasis here by the prophet on the remnant that will ultimately repent and trust in the Lord?
- 3) What type of oppression has the Lord already delivered you from?
- 4) Do we truly leave vengeance in the hands of God and live for eternity in light of future accountability?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: Isaiah's contemporaries were clinging to this promise as evidence that God could not possibly allow them to be destroyed by Assyria. "The Lord promised that we would be as the sand of the sea. Now we are. This is a divinely-ordained state, and nobody can take it away from us." This is an example of a perversion of piety in which people argue that God can't possibly mean what he says because of some previous promise that he has made. In Isaiah's day their hope was founded on the promise to Abraham. In Jeremiah's day (7:4), it was founded on the temple, and the promises that God had made to Solomon at its inauguration. In our foolish pride, we think that we can play lawyer with God's words and force him into a corner. "You can't send us into captivity, because you promised to multiply us, not diminish us." . . .

Notice first that the consumption (annihilation, destruction, "state of being consumed") is "decreed," formally ordered, engraved on stone so that it cannot be altered. The judgment is just

as sure, just as grounded in the counsels of God, as are the promises to Abraham in which they falsely trust.

Second, notice the contrast between “consumption” and “overflow.” Though they will be diminished, that very action will constitute an overflow of God's righteousness. His ultimate objective is to exalt himself, whatever the consequences may be for his people.

Brian Borgman: Deliverance and Messianic Hope (Part 1)

Chaps. 11-12 are glorious chapters about Messiah and His kingdom. As we move rapidly towards that section, we first see God's judgment against Assyria after He has used them to sift the wheat from the chaff – the remnant from the hypocrites. As you read how God uses Assyria as His rod of judgment, understand that it is a type of how God will use other nations in the same way – oppression of the Babylonians, Medes-Persians, Greeks, Romans and then the time of the Messiah. The ultimate type is the Egyptian slavery – cycles of judgment; each time a small remnant emerges as God's true people. Messiah = ultimate redeemer of God's remnant.

(:20-23) Return of the Remnant – “*return*” – translated “*repent*” many places; idea not limited to a geographic return; turning back to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in true repentance; “*In that day*” -- refers to some future date; **Rom. 9:6** – the national ethnic heritage does not make a person a true Israelite; God's people see trouble coming and want to secure their safety by the arm of the flesh; God takes what you choose to trust in and turns it into a scourge to whip you; lean on Yahweh in truth; not just relying on God when it is convenient and when they think it is expedient; God has decreed this destruction which is overflowing with righteousness – God's commitment to uphold the words of His own glory; so He brings salvation to His people thru mercy and grace and judgment to His enemies in accordance with His justice; God is never unjust; we all come into this world spurning and despising God's glory; this is not an accident but part of His plan

(:24-27) Preservation of the Remnant -- exhorted not to fear; God had already told Ahaz that he did not need to fear if he would stand firm; but he feared and went to Assyria for help = object lesson; this is not judgment to wipe you out but discipline to purify you; His discipline, as harsh as it appears, is for their ultimate good; there was a good ending to the Egypt story; the rod that was used for their oppression ended up being the staff of Moses that was held over the Red Sea for their deliverance; I will come through for you Egypt-style; Apostle Paul said his afflictions were light and temporary; very little while = 30 years; Judges 7:25 – rock of Oreb – Gideon tracks down retreating Midianites and captures the king and kills him; Sennacherib dies back in Assyria just as Oreb did back in Midian; no discipline seems pleasant as it is being administered; don't panic when the trials come but look to the promises which are the anchors of the soul; we have monuments to God's faithfulness behind us to encourage us and His promises before us; why do we still panic? The deliverance is typological as well – pointing to future fulfillment; “fatness” – anointing oil – How is this yoke going to come off? Either you get so fat it won't fit any more or this oil as reference to the anointed Messiah who will come and shatter the yoke **(9:4)**;

(:28-34) Threats vs Promises

Isaiah brings a little bit of reality now; the king of Assyria is still coming; here is his battle itinerary; will involve significant destruction; don't believe everything you see – looking very bad for Jerusalem; camping at Nob where you can see them within striking distance = intimidation; Sennacherib sends men to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time to threaten them; they are going to rattle the sword; there will be horrible, inhumane things that will happen – pact between

neighbors: eat your son today and then my son tomorrow; the devil is pretty good at making threats designed to shake our confidence in God; wiping out the wicked leadership of Judah?? Then a little shoot will come up = the Messiah

Gene Washburne: The Remnant Saved

The prophecies of the OT are often layered – immediate fulfillment, sometimes fulfillment further down the road and then the ultimate fulfillment in the second coming of Jesus Christ; God working out His predetermined ends; sovereign even over evil; don't get so worked up over results of elections – remember it is well with your soul; Lord God of history bringing all events together to achieve His purposes and end game; even our adversaries are there for our sanctification; Lord God of hosts commands legions of angels; see the hand of God in everything and you will live with better perspective of wisdom; God wants conflict in our lives in this life in order to whip us into shape; don't be afraid when the rod comes against you and strikes you

TEXT: Isaiah 11:1-10

TITLE: JUSTICE, PEACE AND UNITY IN THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM

BIG IDEA:

IN THE FUTURE MESSIANIC KINGDOM THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD INCARNATE IN THE PERSON OF THE MESSIAH WILL ESTABLISH JUSTICE, PEACE AND UNITY

INTRODUCTION:

- Imagine a world where the court system administers **perfect justice**;
- Imagine a world where one could live in **perfect peace** and harmony without any threat of violence or hostility; where even the animals no longer prey on one another but graze together side by side – a reversal of the curse of the fall
- Imagine a world where all peoples are **unified** in their submission to the majestic presence of the One True God whose name is *Faithful and True* (Rev. 19:11) – no more Jew/Gentile conflict; no more striving for the prideful enlargement of earthly kingdoms

This is the picture of the future Messianic kingdom that Isaiah presents in Chapter 11.

We have mentioned many times in our study of this great book, that the prophetic perspective has a **telescoping effect** – both events associated with the First Advent and the Second Advent of the Messiah can be blended together in the same passage. It is that mountain peak effect where you don't see the valley that lies between. That is certainly true in today's passage. But in a similar vein, the same perspective can be applied to OT content that relates to the 1000 year Messianic Kingdom which then merges into the eternal state after the Lord puts down the final rebellion of the wicked. The distinction does not get clarified until the last few chapters of the Book of Revelation that lays out the chronology for these end game events.

Isaiah's vision here relates primarily to that Millennial Kingdom on earth that will see a reversal of those negative impacts on the environment that can be traced back to the Fall of Man in Genesis 3. Remember the words of the Apostle Paul: *"For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now."* (Rom. 8:19-22)

IN THE FUTURE MESSIANIC KINGDOM THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD INCARNATE IN THE PERSON OF THE MESSIAH WILL ESTABLISH JUSTICE, PEACE AND UNITY

I. (:1-5) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF JUSTICE -- MESSIANIC KING RULING IN WISDOM AND RIGHTEOUSNESS – DELIGHTING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD = THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE

A. (:1) Human Origins

1. Humble Beginnings

"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,"

Contrasting tree prophecy – end of Chap. 10 we saw the proud Assyrians characterized as the

trees of Lebanon – cut down by God’s judgment; here we see a humble shoot springing up from a stump – nation of Israel cut down – things look like they might be over – but the Redeemer comes to the rescue

For He (Messiah) grew up before Him (God the Father) like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground. He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, (Isaiah 53:2).

Famous passage from **Job 14** – where is hope for man in light of the finality of death??
The Messiah brings that hope for the nation of Israel -- Resurrection implications – life from the dead

Beall: The Hebrew word for *stump* (עֲצָב) is used only three times in the OT: Job 14:8; Isa 40:24; and here—again, evidence against the “two Isaiah” critical view of the book. Similarly, the term for branch, צֶמֶח, is used only 4 times in the OT, 3 times in Isaiah: here, Isa 14:19, and Isa 60:21 (i.e., in both portions of the book). The OT fulfillment of Matt 2:23 (“He shall be called a Nazarene”) may possibly be found in a word play with צֶמֶח, speaking of the Lord's lowly beginnings. The humble origins of the Messiah is stressed again in Isa 53:1- 3 (see also Matt 2:23; John 1:46). A related word, צִמְחָה, is used messianically in Zech 3:8 and 6:12; and Jer 23:5 and 33:15.

2. Fruitful Results

“And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.”

Fruit is the evidence of life
Concept of the righteous branch

B. (:2) Divine Empowerment and Enlightenment

1. Divine Empowerment

“And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,”

Bob Utley: Qal perfect denoting a settled condition. It will abide and remain. This same truth is stated in different ways in **42:1**)”Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.”); 59:21; **61:1** (“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to ...”); Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:18.

Beall: we know from the NT that at Jesus' baptism, “the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him” (**Matt 3:16**). The same words are used in Isa 61:1, quoted by the Lord in Luke 4:18-19 (“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me . . .”).

Van Parunak: Throughout the OT, we are reminded that people can only do something worthwhile when God acts through them by his spirit.

PreceptAustin: Like David (**1Sa 16:13** “Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day

forward.”), this king will be energized by the Lord’s Spirit. The Holy Spirit will rest on the Messiah (permanently; not temporarily come upon, e.g., Nu 11:25, 26), a prophecy that was fulfilled at His first coming but will also be fulfilled at His Second Coming. This is a fascinating and somewhat mysterious statement in view of the unity of the Trinity. And yet the Gospels speak of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus. Beloved, while this is indeed a great mystery, Jesus’ dependence on the Holy Spirit to control and empower ministry during His time on earth should also be a great encouragement to all believers and a strong motivation for us to seek to learn to walk by the Spirit.

Oswalt: The promised shoot from the stump of Jesse will be characterized by the very breath of God about him. Everything about his leadership will testify to a supernatural endowment for his calling. It is this which is critical. Unless the Messiah is truly endued with the Spirit of God, the results of his rule will be no different from those of an Ahaz.

At the time of the exodus Bezalel, master craftsman on the tabernacle, was noted for his ability To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

He had this ability because God filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship (Exod 31:3-5; cf. 35:30-35).

The enabling of the Spirit of God is evident in those whom God places over his people.

- The Spirit of God was on Moses, and on the seventy elders who ruled with him (Num 11:15).
- Joshua was enabled by the Spirit in his leadership (Num 27:18; Deut 34:9).
- The ability of the judges to deliver Israel is repeatedly explained by the phrase, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him” (Othniel, 3:10; Gideon, 6:34; Jephthah, 11:29; and notably Samson, 14:6, 19; 15:14; cf. 13:25).
- Saul’s anointing as king was followed by the coming of the Spirit of God upon him (1 Sam 10:10). His victory over the Ammonites was attributed to the endowment of that Spirit (11:6).
- When the Lord replaced Saul as king, the Spirit left him, and came upon David (1 Sam 16:13, 14):
13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed [David] in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. ... 14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, ...

The Spirit also comes upon prophets, throughout Israel’s history. But interestingly, in spite of the universal references to the Spirit during the Exodus, judges, and Saul and David, no later civil ruler is ever said to enjoy this endowment, until the promised Rod out of the ruined stump of Jesse. Recall 1 Sam 16:13, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David **from that day forward.**” It was his permanent endowment, and even after he died, it was reserved for the One who would one day appear, not just as his successor, but bearing his name.

2. Divine Enlightenment

- a. Inner Discernment – Focus on the Mind -- Insight
“*The spirit of wisdom and understanding,*”

*And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Lk 2:52)
He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. (Jn 2:25)*

Beall: wisdom, the ability to make wise decisions; and understanding, perception as to the true nature of things.

Van Parunak: They both relate to the mind's ability to discern the meaning of the observed world.

- b. Outward Encouragement – Focus on the Impact on Others -- Encouragement
“The spirit of counsel and strength,”

Beall: The attributes go right back to the names of the Messiah given in 9:6: “Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God.” Good counsel without the power to carry it out is worthless (compare Ahithophel's wise counsel rejected by Absalom).

- c. Upward Fellowship – Focus on the Relationship with the Father -- Piety
“The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.”

Prov 2:5, *“Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.”*

C. (:3) Delighting in the Fear of the Lord

“And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,”

Van Parunak: *“His delighted smell shall be of the fear of the Lord.”* . . . He will be able to look into the heart of people, to see whether they truly fear the Lord or not. And when he senses that fear of God in them, he will rejoice in it, because it resonates with the most fundamental characteristic of his own personality.

Motyer: from the noun “scent”. The verb “to smell a (pleasing) odour” came to mean “to delight in”, “react pleurably to” (Gn. 8:21).

Not a man pleaser

Not involved in taking bribes

Net Bible note: In Amos 5:21 the Hiphil of ruakh, “smell” carries the nuance of *“smell with delight, get pleasure from.”* There the Lord declares that He does not “smell with delight” (i.e., get pleasure from) Israel’s religious assemblies, which probably stand by metonymy for the incense offered during these festivals. In Isa 11:3 there is no sacrificial context to suggest such a use, but it is possible that “the fear of the Lord” is likened to incense. This coming King will get the same kind of delight from obeying (fearing) the Lord, as a deity does in the incense offered by worshipers.

D. (:4-5) Messianic Ministry of Adjudication

1. Objective and Thorough in Rendering Decisions

“And He will not judge by what His eyes see,”

“Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;”

2. Righteous and Fair in Supporting the Vulnerable

*“But with righteousness He will judge the poor,”
“And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;”*

3. Powerful and Swift in Judging the Wicked

*“And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,”
“And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.”*

Beall: This verse is alluded to in **Rev 19:15, 21**: *“From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron”* (the last phrase taken from Ps 2:9).

Grogan: In the divine economy, the word is active and powerful (cf. Gen 1:3; Isa 55:10-11), and the Messiah’s word of judgment will be utterly effective (cf. John 12:48). He judges as *“the Word of God”* (Rev 19:13-15). This testifies to his great power (cf. v. 2), because, unlike many a monarch, he is well able to execute the judgments he pronounces. In him word and consequent action are virtually one.

Garland (quoted by **PreceptAustin**): If Jesus literally and physically slays His enemies at His Second Coming (**Rev 19:21**), how is it that the sword is figurative—coming out of His mouth? It represents the sword of the Spirit, the word of God: that which God has set forth as His spoken will (**Eph 6:17**). Those who are slain meet their doom because they are judged by God’s righteous word (**Heb 4:12**). They have consistently violated its precepts and standards and their destruction has been prophesied. In many ways, the action of their slaying is the unavoidable result of what God has said. This is why Jesus slays His enemies with His lips: *“He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked”* (**Isa. 11:4**). His mouth is like a sharp sword (**Isa. 49:2**). Hence, when Antichrist is destroyed, he is consumed *“with the breath of [the Lord’s] mouth”* (**2Th 2:8**)

4. Righteous and Faithful in All His Judicial Activities

*“Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,”
“And faithfulness the belt about His waist.”*

Motyer: The garments express the inherent realities and capacities of a person and the purposes to which he commits himself (59:16-17; 61:10; Ps. 132:9, 16, 18). The belt symbolizes readiness for action.

II. (:6-9) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE -- MESSIANIC KINGDOM ENVIRONMENT ENJOYING PEACE AND HARMONY -- DOMINATED BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

A. (:6-8) Predators Become Peaceful Companions

Rom. 8:18-23 remember the impact of the Fall on the created world and how all of creation yearns for the coming kingdom

1. Wolf and Leopard Tamed

*“And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,”
“And the leopard will lie down with the kid,”*

2. Young Lion Meek and Controllable

*“And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;”
“And a little boy will lead them.”*

3. Bear

*“Also the cow and the bear will graze;”
“Their young will lie down together;”*

4. Lion

“And the lion will eat straw like the ox.”

Van Parunak: The original order was (Gen 1:29-30),

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. 30 And **to every beast of the earth**, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

Originally, every beast was to eat the green herb for meat. That changed with Adam's sin. Isaiah anticipates a day when this change will be reversed. . .

The point is that our Savior's mission goes far beyond just taking away our personal guilt and giving us everlasting life. It is a restoration of a fallen world to its original state of order.

5. Viper

*“And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,”
“And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.”*

Beall: Finally, v. 8 indicates that the curse of Genesis 3 itself will be reversed. No longer will men and serpents be enemies; rather, a child may play near a poisonous snake without any worry at all.

B. (:9a) Violence and Hostility Abolished

“They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,”

C. (:9b) Knowledge of the Lord Dominates

*“For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.”*

Had a week to look out at the waters of the Atlantic Ocean from the coast of Maine; a glorious sight

III. (:10) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNITY -- MESSIANIC KINGDOM NATIONS SUBMITTING EAGERLY – DEVOTED TO THE MAJESTY OF THE DAVIDIC MONARCH

When will all of this take place?? *“Then it will come about in that day”*

A. Magnetic Attraction for the Gentile Nations

“That the nations will resort to the root of Jesse,”

Look at how the nations down through history have set themselves against the nation of Israel and especially against the kingdom of God; they don't recognize God's dominion over them – making the same fatal mistake that God had to correct in King Nebuchadnezzar

Ahaz and Sennacherib imagined themselves to be the source of power and might; they had rejected the reign of the Lord

B. Military Unification for All Nations

“Who will stand as a signal for the peoples;”

PreceptAustin: means a banner, an ensign, a standard. Nec/nes referred to a rallying point or standard which drew people together for some common action for or for the communication of important information. Usually the signal was placed on a high place in the camp. Here the signal pole stands for the Messiah Who was raised (pun intended) to give hope to the Gentiles.

John 3 – Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness

John 12:32 *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself”* – not just the Jews

C. Majestic Presence

“And His resting place will be glorious.”

"THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE." (Ro 15:12)

CONCLUSION:

Don't these precious promises about the coming King and His Kingdom stir your heart in anticipation of those days?

*“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven.”*

We look forward to enjoying the Messiah's reign of Justice, Peace and Unity

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In what ways do you find the court system today to be deficient?
- 2) Why would you argue for a literal interpretation of the lion grazing with the ox?
- 3) How did the Messiah's earthly ministry prepare Him for His future millennial kingdom role?
- 4) How are you impacted by the fact that *“His resting place will be glorious?”*

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: It is interesting that the coming king is described as coming, not from David, but from Jesse. He is not just David's son, but David's restoration. There is a hint here of an idea that other prophets make explicit, when they call the coming king "David":

Hos 3:5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, **and David their king**; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

Eze 37:24, 25 And **David my servant** shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. 25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and **my servant David** shall be their prince forever.

Notice especially the language in Jer 30:9 and Ezek 34:23.

Jer 30:9 But they shall serve the LORD their God, **and David their king**, whom **I will raise up** unto them.

Eze 34:23 And **I will set up [raise up]** one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even **my servant David**; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

Here God promises to "raise up" David. The verb might mean simply (as it often does) to promote someone, to bring him into a prominent position. But the LXX translation (ανιστημι) is also used frequently in the NT to describe the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. And indeed, when a prophet four hundred years after David's death promises that God will "raise up" David as king in the future, it seems inescapable that the term is being used in a double sense. In fact, the reason that these passages describe the Messiah as David rather than as David's son may be to force us to wrestle with the relation between these two ideas, of **resurrection** from the dead and **promotion** to rule.

This is the very relation that we see in the image of the Messiah as springing from the stump of Jesse. The one who comes to rule over all the earth springs out of the stump of a fallen tree. Resurrection and promotion are inextricably bound together.

Oswalt: It emphasizes three aspects of this messianic promise:

- 1) his divine endowment for ruling (:2-3a)
- 2) the absolute justice of his rule (:3b-5)
- 3) the quality of safety which will characterize his rule (:6-9)

The movement is from qualifications to performance to results.

John Martin: The reason such tranquility is possible is that all the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord (Isa. 11:9; cf. Jer. 31:34; Hab. 2:14). This means more than people knowing intellectually about the Lord. The idea is that people everywhere will live according to God's principles and Word. Animals will be affected, as well. This will occur in the Millennium when the Messiah will be reigning (Isa. 9:6-7), Jerusalem will have prominence in

the world (2:2), and Judah and Israel will be regathered to the land in belief and will be living according to the New Covenant. The Millennium can hardly be in existence now since these factors do not characterize the present age.

Harry Ironside: In that day the curse (**Ge 3:17, 18, 19**) will be lifted from the lower creation and the very nature of the beasts of the earth will be changed. Those who attempt to spiritualize all these expressions must needs take the beasts here to represent violent and savage men whose hearts will be changed by regeneration. But the prophet gives no hint of such an application of his words. He very definitely speaks of that which God will do for the animal kingdom in the day when the curse will be lifted. There is no hint that the prophet was speaking allegorically or that his language is to be interpreted other than in strict literality. It seems evident that when the Second Man, the Last Adam, is set over this lower universe, that ideal conditions will prevail on earth, such as characterized the world before sin came in to mar God's fair creation with its sad entail of violence and rapine on the part of the beasts of the earth and the evil effects upon the bodies of men and women, resulting in sickness and death. All this will be undone in the day when Christ shall come as the Restorer of all things spoken by the prophets, and "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." While the millennium is not to be confounded with the new heavens and the new earth, it will nevertheless be a period of wonderful blessing for all who shall dwell in the world when in the administration of the fullness of the seasons, God shall head up all things in Christ.

Gil Rugh: Views of Prophesied Kingdom

3 basic views: millennium from Latin word for 1000 years; Rev. 20; chiliasm = Gk word; the only place in Scripture that talks about 1000 years; some people claim that Rev is highly symbolic so don't interpret these numbers literally

1) amillennialism = no literal earthly millennium; Christ rules spiritually; we are in the kingdom now; when Christ returns it means the end of His program for the earth and we will enter eternity; principle that the NT reinterprets the OT; promises in OT relate to the spiritual people of God = the church in the NT as the new Israel; but additional revelation from God never changes earlier revelation; it can add to it; it can clarify the prior revelation; it does not change it; this is a major difference; taught by Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians; they don't usually teach much OT prophecy; Application: our efforts should be directed towards helping the poor, etc.; "We interpret the bible literally because it was literally intended to be interpreted spiritually"

2) postmillennialism = through the work of God's people on earth, things will get better and better so we will usher in the kingdom; at the end Christ will return; over time things will get better and better; we should reinstitute the Mosaic law; change the world; have kingdom principles practiced; get judges and political leaders that will act more consistently with biblical principles; almost died out with WWI and WWII; Strong and Hodge and Boettner, etc. Now we see a resurgence – reconstructionists, theologians; strong on social action and involvement

3) premillennialism – Christ returns before 1000 year reign on earth

a) covenant – post-trib return of Christ; rapture occurs after the 7 year tribulation and before the kingdom; they blend Israel and the church; only believers go into the millennium; if they all get glorified bodies in the rapture, who will populate the millennium; we know that there will be sin and judgment in the millennial kingdom

b) dispensational – Christ will come for the church pre-trib; distinction maintained between Israel and the church; Rom. 2:28 is key passage for amills – a physical descendant of Israel does not guarantee you will inherit the promises and benefit from the spiritual promises to Abraham [like saying in Christ there is neither man nor woman];

Dan. 12 – look at the promised kingdom; practical implications – Jerry Falwell in Moral Majority not functioning as a dispensationalist; at least amill functions consistently with his wrong theology; timeline of these resurrections not laid out until the book of Revelation; prophetic year = 360 years; seven year period broken in half; 75 extra days past the return of Christ – for the judgment of living Israel and the nations alive at return of Christ; other preparation events for the institution of the kingdom; these are literal days;

Is. 2 – descriptions of the kingdom – mountain here is clearly a figure of speech to refer to Israel as a kingdom; Zion and Jerusalem distinguished from other nations here; **Is. 9** – merging of first and second coming of Christ in same passage; throne of David is very literal;

Is. 11 – literal descendant of David from Jesse – you don't spiritualize this; cf genealogies in NT; future events – Rev. 19 – sword coming out of His mouth at Armageddon to slay the wicked; don't try putting your hand in viper's den today; this isn't happening today;

Is. 35 – wilderness blossoming; Why did Christ heal? To fulfil that He is the promised Messiah who can usher in the kingdom;

Is. 65 – creating a new heavens and new earth; creates Jerusalem for rejoicing; promised blessing for descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Dan. 2 – vs. 37 – speaking to Nebuchadnezzar; you are head of gold = a literal kingdom of Babylon and successive literal kingdoms; can't take all the preceding ones as literal and then spiritualize the kingdom of the Lord; picture of great mountain filling the earth = figure of speech that is interpreted in the context; between kingdom of Rome and its revival in ten nation confederacy there is a large gap = Church Age; later revelation didn't change anything, just added more info

Ray Stedman: What's Coming Down?

World conditions deteriorating; violence increasing; what is the world going to be like that our children and grandchildren have to live in; Where is it all headed; Secular answers are largely pessimistic; Christian answer is far different **Heb. 2** – “*we do not yet see all things subjected to man, but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor ...*” Messianic passage;
- we see **Messiah coming into history** – (:1-2) clear prediction of the life of the Lord Jesus; will appear in a very obscure place and way; the ancestry of Jesus has been reduced to obscurity and insignificance; Son of David = royal glory; root of Jesse = humble beginnings;
- **Spirit-filled ministry** of the Messiah -- suggests Jewish Menorah candlestick in its sevenfold description; Lord never needed to use a psychiatrist couch to ask questions because He knew what was in man; had insight; counsel and might speak of authority – carrying out the counsel;

Truth is always ruthless; it tolerates no error; narrow-minded; Jesus will rule with rod of iron and will mean what He says; will face up to issues; If “pro” is the opposite of “con” then what is the opposite of “progress”? We ought to be grateful we don't get as much government as we pay for.

Deep hunger in all of mankind for this type of world, but we don't know how to achieve it. You mothers, what would you think if your child was found playing with a cobra? Is this literal or a metaphor? There is coming a day when the curse will be removed from the earth; creation

released from the curse; **Is. 35** “*The desert will blossom like a rose.*” Emphasis on “*in that day.*” Restoration of Jerusalem as the center of the earth. “Remnant” always references believers, so present return of Jews to the land is not the fulfillment of these prophecies.

Brian Borgman: Deliverance and Messianic Hope (:6-10)

Introduction: Eschatological background [*not my view*] – First advent dealt with suffering of Christ and our redemption; Jesus Inaugurates the kingdom by virtue of the presence of the king; gives His church the keys to the kingdom so that the kingdom is a present reality; Second Advent = Consummation of the Kingdom; return in power and glory; We live in the tension between the already and the not yet; outpouring of the Holy Spirit relates to the age to come and yet has impact on our day; something greater and more glorious to come in age to come; this remnant always hangs on to the hope of a promised deliverance through a coming Messiah; vv.1-

description of promised Messiah; then we move to a description of what His reign will look like
1) (:6-7) Paradise Restored – any opportunity a wolf has, it will have lamb chops for dinner; natural enmity; cf. “wolves in sheep’s clothing”; radical change in nature; to dwell as a sojourning guest who receives hospitality; same kind of hospitality Abraham shows to the 3 visitors in Gen. 18; leopard will lie down with the calf (new born baby cow); heightened predator and heightened prey; poetic language in how things intensify; little child = inexperienced boy; will lead as a shepherd exerting dominion and authority over them; absurd picture cow and bear grazing together; bear is a fierce beast; carnivore grazing; reversal of the conditions of the Fall; result of the Fall that we eat meat;

2) (:8) Reversal of the Curse -- little child still being nursed is teasing a venomous snake; sporting with the snake; these are the conditions of the reign of the Messiah

3) (:9) Picture of God Indwelling the Whole Earth – the whole earth has now become His holy mountain – reference to Mt. Zion in OT has now been expanded to represent God dwelling in the entire earth; universal, global knowledge of God; incident of 12 spies – “*the whole earth will be filled with my glory*” – whether or not Israel trusted and obeyed or not; Hab. 2:14;

4) (:10) the Nations Seeking Messiah – this root of Jesse is another David; David is a type of the Messiah; “the peoples” plural; John 3 – just as Moses lifted up the serpent ... so the son of Man must be lifted up as a banner to draw all men unto Himself; “His dwelling place glory”
What are these verses talking about?? Today we shoot coyotes when they get too close to sheep; have to go back to the original creation to understand this text; man was physically in the Garden of Eden with all of the animals dwelling in perfect harmony; also harmony between Adam and His creator; place of Paradise, perfect peace and righteousness; land yielded enormous amount of fruit with minimal labor; conditions did not last long; at the Fall man is alienated from God and banished from Eden; now we have death and sweat and thorns and thistles; how did animals get along with one another on the Ark??

Abraham looking for a heavenly city (Heb. 11); he never dwelled in Canaan; understood that the promise of the inheritance of the land looked beyond the physical piece of real estate to the heavenly city

TEXT: Isaiah 11:11 – 12:6

TITLE: *LET THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD SAY SO –
FINAL REDEMPTION AND REJOICING*

BIG IDEA:

LET THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD REJOICE AND PROCLAIM HIS GREATNESS

INTRODUCTION:

How excited are you about your salvation? Have you been a child of God for so long that the Christian life has become dull and uneventful? We will never bear witness as we should unless our spirits are singing the praises of our Lord.

Do you remember the book that Francis Schaeffer wrote a long time ago: He is There and He Is Not Silent – writing about the existence of God and how He has revealed Himself to man ... The sad thing about many Christians – when it comes to their praise and thanksgiving to the Lord and when it comes to their testimony and proclamation of His greatness – their life story would be written: They are There and They are Silent

LET THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD REJOICE AND PROCLAIM HIS GREATNESS

**I. (11:11-16) EXODUS REDEMPTION REVISITED IN FINAL VICTORY OF THE REGATHERED REMNANT –
THE REDEMPTION OF THE REDEEMED**

A. (:11a) Emphasis = Last Days Happenings – Final Redemption and Victory
“Then it will happen on that day”

This is that famous “last day” that Isaiah keeps making reference to

There are going to be some major “happenings” in terms of last day events

B. (:11b-12) Experience = Regathering of the Remnant as a Second Redemption

1. Reminiscent of the Exodus

“that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.”

Adonai = Sovereign Lord over all the earth

Motyer: The Lord’s “hand” is a primary exodus motif (see Ex. 3:19-20; 6:1; 13:3; Dt. 6:21) . . . This will be a wider exodus from a world-wide dispersion. . . No worldly strength and no worldly opposition can prevent the regathering.

Vs. 16 makes plain that the first experience of redemption in mind here was at the **Exodus** – extremely significant event in Israel’s history
Our **new birth experience** should be extremely significant event

Beall: from the north, Assyria, who had caused Israel to go into captivity; from the south, Egypt (another nation who had conquered Israel), Pathros, and Cush; from the northeast, Elam and Shinar (southern Mesopotamia and Persia); again from the north, Hamath (in Syria); and from the west, the “*islands of the sea.*”

Oswalt: Egypt was apparently subdivided into three regions: the Delta (Egypt), the Nile Valley (Pathros), and Nubia or Ethiopia in the far south (Cush). Elam and Shinar refer to extreme southern Mesopotamia and Persia, while Hamath is to the north in Syria and the islands of the sea lie in the west.

2. Impacting the Gentiles

“And He will lift up a standard for the nations,”

Looks back to **5:26** and **11:10** where Messiah is raised up as a standard or banner for the nations; also **49:22-26**

Luke 13:29-30 – possibly including Gentiles here in those who will be attracted to the kingdom in those last days from the four corners of the earth

Eph. 2:11-22

3. Impacting the Jews

a. Regathering of Israel

“And will assemble the banished ones of Israel,”

b. Regathering of Judah

“And will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

“*banished*” and “*dispersed*” (scattered) speaks to the state of difficulty and oppression from which they have been rescued

C. (:13) Emotion and Expression = Removal of Jealousy -- Unification

“Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, and those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not harass Ephraim.”

What the forces of Christianity could accomplish if they were united in the truth and focused on their mission rather than torn apart by jealousy and strife; internal unification increases our thanksgiving and testimony and impact on the world

Van Parunak: The tension between North and South was far older than Jeroboam's rebellion. Most recently in Isaiah, it manifested itself in the Syro-Ephraimite threat in ch. 7. When the time of promised return comes, this ancient opposition of the northern kingdom to the south will have been done away, purged out by the fires of captivity. . . There is an important principle here: if we get a good view of our common enemy, the differences we perceive among ourselves will no longer preoccupy us. Internal strife is an indication that we are not taking our external mission seriously enough.

Motyer: Emotions (jealousy) and actions (enemies, hostile) are alike brought into unity.

Young: The great scandal in Israel's history was the schism under Jeroboam. Indeed the latter is known to us as the man who caused Israel to sin. Involved in this schism was an apostasy, a complete rejection on the part of the northern tribes of the promises which had been made to the house of David. Such a condition of things was wrong, and throughout her history God sent prophets to the apostate nation, to call it to repentance and to point it to the Messiah who alone could heal the breach.

D. (:14-16) Effects – Four Corners of the Earth Cooperating in the Regathering of the Jews

1. (:14) Defeating of Ancient Enemies to the West and East by Unified Forces

“And they will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west; Together they will plunder the sons of the east; They will possess Edom and Moab; And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.”

Look how swift and powerful they appear now in their domination of their enemies; this is how God wanted them to enter the Promised Land and purge out their enemies back in the days of Moses and then Joshua

2. (:15a) Destroying of Barriers to the South – the Red Sea

“And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt;”

Motyer: Divine action removes every obstacle to divine plans. . . Just as the lofty features of creation became infected by human pride and must needs be judged (2:12-17), so here all natural barriers become manifestations of humankind's sinful divisiveness and are therefore abhorrent to the Lord, an intolerable barrier to the fulfillment of his plans for one world.

3. (:15b-16) Destroying of Barriers to the North – the Euphrates River

“And He will wave His hand over the River with His scorching wind; And He will strike it into seven streams, and make men walk over dry-shod. And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant of His people who will be left, just as there was for Israel in the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt.”

Beall: Vv 15-16 demonstrate that this event will be similar to the Lord's great deliverance at the Exodus: as at that time, He will cause the tongue of the Red Sea (the “Sea of Egypt”) and the Euphrates River to be subject to Him: He will create paths whereby people can cross both rivers easily. Thus, Israelites will be able to come freely from Egypt and Assyria to the Promised Land. It will truly be a great deliverance of God's people! The fulfillment of these verses is in the initial stages of the Millennium.

Van Parunak: To facilitate the return from Egypt, Pathros, and Cush, he will repeat the parting of the Red Sea; to facilitate the return from Assyria, Elam, and Shinar, he will dry up the River, that is, the Euphrates.

II. (12:1-6) EXALTATION RENEWED AS THE RESCUED REMNANT GIVES THANKS AND TESTIMONY – THE REJOICING OF THE REDEEMED

A. (:1a) Emphasis = Last Days Hallelujah – Thanksgiving and Exalting in the Lord

“Then you will say on that day, ‘I will give thanks to Thee, O LORD;”

Van Parunak: The first of these two paragraphs describes the utterance of individual believers (“*thou shalt say*”), while the second looks at their encouragement of one another (“*shall ye say*”). The distinction and combination of these two is an important lesson for us: we need first to cultivate our individual relation to the Lord, and then to take responsibility for one another. (It's also a good example of the value of retaining the thou-you distinction in Bible translation.)

Rom. 15:6 *“so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

B. (:1b) Experience = Lord’s Comfort Rather Than Lord’s Anger

*“For although Thou wast angry with me,
Thine anger is turned away, and Thou dost comfort me.”*

Anger of Lord cannot simply be redirected to love – there must be propitiation, the satisfying of God’s holy wrath

Beall: The theme of comfort is echoed in **Isa 40:1** as well (yet another indication of unity of the entire book); see also **John 14:16, 26**.

Van Parunak: This is the first of 13 instances of this verb in Isaiah, and in most cases it is God who is comforting his people or causing them to be comforted. Perhaps the most revealing is the last, **66:13**, *“As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”* Chastisement is unpleasant, but necessary. When it is over, the wise parent comforts the child and reassures her of the parent's love. So the Lord does with us, patiently revealing the need for the chastening and encouraging us in how we have been improved by it.

vv.1-2 connect back to **6:1-7**

C. (:2-4) Emotion and Expression = Thanksgiving and Testimony

1. (:2) Private, Personal Expression – Thanksgiving and Testimony

“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; For the LORD God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.”

Cf. **Exodus 15** – song of praise of the redeemed Jews after the Exodus

Motyer: Just as the old exodus occasioned individual (Ex. 15:1) and communal (Ex. 15:21) song, so will the coming exodus (1-2, 4-5).

Grogan: To “*the song of Moses, the servant of God*” is added “*the song of the Lamb*” (**Rev 15:3-4**), for salvation receives its deeper meaning through him.

“Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For all the nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Van Parunak: Verse 2 is a chiasm, with the objective fact of God's salvation on the outside and the believer's subjective enjoyment of it on the inside.

Motyer: The opening and concluding truth that “*my salvation*” is found in God himself forms a bracket round the four characteristics of the saved: **trust, the end of fear, strength and song.**

Beall: Unlike what Israel was doing in Isaiah's day, going to places other than the Lord for help, this united nation draws its strength from the Lord.

Oswalt: It is not an accident that the deliverance at the Red Sea issued in a song or that the throng gathered about the throne of the Lamb will be singing. For song is the natural expression of the spirit which is free, and no spirit is so free as that one which has discovered that its destiny is not dependent upon its striving but rather upon the infinite power of the Almighty.

2. (:3-4) Public, Corporate Expression – Thanksgiving and Testimony

“Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation. and in that day you will say, ‘Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name. make known His deeds among the peoples; make them remember that His name is exalted.’”

Beall: Isaiah switches to the **plural** and uses the imagery of one drawing water joyously from the wells of salvation. Water is often used as a figure for salvation in the Scriptures (see Exod 15:27; 17:1; Num 20:2; 1 Cor 10:4 [*“all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ”*]; John 4:14 [*“whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life”*]; 7:37; Rev 7:16-17; 21:6 [*“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts”*]; 22:17 [*“And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely”*])

cf. similar phrases from **Ps 105:1; 148:13; and 145:4-7**

Motyer: the objective reality of God’s work of salvation is matched by the subjective element of responsive singing (2, 5), exultant shouts (6) and joy. It is the inner transformation of the saved.

Oswalt: To call upon the name of the Lord is to worship him on the basis of the faithful, delivering character revealed in his behavior.

D. (:5-6) Effects – The Demonstrated Greatness of the Holy One Prompts Praise and Proclamation

“Praise the LORD in song, for He has done excellent things; Let this be known throughout the earth. Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

Midst of Israel -- Joel 2:27; Ezek 48:35; Rev 21:3

Motyer: *Shout*, a feminine singular, recalls how Miriam took the lead in the triumph song (Ex. 15:20f; cf. 1 Sa. 18:6f.).

Oswalt: Holiness is the sum total of the attributes of deity. Fundamentally, it denotes that which separates God from mere humanity. What Isaiah had discovered in an experiential way was what the whole faith of Israel was about, namely, that the only Holy One in the universe is Israel's God. But beyond that, his character, the content of his holiness, sets him apart. For that character is radically different from the idols. He is upright and clean, pure and true. In the light of all this, the greatest folly a people could commit would be to treat this god like an idol, one among many who could be manipulated by the worshiper in rites expressing nothing but the unclean, self-serving motives of the worshiper.

Grogan: The pardoning grace of God is the source of many blessings, but none is more wonderful than his presence with his people. That presence was promised and sealed in the child Immanuel (cf. 7:14; 8:10, 18). Here its realization was celebrated and extolled by his people. It is worth noting that the presence of God among his people is no contradiction of his transcendent uniqueness and separateness, expressed in the phrase "*the Holy One of Israel.*" He is distinct but not aloof, for in him holiness and grace find their perfect union.

CONCLUSION:

Ps. 107:2 "*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary and gathered from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.*"

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How should the Gentiles respond to the one whom God lifts up as a *standard to the nations*?
- 2) How would the regathered Jews feel upon their last days redemption in light of the fact that their former state was described as *banished* and *dispersed*?
- 3) How can you reflect to others that the Lord God is your *strength and song*?
- 4) What are some of the *excellent things* that the Lord has accomplished for you?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: Description of the lands from which the Jews will be regathered:
from Assyria,--Centered on the upper Tigris river, the land that led the first great exile. The next three cover Egypt. Jeremiah fled here after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC.
A colony of Jews at Elephantine, at the border of Upper Egypt, documented in the fifth century BC, probably dates to Manasseh about 650.
and from Egypt,--The Delta and Lower (northern) Egypt

and from Pathros,--Upper (that is, southern) Egypt
and from Cush,--Just south of Egypt, modern-day Sudan

Now we bounce back to Mesopotamia:

and from Elam,--SW Iran, northern shore of the Persian Gulf

and from Shinar,--The area between the rivers; Babylonia, the place of exile under Nebuchadnezzar

Now a new direction:

and from Hamath,--Central Syria, north of Israel

Finally, and most broadly,

and from the islands of the sea.--The lands of the Mediterranean, not just what we would call islands,

but also the coastal lands, known through the Phoenician maritime enterprise.

Oswalt: Thus praise and thanks are essential to robust spiritual life, not because God needs them like some neurotic tyrant, but because we need to give them. It is only in this way that we can refocus our attention upon how much we have received from a loving father and in that appreciation stop attempting to use him as our servant (idolatry). . .

How can God get Judah to believe that he is really with them? For they can never forsake their pride and their manipulative understanding of religion and become servants until they are able to commit themselves to God. Ultimately, Isaiah sees that this change will be possible only when God in an act of free grace moves on their behalf.

Grogan: The first twelve chapters of the Book of Isaiah focus attention on Judah and Jerusalem. Chapter 12 forms a fitting climax and close for this whole section. The preceding chapters have said much about the sins of God's people, warning them of the divine wrath provoked by these sins and the divine judgment that was sure to follow. They have also recorded God's declaration of forgiving grace for the penitent, the challenge to believe, and predictions of a glorious future for God's people. God's great name would be exalted, and his king would reign. Nothing could be more appropriate than a heartfelt psalm of praise to round off this section of the prophecy. . .

The truth is that the Exodus – very special as it was to Israel as both the initial and the supreme act of God on her behalf, revealing the power of his arm – will be eclipsed by an even greater disclosure of God's power (Isa 53:1). It will therefore take its place at the beginning of a whole sequence of divine saving acts that may now be celebrated retrospectively in their totality.

TEXT: Isaiah 13:1-22

TITLE: JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS – BABYLON BITES THE DUST

BIG IDEA:

THE WRATH OF GOD DIRECTS INSTRUMENTS OF DESTRUCTION AGAINST EVIL NATIONS ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR PRIDE AND SELF SUFFICIENCY

INTRODUCTION:

We open a **new section** of the book of Isaiah as we come to **chapter 13**. In the early introductory chapters of 1-5, we saw the focus on the sins of Judah and Jerusalem. **1:4** “*Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away from Him.*” Still the Lord was gracious to offer cleansing and salvation if they would just turn from their false allegiances and repent and put their trust in Him. **1:18** “*Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow.*”

We saw glimpses of God’s glorious future for the Jewish nation in the coming **Messianic kingdom**; but we also saw the terrible wrath of God that would be displayed in the preparatory **Day of the Lord**. After **Isaiah’s commission** in chapter 6 where he confessed his personal sinfulness in light of the Holy One of Israel, we were introduced to the **theme of Immanuel** who would come as the ultimate Savior-King. This one rejected by King Ahaz but who would bring blessing not only to the Jews but to believing Gentiles as well. **9:6** “*And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*”

Judgment of the Nations (chapters **13-23** -- broadens the focus of God’s judgment to include 10 Gentile nations. [Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Syria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, & Tyre]) = Important theme in OT prophecy; much space devoted to this:

Jeremiah 46-51

Ezekiel 25-32

Minor Prophets

We just haven’t heard many sermons from these sections of God’s Word

Brian Bell: 5 Reasons for God’s Judgment:

[1] To **preserve** Israel from despair when Gentile nations oppress them.

[don’t give up when persecution comes your way!]

[2] To **prevent** Israel from forming an alliance w/the nations.

[trust 100% in God, not others!]

[3] To **predict** the eventual downfall of all Gentile powers.

[know God’s prophecies are 100% accurate!]

[4] To **produce** faith in Israel.

[again trust!]

[5] To **proclaim** Messiah’s authority over all earthly gentile powers.

[no reason to fear any nation!]

http://preceptaustin.org/isaiah_commentaries.htm

Structural Approaches:

- 1) Alternating between sections dealing with **near term** attack by the Medes and fall of Babylon in **539 B.C.** to Cyrus and **final** eschatological Day of the Lord [mingled together]
- 2) Alternating between sections dealing with the **Lord** speaking directly and **Isaiah** speaking [still the Lord speaking]

We will look at the passage more **thematically** – What does it highlight about the Wrath of God?

THE WRATH OF GOD DIRECTS INSTRUMENTS OF DESTRUCTION AGAINST EVIL NATIONS ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR PRIDE AND SELF SUFFICIENCY

(:1) HEADING – JUDGMENT PRONOUNCED AGAINST BABYLON

“The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.”

“oracle” – “burden” – prophet weighed down with a heavy message to deliver; this is serious stuff; word used 15 other times in OT (9 in Isaiah) in similar headings to prophecies

Significance of this Predictive Prophecy: Babylon not yet a dominant world power as it later became under Nebuchadnezzar

How could Isaiah be writing about Babylon when Assyria was the force to be reckoned with at present?

Constable: When Isaiah wrote, it was a town within the Assyrian Empire that was asserting itself and was a real threat to Assyrian supremacy.

Significance of Babylon:

- Name = *confusion* caused by godlessness; **Gen. 11:9** – tower where God confused the languages of the pride of man, “gate of god” – symbolic of worldly pride
- Location = southern Iraq; 50 miles south of modern Baghdad; river Euphrates runs by the ruins
- Founded in 3000 BC by Nimrod; root of occult systems of worship
- Why treated first here by Isaiah? Because of its end time significance; **Rev 17-18** – symbolizes the godless world system that opposes the true God; capital for Antichrist – **17:5** “*Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth*” – not very flattering!
- Babylon is both a city & a **system!** - Like we speak of Wall Street & Madison Ave. - They are actual streets, but also stand for the financial or advertising enterprises. (**Brian Bell**) Always in contrast to Jerusalem.

I. (:2-8) WRATH COMMANDED – DOOMSDAY HERALDED

A. (:2-3) The Angry God Summons His Warriors = Initiation of His Wrath

“Lift up a standard on the bare hill, Raise your voice to them, Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of the nobles. I have commanded My consecrated ones, I have even called My mighty warriors, My proudly exulting ones, To execute My anger.”

1. Rallying object = the standard or banner -- cf. 5:26
2. Rallying cry – Raise your voice

3. Rallying hand signal – wave the hand to direct the troops to push forward into the battle

Motyer: all second person plurals, creating the impression that the Lord has his agents posted and ready to signal the muster for the last battle. The banner symbolizes divine direction of history.

Look at description of the intended targets as “nobles” – they think very highly of themselves; But interestingly the instruments the Lord is rallying for the execution of His wrath are also described as “*my proudly exulting ones*” (not consciously exulting in the Lord but in their own strength) – yet they are also *consecrated* (set apart) and *called* for this divine mission

Beall: Perhaps **Young** is correct in translating the phrase, “*my proudly exulting ones,*” referring to the pride of the Medes.

B. (:4-5) The Enemy Nations Gather for Battle = Instruments to Execute His Wrath

“A sound of tumult on the mountains, Like that of many people! A sound of the uproar of kingdoms, Of nations gathered together! The LORD of hosts is mustering the army for battle. They are coming from a far country From the farthest horizons, The LORD and His instruments of indignation, To destroy the whole land.”

1. Emphasis on large number of troops – creates quite a tumult; impossible for them to assemble quietly; they are approaching with great force; takes a lot to get such a wide range of nations with their own political priorities to unite together against a common foe

2. Emphasis on how far they have come to gather to fight

How far away? Media and Persia, to the north and the east. The area of the Medes is about 300 miles to the east of Babylon.

Van Parunak: This is no local skirmish, but a major war of empires.

Emphasis on these troops being sovereignly directed by the Lord of Hosts, the Sovereign of the Universe as His *instruments of indignation*

C. (:6-8) The Terrified Babylonians Wail in Anguish = Impotent Targets of His Wrath

“Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt. And they will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame.”

Beall: exhortation to wail (הִלְלִי הֵלִילִי *helilu*, an onomatopoeic word used to indicate a time of distress, used 10 times in Isaiah) because the day of the Lord is near (קָרוֹב).

This destruction is not coming by accident; it is not some out of control event that cannot be explained. This is described as “*destruction from the Almighty.*”

MacArthur: The comparison of labor pains is often a figure to describe human sufferings in the period just before the final deliverance of Israel (21:3; 26:17, 18; 66:7f; Jer. 4:31; 13:21, 22, 23;

Ho 13:13; Mic 4:10; 5:2, 3; Mt 24:8; 1 Th 5:3). Usually it was the suffering of Israel, but here it pictured the misery of Babylon.

Motyer: The picture of a woman in labour is not a simile of fruitful pain here but of that which is sudden, inevitable and inescapable; the end result of a process that cannot now be stopped cf. **1 Thes. 5:2-3** “*For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ Then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.*”

Embarrassment and surprise captured on their faces. They had been smug and self assured. They had no inkling that they could be so easily destroyed. They had trusted in their supreme power.

So this Inescapable Wrath was **Commanded** by the Lord of Hosts

II. (:9-13) WRATH EXECUTED – DESTRUCTION DESCRIBED

A1. (:9a) Day of the Wrath of the Lord

“Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger,”

Look how cruel the Babylonians had been in their attacks on other nations. Here the Lord responds in kind as divine accountability kicks into play.

B1. (:9b) Impact on Creation – the Land

“To make the land a desolation;”

“And He will exterminate its sinners from it.”

C1. (:10) Impact on Creation – the Heavens

“For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light;

The sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light.

MacArthur: Scripture frequently associates cosmic upheavals with the period of tribulation just before Christ’s return (**24:23; Eze 32:7, 8; Joel 2:2, 10, 30, 31; Am 8:9; Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24, 25; Lk 21:25; Rev 6:12-14**).

These great cosmic signs have not been unleashed yet – shows that this passage still has reference to ultimate future fulfillment

Rich Cathers: *constellations* -- *Orion*; the Hebrew word actually means fool, stupid fellow, dullard, simpleton, arrogant one. *Orion* was the same as Nimrod, the founder of Babylon. Apparently the Hebrews didn’t think much of him.

At the heart of the chiasmus lies the root problem: Man’s awful sin and pride

D1. (:11a) Impact on Sinners

*“Thus I will punish the world for its evil,
And the wicked for their iniquity;”*

D2. (:11b-12) Impact on Sinners

“I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.”

“I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold, And mankind than the gold of Ophir.”

C2. (:13a) Impact on Creation – the Heavens

“Therefore I shall make the heavens tremble,”

B2. (:13b) Impact on all Creation – the Land

“And the earth will be shaken from its place”

A2. (:13c) Day of the Wrath of the Lord

“At the fury of the LORD of hosts In the day of His burning anger.”

III. (:14-18) WRATH INESCAPABLE AND BRUTAL – DEFENSELESS SLAUGHTERED

A. Two Images of Defenseless Prey – No Protection

1. The Hunted Gazelle

“And it will be that like a hunted gazelle,”

the most timid and easily startled.

2. The Shepherdless Sheep

“Or like sheep with none to gather them,”

Motyer: The first animal is endangered by the attentions of people, the second is endangered without their attention. So, finding the Lord as their enemy and losing him as their shepherd, humankind is indeed helpless and hopeless, with everything to flee from and nowhere to flee to.

While there is still time, Isaiah pleads, come under the care of the Good Shepherd.

B. Futile Attempts at Seeking Refuge – No Place to Hide

1. Seeking Safety in Desperation

*“They will each turn to his own people,
And each one flee to his own land.”*

Motyer: The picture of gathering armies with which the poem of the day of the Lord began (2-5) is balanced by this concluding picture of people scattering from the disaster – and being overtaken by it.

2. Slain by the Sword Without Mercy

*“Anyone who is found will be thrust through,
And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.”*

While there is still time, Isaiah pleads, seek refuge in the One who is the Rock, the Fortress, the ultimate Hiding Place.

C. (:16) Savage Brutality – No Limits

1. Children Slain

“Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces Before their eyes;”

2. Houses Plundered

“Their houses will be plundered”

3. Wives Raped

“And their wives ravished.”

D. (:17-18) Destructive Mindset – No Mercy

1. Reputation of the Medes

“Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them,”

2. No Hope of Brokering Deals – no acceptance of tribute money

“Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold,”

Rich Cathers: You won't be able to buy them off. The secular historian Xenophon (Cyropaedia, 5,1,10) represents Cyrus as attributing this characteristic to the Medes.

Constable: Part of the Lord's warriors would be the Medes, who occupied what is now central Iran. In Isaiah's day, the Medes were already a powerful people that the Assyrians dreaded. They would destroy Babylon. They united with the Babylonians to destroy the last vestiges of the Assyrian Empire in 609 B.C. Still later, it was the Medes and the Persians who overthrew Babylon in 539 B.C. (cf. Esth. 10:2; Dan. 5:30-31; 6:8, 12, 15). The Medes valued silver and gold less than military conquest; they could not be bought off, but mercilessly slew every enemy (vv. 17-18). Revenge motivated them more than booty.

3. No Hope in Battle

“And their bows will mow down the young men,”

4. No Compassion on the Young

a. Infants

“They will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb,”

b. Children

“Nor will their eye pity children.”

IV. (:19-22) WRATH UNRELENTING -- DESOLATION PERSISTS

A. (:19) Fall of Babylon Compared to Sodom and Gomorrah

“And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.”

- Compared in terms of the completeness of the destruction
- Compared in terms of the moral cause

B. (:20-22a) Desolation Complete and Final

1. Rendered Desolate

a. Uninhabitable by humans

1) No Permanent Cities

“It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation;”

MacArthur: Though nothing like its glorious past, the site of Babylon has never been void of inhabitants. A city or town of one type or another has always existed there, so this prophecy must point toward a yet future desolation.

Warren Wiersbe: The city of Babylon was completely destroyed in 689 B.C. by Sennacherib and the Assyrian army, but it was rebuilt by Sennacherib’s son. In 539 B.C., Darius the Mede captured the city (Dan. 5:31), but he did not destroy it. In the centuries that followed, Babylon had its “shining moments”, but after the death of its last great conqueror, Alexander the Great, the city declined and soon was no more. Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled, for the city was not rebuilt.”

2) No Nomadic Dwellers

“Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there,”

b. Unusable for Grazing

“Nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there.”

2. Inhabited by Forlorn Creatures

a. Desert Creatures

“But desert creatures will lie down there”

b. Owls

“And their houses will be full of owls,”

c. Ostriches

“Ostriches also will live there,”

d. Shaggy Goats

“and shaggy goats will frolic there.”

e. Hyenas

“And hyenas will howl in their fortified towers”

f. Jackals

“And jackals in their luxurious palaces.”

Oswalt: These are animals that inhabit dark and lonely settings. There is something vaguely ominous about many of them. The mighty city is silent except for the hoots and howls of the night-dwellers.

C. (:22b) Judgment Coming Soon

“Her fateful time also will soon come And her days will not be prolonged.”

CONCLUSION:

- It would be folly to imagine that Doomsday is not coming. Wrath of God has been Commanded and is hanging over the head of the wicked like a guillotine ready to be released
- The Impact of Destruction when divine wrath is Executed shows the awfulness of our sin
- Divine Wrath will be Inescapable and Brutal – not a pretty picture – certainly Christ dying on the cross for our sins is not a pretty picture as well
- This Divine Wrath will be Unrelenting – will persist in eternal judgment and torment forever

1:18-20

“Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the Lord, ‘Though your sins are as scarlet they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; but if you will refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.’ Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

That is the *burden* of the prophet Isaiah.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do you think we don't see the United States featured in biblical prophecy? What does this teach us about our national pride and self sufficiency?
- 2) How do we teach our children that our God is a God of wrath and fury and anger as well as a God of love?
- 3) How can a God who is so merciful and compassionate be directing instruments of destruction that are completely devoid of mercy and compassion?
- 4) How have the mighty fallen! Where have you experienced the practical effects of the principle that “Pride goes before a fall”?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ironsides: As we read these chapters it is easy to see that back of the literal rulers of Babylon there was a sinister spirit-personality denominated as Lucifer, the son of the morning. That this evil angel is identical with Satan himself seems to be perfectly clear.

S. Lewis Johnson: The destruction of Babylon that is described both here and in Jeremiah contains some facts that were not fulfilled at the ancient destruction of that city. For example, Jeremiah says in the 51st chapter in the eighth verse, that Babylon should be suddenly destroyed when it was destroyed. Now, if there is one thing that is true, it is this, Babylon was not

suddenly destroyed. As a matter of fact, when Babylon was taken in 539 B.C., from that time on that city still had a tremendously important place in the ancient world. In fact, you can go on over even into Christian times and there is still a settlement at Babylon. In fact, Alexander had intended a couple of hundred years later to make Babylon his capital. In fact, it may well have been, that it was for that reason that he died his premature death. But in any rate, Babylon was not suddenly destroyed, and yet in the Old Testament it is stated that it should be suddenly destroyed. And in the Book of Revelation it is stated more than once, I think three or four times, that Babylon when Babylon is destroyed shall be destroyed suddenly.

Van Parunak: The overall lesson that we should take from this announcement is an appreciation of how terrible sin is:

- the degree to which it pollutes the world, which cannot be cleansed but must be **destroyed**;
- the **wrath** it inspires in God;
- the degree to which it **perverts** the hearts of men, turning them into beasts.

Only when we understand the wickedness of sin can we truly appreciate the salvation that God has graciously given us.

Oswalt: these oracles are not so much an announcement of doom upon the nations as they are an announcement of salvation to Israel if she would trust her Lord . . . Thus, they are an answer to questions raised in chs. 7-11. Can God deliver Israel from the pomp and power of the world? Will he be able to restore her as ch. 11 promises? The answer is a resounding yes. Furthermore, these chapters demonstrate the folly of trusting in nations whose doom is already sealed. God is the master of the nations. It is at his command that the armies move out to destroy one after another, both great and small. Thus, it is foolish for Israel to trust in her own system of alliances, with the necessary commitments to foreign gods, to save her. Only God, who has promised to save her, can save her.

TEXT: Isaiah 14:1-23

TITLE: *JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS -- BABYLON BITES THE DUST – PART 2*

BIG IDEA:
PRESUMPTUOUS PRIDE BROUGHT LOW

INTRODUCTION:

We are all familiar with the **expressions**:

“Pride goeth before a fall” **Prov. 16:18**

“The bigger they are the harder they fall” – we are not as familiar with the source of this quote = boxer Robert Fitzsimmons, prior to a fight c 1900

Isaiah’s continuation in Chapter 14 of God’s judgment against Babylon fleshes out these quotes in graphic reality. No nation is more prideful than **Babylon**. Remember the lessons that Nebuchadnezzar learned as God reduced him to a beast of the field. But those lessons were not internalized by the rulers to come. In fact in the end days, Babylon will represent the world-wide domination of the Anti-Christ who opposes with futility the final end game program of the kingdom of God.

“God opposes the proud but He gives grace to the humble.” **James 4:6** Isn’t grace what each of us needs every day? Hopefully our study today can be the channel for us humbling ourselves, submitting to God, resisting the devil and drawing near to God. James’ admonition to us who desperately need **God’s grace** moment by moment is *“Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your heart, you double-minded.”*

Constable: The whole point of this poem is the futility and folly of self-exalting pride, which this idealized Babylonian king modeled (cf. Dan. 4:25).

(:1-2) PROLOGUE -- REVERSAL OF FORTUNES FOR ISRAEL – FROM JUDGMENT TO BLESSING

A. Covenant God Responding in Compassion and Blessing

“When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob, and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land,”

Borgman: better translation of conjunctive *“When”* would be *“For”* as explanatory – the reason for the judgment against Babylon detailed in Chap. 13

Young: Babylon must perish because it was the purpose of God to raise and exalt His people.

Oswalt: Thus, God’s wrath is not only negative as against sin but also positive as against that which blocks the path of blessing.

Covenant Commitment to **Compassion** and **Election** – speaking in terms of how things appear in our experience

Does God ever take away His compassion and unselect His people? **9:17** But look at how these

promises played out in the experience of the nation. Sometimes they experienced blessing and sometimes judgment in relation to their obedience to the covenant.

When election is applied to **individual believers**, there can never be any doubt that God will never leave us or forsake us.

Van Parunak: Isaiah recapitulates the steps through which he deals with his elect, the same steps that led to Israel's earlier history as his chosen people, and that are now applied to us, cf. Rom 8:29-30; 2 Thes 2:13-14; 1 Pet 1:2,3.

- “*Mercy*” describes his unmotivated, fundamental love for some people. The word appears for the first time in Exo 33:19, “I ... will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.” It is analogous in Rom 8:29 to the step, “whom he foreknew,” or in the parallel in 2 Thes 2:13, “beloved of the Lord.”
- “*Choose*” is his action of distinguishing them from others as a result of this underlying love.
- “*Set them*” is the blessing that results from their special position in his favor, and corresponds to the glorification that is promised in the NT passages. . .

This restoration of Israel is anticipated in the **return under Cyrus**. Yet that was only a foreshadowing of the ultimate Millennial restoration, as Zechariah himself recognized at the time when he prophesied an intervening dispersion before the ultimate restoration:

Zec 1:16-17 Therefore thus saith the LORD;

[538 BC] I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies [רחמים , cf. Isa 14:1 √ רחם]: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.

[AD 70] 17 Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through [better, “from”] prosperity shall yet be spread abroad [“scattered”; everywhere else the verb has negative connotation];

[Millennium] and the LORD shall yet [again] comfort Zion, and shall yet [again] choose Jerusalem.

B. Gentiles Promoting Regathering of the Jews

“then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. And the peoples will take them along and bring them to their place,”

Amill perspective: church incorporating Gentiles; Christocentric focus; but how do you have Gentiles submitting to Jews here? At the end times you still need to make an important distinction between Gentiles and Jews – a distinction that does not fit the amill perspective.

Van Parunak: This relation is markedly different from that in the church age, when “there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek” (Rom 10:12; cf. Gal 3:28 “there is neither Jew nor Greek,” Col 3:18 “there is neither Greek nor Jew”).

Cyrus encouraged the Jews under Ezra and Zerubbabel to return to the promised land and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple structure – just a foretaste of the ultimate regathering of the Jews to their land in preparation for the Millennial kingdom.

C. Gentiles Submitting to Jewish-Based Rule in the Millennial Kingdom

“and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive, and will rule over their oppressors.”

Slavery issue: -- is the Lord advocating form of slavery here? Here the Messianic King is beneficent ruler who administers peace and justice and righteousness; it is a blessing to submit to such rule

You see that **salvation is of the Jews** and the Gentiles participate in the promises made to Abraham and the fathers which speak of worldwide blessing that will incorporate the Gentiles

(:3-21) TAUNT AGAINST THE PROUD KING OF BABYLON – FOUR STROPHES

(:3-4a) Introduction

Van Parunak: The taunt has two parts, each beginning with “how” כִּי־אֵיךָ . Each of these is divided in turn into an earthly scene (4b-8, 16-20) and an other-earthly scene (9-11, 12-15), arranged chiastically.

A. Timeframe: Relief From Oppression

“And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved,”

Oswalt: In that day, he promises rest to his people in their own land (28:12; 32:18; Deut. 12:9; 2 Sam. 7:1; 1 K. 8:56; Ps. 95:1; Mic. 2:10).

B. Taunt

“that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say,”

Motyer: *Taunt* does not convey the sense here. This is not an exercise in jeering or mocking. The word *masal* is the general Hebrew word for “proverb” or “parable”, a saying or a way of putting something whereby the inner truth comes to light. . . Hence, here, a better translation would be “*you will bring to light the inner truth about the king.*”

What does **Babylon represent?** Eschatological emphasis – Anti Christ

Beall: Who is this king of Babylon? Many commentators now see only an idealized figure here, with no particular person in mind (thus **Oswalt**, 314; **Young**, 1:435; similarly **Motyer**, TOTC, 118: “there is no point asking which king of Babylon Isaiah has in mind, If it had been essential to know, he would have told us”). Martin thinks Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, is in view, but this is highly unlikely, since Babylon is mentioned, not Assyria. **Ridderbos** believes that the grandeur of the king mentioned here is Nebuchadnezzar's, but the death depicted is that of Belshazzar (p. 144). Perhaps the best view is to see this king as a yet future king of Babylon (Rev 17-18). [**Oswalt**: “None of the kings of the Neo-Babylonian empire (e.g., Nebuchadnezzar or Nabonidus) fits, nor do any of the Assyrian kings of Isaiah's day”] [**Motyer**, Prophecy, 142, sees the poem as within the “day of the Lord” genre: “the general idea of a hostile world power is personalized into the imaginative portrayal of the end of the world king....The more we think of chapters 13-27 as a study of the principles of world history merging forward into eschatology, the easier it becomes to see that from the start Babylon carries overtones of

the ‘city of emptiness’ (24:10) whose fall is the end of all that opposes the Lord’s rule”]

Will the city of Babylon be **rebuilt**? Prophecies about it suddenly being destroyed in a short span of time

(as football season approaches) Ultimate **trash talking** here

Constable: After Yahweh gave Israel rest following her captivity, she would taunt (Heb. *marshal*, bring to light the truth about) Babylon's proud ruler who had formerly taunted her (vv. 3-4a; cf. Rev. 18). His death would be an occasion for joy, not sorrow.

4 REACTIONS TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PROUD KING OF BABYLON

Beall: It is in the form of a lament, yet is really a hymn of rejoicing!

I. (:4b-8) REACTION OF THE EARTH [NATIONS]: **EARTH REJOICES AT THE TYRANT’S DEMISE – NO MORE THREAT OF PERSECUTION**

A. (:4b-6) Reign of Oppression Has Ended – Violence / Anger / Persecution

“How the oppressor has ceased, And how fury has ceased! The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, The scepter of rulers Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes, Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.”

Van Parunak: [staff and scepter] always reflecting chastisement and force.

B. (:7a) Reign of Peace and Security Now Dominates

“The whole earth is at rest and is quiet;”

What a contrast – like Lord Jesus calming the Sea of Galilee

C. (:7b-8) Rejoicing Overflows from Hearts that are Secure

:They break forth into shouts of joy. Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, ‘Since you were laid low, no tree cutter comes up against us.’”

Cypress trees could be symbolic of the nations here

Van Parunak: Recall the imagery of Assyria as his ax and saw (10:15), which views the nations they conquered as forests (Ephraim in 9:18; Assyria in 10:33-34). Now that the dominant ruler is subdued, the nations (like trees) rejoice in their safety.

Constable: Mesopotamian kings regularly took parties of lumberjacks to the forests of Lebanon to cut timber to build their palaces and public buildings. Such timber was unavailable in Mesopotamia and Palestine.

II. (:9-11) REACTION OF SHEOL: **SHEOL MOCKS AS SHE RECEIVES THE DEAD RULER – DEATH = THE GREAT EQUALIZER**

A. (:9) Communion of the Wicked Dead

“Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.”

Analysis of Sheol – Place of departed dead; no developed theology here

Vine: This passage demonstrates the fact of the conscious state of the souls of the dead in Hades, their power to exchange thoughts, and their vivid recollection of their past circumstances on earth. There is no Scripture to support the supposition of the unconsciousness of the soul.

B. (:10) Common Impotence of the Wicked Dead – What a Shock!

“They will all respond and say to you, ‘Even you have been made weak as we, You have become like us.’”

C. (:11) Catastrophic Change in Circumstances

1. No More Lavish Festivities in Sheol

“Your pomp and the music of your harps Have been brought down to Sheol;”

Oswalt: This verse continues the mockery of the lament by contrasting two radically different pictures of a funeral. In the first we see the royal corpse being carried on its final journey with all the pomp and ceremony which can be mustered to show the power and importance of a person.

2. No More Royal Comforts in Sheol

“Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you, And worms are your covering.”

Young: No longer, however, is there spread under the king a carpet of luxury, but in its stead only the worm. This is a picture of decomposing bodies in the grave. At one time there was a variety of coverings, rich and varied garments. Now there is only one – worms.

III. (:12-15) REACTION OF GOD:

GOD JUDGES RIGHTEOUSLY IN BRINGING DOWN BABYLON – PRESUMPTUOUS PRIDE REDUCED TO THE DEPTHS OF SHEOL

A. (:12) Tragic Fall – Bright Beginnings

“How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!”

Why doesn't this refer to **Fall of Satan** even though there are many parallels?

- Satan not confined at present; here he is confined to depths of Sheol
- Yet future fulfillment

Beall: If this king is the end-time king of Babylon, he might possibly be identified with the Antichrist, who issues similar statements against the Lord (see Dan 8:23-25; also, the man of sin in 2 Thess 2:4 who *“opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God”*).

B. (:13-14) Puffing Up -- Presumptuous Pride – The Five “I Wills”

“But you said in your heart,” “I want” . . . “I can” . . . “I will”

1. *“I will ascend to heaven;”*
2. *“I will raise my throne above the stars of God,”*
3. *“And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north.”*
4. *“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;”*
5. *“I will make myself like the Most High.”*

Beall: many of the Babylonian kings viewed themselves as deity, taking the place of God.

Our pride is so pervasive – reminds me of the carnival game: **Whac-A-Mole** --

A typical Whac-A-Mole machine consists of a large, waist-level cabinet with five holes in its top and a large, soft, black mallet. Each hole contains a single plastic mole and the machinery necessary to move it up and down. Once the game starts, the moles will begin to pop up from their holes at random. The object of the game is to force the individual moles back into their holes by hitting them directly on the head with the mallet, thereby adding to the player's score.

James 4:16 *"But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil."*

C. (:15) Hitting Bottom -- Depths of Sheol

“Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit.

IV. (:16-21) REACTION OF THE PEOPLE:

**PEOPLE OF THE WORLD MARVEL –
BRANDING BABYLON WITH A LEGACY OF SHAME**

A. (:16-17) Denied the Fear Accorded to a Powerful Tyrant

“Those who see you will gaze at you, They will ponder over you, saying, 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms, Who made the world like a wilderness And overthrew its cities, Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’”

Doesn't look so powerful now; stripped even of common dignity

B. (:18-20a) Denied the Dignity of a King's Burial

“All the kings of the nations lie in glory, Each in his own tomb. But you have been cast out of your tomb Like a rejected branch, Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword, Who go down to the stones of the pit, Like a trampled corpse. You will not be united with them in burial, Because you have ruined your country, You have slain your people.”

Van Parunak: Those who oppress other nations invariably abuse their own people. He has not only been a scourge to others (v. 6), but a tyrant at home, and in doing so has breached his responsibility as a monarch.

Grogan: We know from the Egyptian pyramids and other royal tombs how much stress was put on proper burial – with all the proper rites and ceremonies – in the Fertile Crescent in OT times. How horrifying to a great king of Babylon and to many of his contemporaries would be the prospect of his lying out in the open (v. 19), unburied, his royal body undistinguished and perhaps indistinguishable from those of his soldiers, to be thrown into a common burial pit!

C. (:20b-21) Denied the Normal Blessing of Offspring

“May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever. Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter Because of the iniquity of their fathers. They must not arise and take possession of the earth And fill the face of the world with cities.”

(:22-23) EPILOGUE – FINALITY OF GOD’S JUDGMENT AGAINST BABYLON

A. (:22a) Babylon Opposed by the Lord

“And I will rise up against them,” declares the LORD of hosts”

Van Parunak: *For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts,*--This was the theme of vv. 2-3. The next two summaries concern the human and physical consequences, respectively, of this divine opposition.

B. (:22b) Posterity Cut Off by the Lord

“and will cut off from Babylon name and survivors, offspring and posterity,” declares the LORD.”

C. (:23) Utterly Destroyed by the Lord

“I will also make it a possession for the hedgehog, and swamps of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction,” declares the LORD of hosts.”

Image of sweeping with a broom – this is where baseball teams get their inspiration!

Motyer: The Lord’s broom is mighty enough to sweep the whole of great Babylon to destruction and oblivion.

CONCLUSION:

Those enemies of God’s kingdom which seem the most powerful to us today will be the ones that fall the hardest as God rises up to render judgment and to establish His rule in peace and righteousness.

Just as the king of Babylon was destined for the depths of sheol, the Anti Christ will be cast into the lake of fire.

Need to read final chapters of the book of Rev:

18:9-10 *“And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of **security** do you enjoy day to day from the Lord's abiding compassions which are new every morning and His election of you to salvation?
- 2) What are the practical implications for everyday living from understanding the universal reality of death with its equalizing force?
- 3) What evidences of pride and self will do you still need to renounce in order to draw close to God?
- 4) What type of **legacy** should the righteous leave behind as opposed to those who are condemned by God for their pride?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: There is general agreement that this is one of the finest of Hebrew poems. It manifests a balance of terms, a forcefulness, and a power of imagery that is typical of the best of Hebrew poetry. The total impact is unforgettable. It is divided into four stanzas of almost equal length, each one describing a different scene. **The first (vv. 4b-8)** depicts the relief which pervades earth with the tyrant gone. **The second (vv. 9-11)** tells of the astonishment in Sheol when the dead discover that even this man is mortal. **The third stanza (vv. 12-15)** moves from Sheol to heaven, showing that the tyrant's ignominy is the more devastating because he pretended to be so much. **Finally, vv. 16-21** return to the earth and tell of the final disgrace to overbearing pride: the denial of a decent burial and the destruction of his descendants.

Part of the power of the poem lies in its careful mockery of the lament form. That form typically uses an unbalanced line called the *qinah*, or "limping" line. The first of the parallel members is typically one-third longer than the second member, giving the limping effect . . . This song for the dead is a song of joy, not grief.

Motyer: The more we think of chapters 13-27 as a study of the principles of world history merging forward into eschatology, the easier it becomes to see that from the start Babylon carries overtones of the "*city of emptiness*" (24:10) whose fall is the end of all that opposes the Lord's rule.

TEXT: Isaiah 14:24-27

TITLE: JUDGMENT ON ASSYRIA – THE EXERCISE OF GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL NATIONS

BIG IDEA:

THE HISTORY OF ALL NATIONS IS WRITTEN BY THE SOVEREIGN HAND OF GOD – WHO CANNOT BE STOPPED FROM EXECUTING HIS JUDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION:

If you are a serious student of history [not really my focus], you have your favorite authors for various subjects. Some of the most recognizable classical historians would be: **Herodotus** and **Plutarch**; You could talk about experts in a specific world kingdom – such as the rise and fall of the Roman Empire – **Edward Gibbon**, for example; or historians that have analyzed the Christian church [I am more familiar with these] – **Albert Newman, Philip Shaff**. But all of these have attempted to interpret the events of history after the fact. **Only God** writes the history of nations before it happens and executes His sovereign judgments according to His timetable of events.

We are in the second major section of Isaiah – **chapters 13-25** – that detail God’s planned judgments against various evil nations. [Last week we reviewed the first 12 chapters of Isaiah’s prophecy.] We already studied the judgment leveled against Babylon. Isaiah opened with that nation since it is symbolic in the end times of any evil world empire that tries to oppose the kingdom of God. So Babylon gets some serious treatment up front by Isaiah. Today we study just 4 short verses that speak of God’s sovereignty in exercising judgment against Assyria. It is surprising to see Assyria get such brief treatment here.

How does this brief paragraph fit into Isaiah’s flow of thought? Liberals respond by saying this paragraph is out of place – some type of redaction that was inserted by some misguided scribe. It doesn’t belong here. However, this is the perfect spot for this important theme. It reinforces what Isaiah has just predicted about judgment against Babylon. By looking at how God will deal with the immediate threat of Assyria, one can have greater confidence that God will respond in like manner to enemies that crop up further down the road. In fact the **Big Idea** of this paragraph is the central thought of this entire section of chapters 13-25.

THE HISTORY OF ALL NATIONS IS WRITTEN BY THE SOVEREIGN HAND OF GOD – WHO CANNOT BE STOPPED FROM EXECUTING HIS JUDGMENTS

Ps. 103:19 “*The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.*”

We know the Scriptures teach this consistently and without apology. But we need to be reminded constantly about the practical applications in terms of how we are to respond to this great truth.

Definition: To be sovereign is to possess supreme power and authority so that one is in complete control and can accomplish whatever he pleases.

I. (:24) PLEDGE OF EXCLUSIVE SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL NATIONS

**God wants us to understand that He is serious about this Pledge --
God's purposes are immutable**

A. The Significance of the One Pledging

"The LORD of hosts"

Not some local, tribal leader

Not even the king of the most powerful nation on earth

Not even a league of nations united around one world-wide agenda

We lose sight of the invisible armies that are commanded by the Lord of hosts

Pink: Who is regulating affairs on this earth today – God or the Devil? What saith the Scriptures? If we believe their plain and positive declarations, no room is left for uncertainty. They affirm, again and again, that God is on the throne of the universe; that the scepter is in His hands; that He is directing **all things** *"after the counsel of His own will."* They affirm, not only that God created all things, but also that God is ruling and reigning over all the works of His hands. They affirm that God is the *"Almighty,"* that His will is irreversible, that He is absolute sovereign in every realm of all His vast dominions. And surely it must be so. Only two alternatives are possible: God must either rule, or be ruled; sway, or be swayed; accomplish His own will, or be thwarted by His creatures. Accepting the fact that He is the *"Most High,"* the only Potentate and King of kings, vested with perfect wisdom and unlimited power, the conclusion is irresistible that he must be God **in fact**, as well as in name.

B. The Significance of the Manner of Attestation = Swearing an Oath

(not swearing in the sense of cursing with profane language)

"has sworn saying,"

Study the scriptures to see what types of things rise to the level of God swearing an oath ...

Van Parunak: **sworn**,--About 20 times in the OT, we read of the Lord's *swearing an oath*. The two most common categories are the patriarchal blessings of the land and his special relation to Israel, and his judgment (not only on Gentiles, as here, but on rebellious Israelites). [A smaller third category would be promises relating to the Messianic fulfillment of the Davidic kingdom.]

Deut 7:8 *But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

Psa 110:4 *The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

Heb 6:16-18 tells us that this mode of speech is condescension to us:

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. 17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

God wants us to know that these things originate in his sovereign counsels, and not in the power of men.

2 *immutable things* = God's promise and His oath

MacArthur: God's Word does not need any confirmation from someone else. It is reliable because God Himself is faithful. People confirm their promises by appealing to someone greater (especially to God) as witness. Since no one is greater than God, He can only provide an oath from Himself. By doing so He is willingly (v. 17) accommodating Himself to human beings who desire the confirmation because of the characteristic unreliability of human promise.

How sure is our salvation? It is all dependent on the Promise and Pledge of God who cannot lie; He is the God of Truth

C. The Significance of the Immutability of the Pledge = His promises and pledge are unchangeable and effective

*"Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened,
and just as I have planned so it will stand,"*

Look at the plans of man and see our limitations in contrast to the exclusive sovereignty of God:

- No accidents with God – think of the tree that fell and killed my brother-in-law
It's a different world if you think that accidents can get in the way of God's plan
- No surprises with God --
- No false threats with God – Don't you hate it when you hear parents threatening their children with discipline but not carrying it out?
- No frustration with God – never has His plans thwarted by someone else
- No vacillation with God – I said I was going to do this ... but maybe I should really do that ...

Is. 46:9-11 *"My purpose will be established"*

II. (:25-26) PURPOSE OF EXCLUSIVE SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL NATIONS

God wants us to understand that His purposes are redemptive and glorify His name --

A. (:25) Near Term Redemptive Purposes – Deliverance from Assyria

"to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains.

Then his yoke will be removed from them, and his burden removed from their shoulder."

1. Involves Smashing God's Enemies

"break" "trample"

Van Parunak: (25) *That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains [I will] tread him underfoot:* -- Note the chiasmic emphasis on the Lord's agency and the Lord's authority over the land. The Lord's sovereign "I will" here stands against the pathetic and failed "I will" of the Babylonian king in **14:13-14**. Our purposes are always contingent on the Lord's pleasure. His purposes are absolute.

2. Involves Protecting God's Sovereign Turf

"My land" "My mountains"

Zion is the fortress of the Lord; place of safety and protection

3. Involves Delivering God's Covenant People

"yoke removed" "burden removed"

What type of **yoke** or **burden** is crushing you down right now?

Beall: V. 25 is fulfilled in Isaiah's lifetime (Sennacherib, 701 B.C.—see Isa 37 for the fulfillment).

Van Parunak: The reference to Assyria takes us back to ch. 7. The correct solution to Assyria is neither to mount an independent attack (the approach of the Syrian-Ephraimite coalition) nor to send them tribute (as Ahaz wished to do), but to turn to the Lord.

Constable: The near fulfillment came in 701 B.C. when the angel of the Lord slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers who had surrounded Jerusalem (37:36-37; 2 Kings 19:35). Later fulfillments came in 689 B.C., when the Assyrians under Sennacherib sacked Babylon, and in 539 B.C., when Cyrus the Persian destroyed it.

B. (:26) Eschatological Redemptive Purposes – Ultimate Deliverance in Day of the Lord

*"This is the plan devised against the whole earth;
and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations."*

God's decrees concern the whole world; everything is under His sovereign control

What you see accomplished in miniature will ultimately be played out on a global scale in the end times in the Day of the Lord;

It is the same hand of the Lord that sovereignly plans and executes such plans of judgment and redemption

Motyer: The substance of these verses is that the Assyrian threat, current in Isaiah's day, would be decisively crushed in the Lord's own land (24–25), that is, with his then people as witness. This attested act of God is then used as an example of the way the divine hand governs all nations and executes an irresistible world purpose (26–27). The outstretched hand of verse 27 forms an inclusio with 13:2. The historical act which they see will be replicated in the eschatological judgment on the whole world and now acts as a guarantee of it....The Assyrian incident is the model for the eschaton.

Jim Bomkamp: No nation upon the earth shall escape the judgment of the Lord that is going to come, for all of the nations have determined their own fate and refused to submit themselves to the counsel and purposes of the Lord.

James Barker: Emphasis on word "*purposed*"; It is an eternal purpose of God; **Rom. 8:28** – all things including sickness and death – *called according to His purpose*; **Ephes. 1:11** *being predestined according to the purpose*; **Ephes. 3:11** *according to the eternal purpose . . .*; **2 Tim. 1:9** *God has saved us and called us with a holy calling . . . according to His own purpose . . .*

.; **1 John 3:8** *for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil;*

III. (:27) POWER OF EXCLUSIVE SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL NATIONS

God wants us to understand that His power cannot be thwarted by any person or any nation –

God's purposes are effective

*“For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it?
And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?”*

- Can the will or actions of man frustrate God's plans?

Rom. 9:16 *“So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.”*

2 Tim. 1:9 *“who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity”*

- Can the counsel and combined alliance of the most powerful nations frustrate God's plans?

Psalms 2:4 *“He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them.”*

Job 12:3 *“He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away.”*

Dan. 4:34-35 *“For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have you done?’”*

Man is not even in a position to question God's sovereign actions

- Can the power of Satan frustrate God's plans?

Ps. 135:5-6 *“our Lord is above all gods”*

1 John 3:8 *“He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.”*

Possible approaches to dangers and threats (such as faced by King Ahaz):

- Fight back in the **power of the flesh**
- Capitulate in the **panic of fear** – pay tribute; make a deal
- Submit in the **peace of faith** to the sovereign plan of God

CONCLUSION:

History has been defined as “**His Story**” –

THE HISTORY OF ALL NATIONS IS WRITTEN BY THE SOVEREIGN HAND OF GOD – WHO CANNOT BE STOPPED FROM EXECUTING HIS JUDGMENTS

Practical Applications:

- Have security in your eternal salvation – God’s calling is without repentance
- Set your priority is on the progress of God’s kingdom rather than the furtherance of any earthly kingdom
- Persevere in your spiritual service, knowing that it is not in vain since the Lord is sovereign over all – especially over the results of your labors
- Be comforted that no trial or pain or disaster that strikes you is outside of the providence of God’s sovereign control
- Be excited about the fact that God has a purpose for your life

You never know how God is using you in His sovereignty –

Gladys Talbot -- Illustration – quoted by Rich Cathers

Gladys Talbot tells the story of three little trees who wanted to be something in life. The first tree wanted to be a pretty cradle when it grew up. One day some people came to the forest and cut the tree down. The tree was hewn into rough pieces and carelessly put together to form a manger in a stable in Bethlehem. The little tree was disappointed because it was shoved into a dark cave with no one to see it but some cattle. One day however, God laid there His own Babe -- the Son of God. the manger quivered with delight. "Oh, this is wonderful! In all my dreams I never thought to hold a Baby like this. This is better than all my planning. Why, I am part of a miracle!"

Years passed by, and men came to the forest to cut down the second tree. This tree aspired to be a great ship when it grew up. But the little tree did not do great things. It was not made into a great vessel, but instead it became a tiny fishing boat, owned by a simple Galilean fisherman named Peter. The little boat was most unhappy. One day it stood by the shores of the Sea of Galilee dejected and disappointed. A crowd had gathered by the shore and because of the multitude, a Man, called Jesus, stepped into the little boat and taught the people from it. "This is wonderful!" it whispered. "In all my dreams and planning I never thought I would be used as part of a miracle."

After some months, men came to the forest to cut down the third tree. This tree just wanted to remain on the hillside and point to God. But men did not leave the little tree alone. They tore away its branches; they cut into its bark, and deeper, into its very heart. They hewed it apart and put it together again, in the form of a crude cross. The little tree quivered through all its being. "This is terrible!" it whispered. "They are going to hang someone. Oh, I never wanted this to happen to me -- I only wanted to point to God! This is awful!"

One day, outside of Jerusalem, a great crowd gathered. In the midst of the crowd was Jesus and beside Him was the cross. After nailing Him to the cross, the little tree heard words of forgiveness and peace that were offered to the whole world. Then Christ completed His work of redemption and "gave up the ghost."

And the cross began to understand! "This is wonderful!" it whispered. "In all my dreams I never thought to point to God in this way. I am part of a miracle. This is better than all my planning."

-- Talbot, G.M., *Stories I Love to Tell*, Chicago: Moody Press

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why is it so important to try to align our will with the will of God?
- 2) What perspective should we have as we listen to the world news each night and see the dangers in our current situation?
- 3) How does God go about protecting His turf in your life and accomplishing His redemptive purposes for you?
- 4) Why do we get so frustrated when our plans do not work out as we intended?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: The paragraph is an inclusio.

- The outer members, vv. 24 and 27, describe the immutability of the Lord's purposes in general.
- The central member describes the specific purpose in view here, the destruction of Assyria.

This division highlights a contrast between the fleshly adversary, Assyria, whom men ought not to fear, and the Lord, who alone should be the object of our fear. . .

God wants us to know that these things originate in his sovereign counsels, and not in the power of men.

He develops the authority of his sovereign will in three stages:

1. his past acts (24b, “as I have thought so has it come to pass”)
2. the present case of Assyria (24c-25, “as I have purposed, so shall it stand”)
3. his future dealings with all nations (26).

Motyer: The whole cycle takes the principles, blessings and warnings of chapters 7–11 on to the next stage, in particular seeking to affirm that the Lord is really and truly ruling history and guiding it to his predetermined end. Throughout, Isaiah deals with the present, the impending and the eschatological. For example, in the Babylon oracle, although Babylon is addressed as a present power, the setting of the whole is eschatological (there are references to a gathering of the Lord's forces [13:2–3], a universal objective [verse 5], the day of the Lord [verses 6–8] and cosmic as well as world-wide results [verses 9–11]). In case the remote should appear unreal, Isaiah offers an interim fulfillment for which people can watch and which, when they see it, will guarantee that the greater purpose will also come to pass. The interim fulfillment is the overthrow of Assyria, which is an earnest that the hand which mastered Assyria masters the earth (14:24–27). In the series as a whole, now one of these elements and now another is stressed, but Isaiah is specially concerned to offer interim fulfillments (along with 14:24–27, see 16:13–14 and 20:1–6). This is of some importance for if God cannot demonstrate his management of history in what people see before them, why should they trust him for what they cannot see? Faith is not a leap in the dark but conviction reached on the basis of evidence. But if they actually live through what is demonstrably a work of God, they are without excuse if they withhold belief regarding coming days and the day of the Lord itself. Prediction and fulfillment

provide the required demonstration, as in the case of the Assyrian overthrow. Before the event, Isaiah made a commitment in the name of the Lord about what had not yet happened (and, indeed, what was self-evidently against the odds). It is the nexus between the prior word and the later event that shows who rules the world. This gives confidence regarding that which is equally the subject of prediction and is yet to be the subject of action.

Van Parunak: This exposition associates vv. 24-27 with what follows rather than what precedes . . . Both paragraphs include a historical prophecy and an emphasis on our attitude toward the Lord of history. . . So in this case alone, the title of “*burden*” lies at the center of the oracle (28). It is not associated directly with a specific nation, but in fact involves three:

- Assyria (vv. 24-27), which had threatened the whole Levant;
- Judah (v. 28), which had falsely hoped in Assyria;
- Palestina (vv. 29-32), which had prematurely rejoiced in the destruction of Assyria.

Assyria is appropriate neither as a basis for hope nor as a reason for fear. The first section ends by reminding us of the true object of fear, the Lord, and the last section ends by reminding us of the true object of hope, again the Lord. This lesson goes far beyond Assyria, and is one we need to learn today.

Pink: The sovereignty of God! What do we mean by this expression? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the Godhead of God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that God is God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Most High, doing according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou? (**Dan. 4:35**). To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purposes, or resist His will (**Ps. 115:3**). To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is “*The Governor among the nations*” (**Ps. 22:28**), setting up kingdoms, over throwing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleaseth Him best. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the “*Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (**1 Tim. 6:15**). Such is the God of the Bible.

Oswalt: Mesopotamia is the symbol of *the whole earth . . . all the nations*, which stand over against God in pride and arrogance and against whom God’s hand is stretched out. Here is the final issue of biblical faith. If there is one almighty Creator of the universe, who is intimately and purposefully involved with his creation, then there is no power on earth, least of all human pride, which can successfully rise up against him (43:13; Ps. 33:6-11; Prov. 19:21).

James Barker: For the Lord Has Purposed

Prophets often would prophecy against the enemies of Israel – here, Assyria; but the prophets looked beyond current events all the way down to the last days; Assyrians represent the ungodly heathens who fight against God’s people; Story of Haman – fighting against the Jews and God saw to it that he would not prevail; Iran in its council in our days called: “The world without Zion” – badly mistaken because there never will be a world without Zion; Ps. 2; Ps. 129:5; 132:13; leader of Iran is a modern day Haman; God has a purpose for Israel and for the Gentile nations and for you and me and for His church; In this dispensation God’s program focuses on the church – you had better be involved;

Bill McDaniel: Certainty of God’s Purpose

Arminians try to make distinction between God’s perfect will and permissive will; Isaiah here speaks of prophecy of destruction of Babylon in this context even though it was not yet fully a

world power; What comfort would the destruction of Babylon in the future be to this present generation; As a forerunner of the destruction of Babylon, their present enemies, the Assyrians and the Philistines would be crushed by God right before their very eyes; What is the ground that such a promise would be fulfilled? The Lord confirms His promise by an oath of swearing; shows the certainty of the thing declared; 4 references to the purpose of God in this text; the Lord affirms the certainty of fulfilling His purpose; a will or decree of God; Who shall cause God's purpose to fall to the ground and be annulled? Who can cancel out what the Almighty has determined? Dan. 4:35; Job 9:12; Rom. 9:20; Job 33:13; Acts 5:34-39;

Tom Harding: The Purpose of God

God promised Israel deliverance based upon His sovereign purpose. He has made the same promise of deliverance to His spiritual elect over all of our spiritual enemies – sin, Satan, world, law, etc.; 2 Pet. 2:4; Salvation is of the Lord; Predestined whom He would justify before the foundation of the world; Purposed the grounds by which He would justify and the means as well;

3 Things about the Eternal Purpose of God:

1. (:24) The Purpose of God is Immutable (Unchangeable)

"I am the Lord, I change not." (Mal.) Is. 46:9; Heb. 6:17 *"the immutability of His counsel"*;

2. (:26) The Purpose of God Includes All Things

2 Cor. 5:18 *"all things are of God"*; in God's universe nothing happens by chance or accident; Rom. 11:36; all things ordered by the decree of God; nothing determined ultimately by the will of man; Rom. 9:15-16; nothing is under the ultimate control of Satan; Ps. 135:6; the devil is God's servant

3. (:27) The Purpose of God is Effectual and Must and Will be Accomplished

Nothing happens in the universe that He has not decreed; nothing that He has decreed will not come to pass; His decree cannot be frustrated; Ps. 110:3; His power cannot be defeated;

TEXT: Isaiah 14:28-32

TITLE: JUDGMENT ON THE PHILISTINES BUT REFUGE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE –
DON'T COUNT YOUR CARDS WHILE YOU'RE SITTING AT THE TABLE

BIG IDEA:

BANK ON GOD'S PROMISES FOR THE FUTURE RATHER THAN THE GLOOMY PROSPECTS IN THE PRESENT

INTRODUCTION:

Often God's people can be really down in the dumps as they look at the deplorable condition of God's kingdom in its present condition here on earth. As you look around each week and see lawlessness increase and depravity rampant, it certainly doesn't give the Christian good vibes. Just look at the TV shows that are most popular today. It's not Leave it to Beaver and Father Knows Best. In one generation the cultural climate has dramatically shifted so that sexual promiscuity and perversions are the heart and soul of our entertainment diet.

Look at the character reflected in the conduct of our political leaders. Can you imagine 200 years ago how the nation would have responded to a president committing oral sex with a young intern in the Oval Office; or candidates for the highest offices distributing pictures of their private parts? Not that former leaders were always paragons of virtue but at least there was some regard for modesty and a sense of decorum. Today, there is little left that can shock us anymore.

In such a climate, God's enemies become increasingly vocal in their opposition and mocking of God's kingdom. Think how it must have been for the godly [however few there were that maintained their faith along with Isaiah] back in the days when King Ahaz died. God provides a prophecy of judgment against the Philistines to encourage His people to:

BANK ON GOD'S PROMISES FOR THE FUTURE RATHER THAN THE GLOOMY PROSPECTS IN THE PRESENT

(:28) PRELUDE: LISTEN TO GOD'S REVELATION – GOD PROVIDES LIGHT IN DARK TIMES

“In the year that King Ahaz died this oracle came:”

Dates oracle around 715 BC – although that date, as with most aspects of this passage, is somewhat debated.

Parallel to **6:1** where you have the death of a righteous king - **Uzziah** - as pinning a watershed event; here you have the death of a wicked king – his grandson **Ahaz**

Understand the depths of the apostasy of King Ahaz – his reign marked the end of the Davidic Kingdom experiencing any real glory days until the times of the Messiah – despite temporary and partial reforms under King Hezekiah; Ahaz was a **committed apostate**; he had led the nation deeper into idolatry – **2 Kings 16:2-4**; but most importantly, when offered grace and mercy as the Lord came to him in Is. 7 willing to provide a miraculous sign, he stubbornly persisted in his reliance upon pagan nations rather than faith in the covenant God.

Gracious for God to provide His revelation during such dark days. The nation was surely at one of its lowest points.

GOD'S TWO FOLD WARNING TO HIS ENEMIES:

I. (:29-30a) DO NOT GLOAT PREMATURELY – GOD'S KINGDOM WILL TRIUMPH

II. (:30b-31) INSTEAD BEWAIL YOUR IMPENDING DOOM – GOD'S ENEMIES WILL PERISH

Again, the main purpose for God providing such a warning is to encourage His own people, so vs. 32 will be the **Application** to the faithful

I. (:29-30a) DO NOT GLOAT PREMATURELY – GOD'S KINGDOM WILL TRIUMPH

A. Gloating Would Be Premature – Based on Faulty Evaluation

“Do not rejoice, O Philistia, all of you, Because the rod that struck you is broken;”

Philistines called *the uncircumcised* in **Judges 15:18** by Samson – a term of derision; “*all of you*” -- 5 major gated cities (Zeph. 2:4) comprising the Philistines to the west and south of Jerusalem in that very fertile area along the coast of the Mediterranean – Ashkelon (only one located directly on the coast), Gaza, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron
Taunting was nothing new to them – remember Goliath

Identification of this “rod” is critical: [Brian Borgman very helpful here]

- 1) older commentators for the most part point to **Davidic kingdom**
 - natural link to the significance of death of King Ahaz in vs. 28
- 2) newer commentators for the most part point to **Assyria** (cf. E. J. Young)
 - earlier reference in chap. 10 to rod that God used to punish His people as being Assyria
 - because of the previous verses dealing with judgment against Assyria
 - because Ahaz had not been exerting any power over the Philistines
 - because the army coming from the north is assumed to be that of Assyria
 - because of difficulties seeing the imagery of a serpent connected with Messiah

Arguments in favor of Davidic Kingdom:

- Philistines looking back at their history and seeing the culmination of all of the defeats they had experienced at the hands of King David and his followers

Must have the historical background of the constant antagonism and warfare between the Philistines and the nation Israel:

Judges 13-16 (remember our studies earlier) – days of Samson – vs. 5 “*he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.*” Ended up in captivity – being mocked by the enemies of God – but they rejoiced prematurely – the story ended with Samson grabbing the two pillars and bringing down the house upon the Philistine big shots

1 Sam. 5:3 – Another example of premature taunting of God and His kingdom; thinking that the rod was broken utterly

Fast forward to the days of Saul – **1 Samuel 13** – Jonathan made a successful raid on the garrison that was in Geba so that the Philistines became incensed and mobilized their forces against Saul; caused panic on the part of Saul – did not respond in faith; vv. 19ff – Philistines

controlled all the iron and steel – program of arms control – did not allow for any blacksmiths in Israel – a true monopoly

Things come to a head in the confrontation between David and Goliath; **17:26** “*What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should taunt the armies of the living God.*”

1 Sam. 18:25 – David wants to marry Michal, Saul’s daughter; accepts the challenge of providing the dowry price of 100 foreskins of the Philistines – doubles the challenge and comes back with 200 foreskins – a bloody mess – Philistines were constantly being abused by David

2 Chr. 28: 18-22 – Things have flip flopped at the time of Ahaz – so that now the Philistines have made some inroads and actually settled in some of the outlying cities of Judah; vs. 19 – the Lord was humbling Ahaz – what a low point – cause for rejoicing on the part of the Philistines; they felt with the death of Ahaz they would continue to put Judah under their dominion;

Borgman: Ahaz gave some tribute but was not helped but bullied; Ahaz gives up territory to a little tiny territory to the west that has never had the prominence; When Ahaz dies; they start to make a move on Hezekiah who follows; guise of alliance against Assyria to help Judah regain national sovereignty; Lesson: you don’t make deals with Philistines;

That’s the historical background

- language used is consistent with Exodus imagery of Moses’ **rod** turning into a **serpent** (**Exod 4:1-2; 7:10-12**)

Douglas Van Dorn: Function and purpose of the rod and the snake: Moses had a shepherd staff with hook on the end; to keep the sheep safe; fend off attacking enemies; uphold Moses when he got tired on his journeys; his most important instrument for his life’s work; as Moses has a shepherd’s staff that he can control, God has Moses as his staff to use for His work; mediator for doing all sorts of miracles; ushering in plagues; parting the Red Sea with staff; bringing water from rock; etc. Isaiah talks about a different sort of staff – this rod was primarily for a weapon; **Ps. 23** – “*Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me*”; **Is. 10:5**; people are God’s instruments and they will do God’s bidding; rod can be used for discipline or punishment; **Ps. 89:32**; God struck David with rod of discipline to get him back on the right path

- linking serpent to the Messiah consistent with **Numbers 21:9** and **John 3:14**

- no way that the Assyrian power and threat has been diminished at this time; in fact the Philistines are trying to persuade Judah to enter into an alliance to defend against Assyria

God’s kingdom and His promises may look “*broken*” – but don’t be fooled --

Your life may seem **broken** in some area – but don’t give up or lose hope; the Lord can raise you up to victory

B. Growing Strength of Davidic Kingdom Leadership

1. Serpent’s Root = Ahaz – the immediate Davidic dynasty

“For from the serpent’s root”

Scriptures full of mixed metaphors – especially in poetic sections like this
Snake is very subtle – you don't see it right away; lying in wait and sneaking about on the ground where it cannot be easily seen until it quickly strikes and bites you with its fatal poison

2. Serpent's Shoot = "viper" = Hezekiah
"a viper will come out,"

Serpent might have seemed dead ... but watch out; don't stick your hand down that hole

3. Serpent's Fruit = "flying serpent" = Messiah – the ultimate Davidic dynasty
"And its fruit will be a flying serpent."

Is. 30:6 – directed against Egypt – but look at how similar the context is – relying on other nations instead of on the Lord

What is more impossible or more terrifying than a **flying serpent**??

We don't know what type of end times fulfillment there will be in the Day of the Lord in preparation for the millennial kingdom – that may be why we have so much difficulty with some of these prophecies in Isaiah 13-23

C. Gracious Provision for God's Dependent People – Imagery of the Good Shepherd invoked

1. Food
"And those who are most helpless will eat,"

The poorest of the poor – the firstborn of the poor --
This food was not acquired on the basis of personal strength and sufficiency

2. Safety
"And the needy will lie down in security;"

Conditions that only will apply in the millennial kingdom
God undertakes for the poor and needy who trust in Him

Ps. 72:13 *"He will have compassion on the poor and needy, and the lives of the needy he will save."*

Ezek. 34:11-16

Who tends to gloat prematurely in our day and culture?

- the scientists and evolutionists who have consigned God's Word to the scrap heap of intellectual suicide – What would Darwin say today since no transitional forms have been discovered

- those who mock the prophecies of the second coming of Christ –

- the rich who think that their future is now secure

- the sophisticated media who thinks they have the answers to the world's problems – until they realize they can't even nurture their own children

- the professors of our elite educational institutions who live in ivory towers of their own pride and self importance

- the rulers of the kingdoms of this earth who imagine that their power is intrinsic to them and will grant them lasting significance

II. (:30b-31) INSTEAD BEWAIL YOUR IMPENDING DOOM – GOD’S ENEMIES WILL PERISH

A. No Food or Safety for God’s Enemies

1. No Food or Remaining Root

“I will destroy your root with famine,”

When root has been destroyed, there is no more hope for revival.

2. No Safety or Remnant

“And it will kill off your survivors.”

B. No Hope of Deliverance – Just Anguish and Terror

1. Cry of Anguish

“Wail, O gate; cry, O city;”

Is. 13:6-7

Gate is the location where the respected elders of the city should be able to gather and enjoy the respect of the people; the city should be impregnable

2. Broken Spirit – no more heart to put up a fight; resigned to defeat

“Melt away, O Philistia, all of you;”

C. No Weakness in the Coming Invasion

1. Concentration of Invading Forces – a huge mass creating a dustbowl

“For smoke comes from the north,”

Could be from Assyria in the near term; but could be from Judah in the end times

Possibly smoke from other cities that have been leveled – but they would probably be too far away to see;

More likely the dust stirred up from such a massive force on the move and rapidly approaching

Bad enough to suffer a dust storm of invading locusts – but a barbaric, savage enemy that will show no mercy is a force to be dreaded

2. Coordination of Invading Forces

“And there is no straggler in his ranks.”

Well connected forces; no isolation; all working together and advancing rapidly

(:32) APPLICATION TO GOD’S PEOPLE: TRUST THE ALL SUFFICIENT SAVIOR

A. Pressure to Compromise Must Be Repelled

“How then will one answer the messengers of the nation?”

Shows that this oracle had primary application to God's own people; intended for their encouragement and benefit

What should be the response of God's people?

B. Roots of Salvation Must be Relied Upon

"That the LORD has founded Zion,"

Dangerous for nations to fight against Zion

How did you get started in the Christian life? You must experience victory in the same vein ...
Salvation is totally of the Lord

Col. 2:6 *"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him"*

Gal 3 – *"Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?"*

C. Rest in the Savior is the Secure Solution

"And the afflicted of His people will seek refuge in it."

The Lord always sees the afflictions of His people

Where do we turn for refuge?

Sometimes we say: "All we can do is pray" – as if that is our last and weakest option – when really it should be our constant priority and only hope for victory

Is. 28:16 *"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed."*

Psalm 46 – Lord is the refuge for His people

Beall: The Assyrians would indeed come and overtake the Philistines (under Sargon II–722-705 B.C.–see **Isa 20:1**, which indicates that in 711 Sargon's general, Tartan, defeated Ashdod), as the smoke "*from the north*" (v 31), a well organized army from Assyria, overwhelmed the city. . . V 32 expresses the main message for Judah: when the Philistine envoys come and desire you to make a league with them, do not do so—for they will soon be nothing. It is the Lord who has founded Zion, and Judah's afflicted should find refuge only in her (see also **Isa 28:16**).

Constable: This oracle came to Isaiah in the year that King Ahaz died, namely, 715 B.C. The dating of prophecies is rare in Isaiah, so probably this date has some bearing on the interpretation of the oracle. . . The "*rod*" and the "*serpent*" could refer to Shalmaneser V, who laid siege to Samaria and dominated Israel for so long; and the "*viper*" and "*flying serpent*" could be Sargon II, who followed Shalmaneser. This setback led the Philistines to think that this enemy would not oppress them any longer. But Isaiah warned that the oppressor was not gone forever. A worse enemy would come from that nation in the future, probably Assyria or Babylon (v. 29). Only the poorest of the people would survive the coming enemy. Most of the Philistines would starve or be slaughtered (v. 30). . . Sargon II the Assyrian invaded Philistia in 712 B.C., and in 701 B.C. another Assyrian, Sennacherib, punished anti-Assyrian elements in Philistia.

CONCLUSION:

God's enemies certainly rejoiced to see the seemingly broken rod of Christ dying on the cross ...

But they should have taken note of God's promise from **Gen. 3:15** "*He shall bruise you on the head*" while all you can do is "*bruise him on the heel*"

They should have taken note of God's promise from **Genesis 49:10** "*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*"

Talk about celebrating prematurely! Remember the victorious words of the famous Easter hymn:

Up from the grave he arose;
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain,
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

BANK ON GOD'S PROMISES FOR THE FUTURE RATHER THAN THE GLOOMY PROSPECTS IN THE PRESENT

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When things look the darkest, how can we encourage ourselves?
- 2) Where does it look like God's kingdom is in trouble today and that these are the worst of times?
- 3) Are we resting in the Savior for all of our nourishment and security?
- 4) How do we respond to pressures to compromise our biblical convictions and Christian worldview?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: The Babylon oracle revealed that world history, even in its most threatening and climactic forms, is so organized that the people of God are cared for. The Philistia oracle confirmed this by insisting that the Davidic promises would be kept, and the Moab oracle corrects any impression that the hope expressed in the Davidic promises is exclusivist.

Brian Borgman: The Oracle Against Philistia (Pt. 1)

To be a Philistine is not a good thing; term for somebody who lacks good manners; derogatory term; enemy of Israel for many years;

Historical background: You can't just open the bible and understand any passage because you have the Holy Spirit; it takes work; During the Assyrian reign, Philistia was one of the great political agitators; the wart under Assyria's saddle; that was all they were; 734 Gath refused to pay tribute to Assyria and was sacked; 720 conspired with Egypt and defeated by Sargon II at Gaza (one of the other 5 principal cities); 711 Ashdod was central to a Palestinian uprising; sacked in 701 by Sennacherib; Ahaz died in 715 – he was conspiring with Syria; he is the weak link of the Davidic dynasty; a monument of apostasy and unbelief – death blow to the Davidic dynasty; from David's time to Ahaz, Philistia had been at a disadvantage – under Israel's thumb; but once Ahaz comes to power, Philistia has the advantage; **2 Chr. 28: 5-21** – focus on vv. 18-22; this type of invasion had not happened since the days of David; *“they settled there”* in the southern kingdom;

“in the year that King Ahaz died” – cf. 6:1; Uzziah was good king with long rule; now we go to a wicked king's death; Ahaz is utterly wicked – not just because of his idolatry; God had tried to show him kindness; offered second chance which was unbelievable; but Ahaz showed grossly false piety; what makes a person utterly wicked is how they continue to turn their back on outstretched offer of a merciful God; brought severe consequences to the house of David;

“an oracle came to me” – ends up being an indirect promise to the remnant despite the wickedness of the covenant people; *“But God”* = sermon by Martin Lloyd Jones; in spite of such wickedness God still preserved His faithfulness to the Davidic promises; Isaiah's commission involved a ministry of hardening and reprobation leading to a famine in the land of hearing the Word of the Lord; but even in the midst of the judgment of God on His visible people, God is faithful to His remnant; look who followed Ahaz = Hezekiah has passion for Word of God and brings reform to the nation; don't be a pessi- millennialist; Our God always triumphs; He never goes down for the count; he lets the game look lost, but it is rigged; brink of disaster in order to bring light out of darkness; people probably looked at Ahaz and said things can't get much worse than this; every generation sees the darkness of its own generation but God can always turn on the light; we don't know darkness like Martin Luther knew darkness and ecclesiastical corruption; God may revive us in these days; don't be pessimistic; God will not let his remnant starve

“don't rejoice, O Philistia; each and every one of you” – identify first of all the rod that is broken; many commentators say it is Assyria – chap. 10 makes that reference (E. J. Young) – it is the **house of David**; 2 things in the context:

- 1) obvious connection to vs. 28 – King Ahaz died – what is the significance of mentioning his death unless it is connected
- 2) now through the rest of the passage Isaiah is going to use Exodus language which would not fit Assyria

Assyria would be tempted to rejoice – house of David had been successfully against them since David slew Goliath – a little boy killing their champion with a rock; God is with this little boy; 1 Samuel – David just keeps pummeling the Philistines even though they keep coming back for more; David charged with going and getting 100 foreskins to win wife; goes and gets 200 foreskins; captured ark of covenant and had all sorts of plagues; the battle belongs to the Lord – He will have victory over the Philistines – not any boy or king or ruler; Philistines paying tribute to southern kingdom at one point; Ahaz had brought Judah into vassalage with Syria; promising servitude in trade for protection; ungodly alliances weaken the fabric of a nation; [we don't do anything without UN's permission]

Gen. 49:10 – the rod will not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes; that rod will not be completely broken; may have a fracture ... but Prince of Peace will come; serpents don't have roots and fruit; Ex.4 – time of Moses and Aaron you have rods and serpents together; take that rod and throw it on the ground and it turned into a serpent; Ex. 7 – sure hope it works this time; Pharaoh's magicians tried to duplicate deed but snake of Moses ate up their snakes – supremacy of God over all the gods of Egypt; That very rod on the ground is going to turn into a serpent – 3 stages:

1) serpent – Davidic govt of immediate future -- King Hezekiah follows Ahaz – Davidic dynasty will continue to grow

2) viper --

3) flying serpent – Davidic govt of ultimate future -- Messiah -- progression of strength and greater vigor and deadly menace to its foes -- God's power resides in the rod and the promises God has given; Numbers and John 3 show that the serpent is not an inappropriate symbol for Messiah – reptile, dragon

Watch out with things that may look broken – power of God still resident

Vs. 30 -- “*the firstborn poor though they be*” – Ex. 4:22 – God identifies nation Israel as His first born; they will be in a helpless and destitute situation; but they will eat;

Lie down in green pastures with security – Ps. 77:20

Exodus language continuing

These patterns are fixed in Scripture; typology

Wait for the outstretched arm of Jehovah – that is all that anyone can do – but don't minimize that like saying “All we can do is pray” – that is the best that one can do!!

That is not the posture of weakness, but anticipation; if you have lived in war-time you could appreciate the blessing of eating in security

God gets nasty with the Philistines here;

Erasmus: “Let God be good”; Luther: “Let God be God” – nastiness and all;

The root of the remnant and the branch = the Messiah – glorious thing for people of God;

Absolute contrast of contrasts – God will be faithful to the root of his remnant, but the root of the Philistines will starve; survivor is another remnant term – God will kill their survivors;

Gates = strength of the city

Wail and Cry – this is not a message of hope for Philistia

Melt away = **Ex. 15:15** lose heart so that you have no more will to fight; one of the signs of Joshua's conquests; their desire to fight against you will melt away into nothingness

Smoke from north = Assyrian invasion;

The army will be so immense that there will be no gaps – no isolated soldiers; no straggler

Philistia will be pressing Hezekiah for a reply – if we go down, you are going down too so you better lock arms with us to fight the Assyrians

The answer is trust in the Lord who founded Zion; the king of Assyria will be called back home before he can enter into Jerusalem; God kills 185,000 of them at one time; Zion is untouchable as God's city; Ps. 87; Is. 66:1 – redeemed Gentiles can end up as citizens of Zion

Phil Pockras: Against Philistia

They had been a troubler of Israel a long time ago in the time of the judges; Samson was used to partly deliver the people; God rose up David whom he used to smash the power of Philistia; but now a small resurgence; Power and prestige of Judah had taken a nosedive during reign of

wicked Ahaz who foolishly trusted in the Assyrians; controlled the weapons by killing off the blacksmiths; you had to go to Philistia if you wanted iron and steel implements; Judah's decline led to rejoicing on part of Philistia; but that rejoicing would be cut off; their end was near; cf. elderly declining in health – going down and down, rally for a couple of days, and then quickly die; God was sending a final destroyer; calls Uzziah the serpent and thinks the army from the north comes from Judah; complete destruction all the way to the root; use RoundUp – chemicals go all the way to the root and kills the whole plant;

In contrast to this destruction is God talking about the security of believers in this life; there will be peace in the land of the godly and general prosperity; the poorest of the poor will have enough to eat; people wish for these blessings and yet reject Christ, the source of these blessings; king dies and other foreign dignitaries visit to show their respect and convey condolences; cf. delegation from Babylon congratulating Hezekiah upon defeat of Assyrians – he did not give credit to God but showed them all his might and wealth; God sent Isaiah to ask: “What did the Babylonians see?” Everything that would eventually be taken away by the Babylonians; This is what Hezekiah should have answered – The Lord establishes His people

Douglas Van Dorn: Rods and Snakes – Condemnation or Comfort

Movement from a rod to a snake; Exodus provides insight; the function and the purpose of the rod and the snake

Snake: Why does the rod become a snake? Look at what snakes do? Sneak about on the ground, seeking their prey; strike quickly by biting with poisonous venom, strangling or eating whole; the outcome for Pharaoh is not going to be a happy one so; a very imminent sort of death and God will win; by picking it up by the tail, Moses shows he is in control;

Location of Philistia; 1/10 size of Judah; directly to the west along the Mediterranean Sea; 5 key cities; modern Gaza is today the Gaza strip; arch nemesis of Israel; Why would God want the Philistines to be free from Ahaz? In punishment against wickedness of Ahaz; Sign that God gave was one of destruction and yet a remnant; flying serpent does not just lie in the grass but actively flies against its prey; destruction of Philistines assured; land of idols and immorality; God has promised He is going to destroy His enemies; only left with warning of destruction -- no hope of covenantal love; yet comfort for Hezekiah and God's people

Application: do not make alliances with the world or the ways of our nation; what good will it do you? You will end up wailing and howling like the Philistines; must trust in the Lord alone

TEXT: Isaiah 15:1 – 16:14

TITLE: JUDGMENT AGAINST MOAB – WEEPING FOR THE LOST

BIG IDEA:

PRIDEFUL IDOLATERS SHOULD STIR OUR HEARTS TO COMPASSION AS THEY FACE GRIEVOUS DEVASTATION FOR THEIR REJECTION OF REFUGE IN CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

This morning God is going to call us to examine our heart towards the lost. You need to be honest with yourself and ask God to remove any veil of self deception and let you see your true inner spirit. When we are confronted with the prideful resistance of sinners to the gospel of God's grace, how do we respond?

- Often we are **self righteous** – imagining that we are somehow morally superior and would never oppose God in such a stubborn and futile fashion. Except for God's mercy and compassion, we would also be destroyed. (**Luke 13:1-5**)
- We tend to be **judgmental** – as if our mission is more to condemn sinners to their eternal destiny in hell rather than to come alongside as fellow sinners and testify to the magnitude of God's grace and mercy; remember that Christ defined the mission of His first coming of that of offering sinners salvation rather than judging; there will be time for judging at His second coming (**Luke 9:53-56; John 3:17**)
- We are quick to be **revengeful** – especially when we feel we have been personally wronged – actually rejoicing that the wicked will receive their just desserts (**1 Pet. 2:18-23**)

But how does the **heart of God** respond? What type of compassion did the Lord Jesus evidence toward the lost?

Luke 13:34 “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gather her brood under her wings, and you would not have it.*”

God is not some impersonal Force; not a watchmaker who set everything in motion and is looking at the events of history dispassionately . . . very **emotional** passage; we tend to be **analytical** in our approach to the Scriptures – grasping the Big Idea and the flow of the passage; don't lose the **emotional impact** of the Word of God on our hearts

Van Parunak: Big Idea: Faced with lamentable destruction, Moab refuses the salvation that God offers her because of her pride and commitment to her false gods.

Oswalt: The thrust of the oracle is to discourage any who would be tempted to join with proud Moab for purposes of mutual security. Moab will be reduced to the most abject circumstances and will herself be forced to rely on Judah's only hope: the Messiah (16:5).

PRIDEFUL IDOLATERS SHOULD STIR OUR HEARTS TO COMPASSION AS THEY FACE GRIEVOUS DEVASTATION FOR THEIR REJECTION OF REFUGE IN CHRIST

Chiastic structure once again – **16:1-5** – God’s offer of refuge in Judah lies at the heart of the passage

(:1) PRELUDE: FIRST PRONOUNCEMENT OF DEVASTATION

A. Introduction to the Oracle

“The oracle concerning Moab.”

History of Moab:

Location: east side of the Dead Sea – about 30 miles by 30 miles; some cities above the **Arnon River** that were contested by the Israelite tribes of Reuben and Gad; down south to the **waters of Nimrim**

Beginnings: Lot’s incest – **Gen. 19:30-38** – upon being delivered from Sodom and Gomorrah; oldest daughter schemed to have children by her father – Moabites; younger daughter – Ammonites – like cousin nations; What a contrast to last week where we saw the emphasis on Judah as having been **founded by the Lord**

Conflicts with Judah:

- On the way to the promised land, they refused safe passage; king of Moab Balak hired Balaam to curse them (Num. 22:24)
- In the time of the Judges – Eglon attacked Israel and captured Jericho and oppressed the land for 18 years (Jud. 3:12)
- Story of Ruth who was from Moab – extension of God’s compassion and grace to the Gentiles
- Moab was conquered at the time of King David and its citizens forced to work as servants for the royal building projects (2 Sam. 8:2)

Beall: Moab is located east of the Dead Sea. The Moabites were descendants from Moab, the son of Lot and his oldest daughter (Gen. 19:31-37). The Moabites occupied the land east of the Dead Sea, going from the Arnon River to the Zered River (forming the border with Edom on the south). The land above the Arnon was contested between Israel (esp. Reuben and Gad) and Moab. Relations between Israel and the Moabites were often quite rocky. Moses was commanded by God not to vex them when Israel passed through on their way to Canaan (Deut 2:8-9, 18-19, 29). However, it was Balak, king of Moab, who hired Balaam to curse Israel (Num 22-24), and the Moabite women may have joined with the Midianites to seduce Israel’s men (Num 31:15-17). Later, during the judgeship period, Moab’s king Eglon attacked Israel, captured Jericho, and afflicted Israel for 18 years (Judg 3:12). The story of Ruth shows that there was free travel between Judah and Moab during that time. Saul fought Moab (1 Sam 14:47), and Moab was finally defeated by David (2 Sam 8:2, 12). Solomon, however, built an altar to Chemosh, the god of Moab (1 Kgs 11:7-8). In Ahab’s day, Moab’s king Mesha paid tribute to him, but after Ahab’s death (853 B.C.) Mesha revolted against Israel. That revolt was put down by Joram and Jehoshaphat (2 Kgs 3:5-27). **The Moabite Stone** (made of basalt, found in 1868 by a German missionary, and now in the Louvre in Paris), erected by Mesha, contains 34 lines of ancient Moabite (a language very close to Hebrew), which commemorate Mesha’s revolt from Israel after the death of Ahab. The name Omri is even found on the Moabite Stone (and also possibly “house of David”). The destruction prophesied here by Isaiah (and also by Amos 2:1-3) occurred at the **hands of Assyria**. Some refer this destruction to 732

B.C. under **Tiglath-Pileser**, while others think it refers to **Sennacharib's invasion** in 701 B.C.

Van Parunak: This oracle reads like God's response to the Moabite Stone. "Mesha, you boasted of conquering all these cities for Kemosh, but the time will come when I will lay them waste." We can understand the main thrust of the oracle without knowing of the Moabite stone, but if we have read the stone, we can hear echoes of it throughout these chapters.

Why does the Lord seem to have **greater compassion** for the plight of the Moabites?

Deut. 2:9 "*Do not harass Moab, nor provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the sons of Lot as a possession.*"

Seems to go back to His **promises to Lot**

How can the Lord both **punish** to the point of devastation and **weep** for the people?

Cannot compartmentalize the Lord into different emotional boxes; He is a complex unity; we call it the **indivisibility** of His attributes; His love works together with His holiness and His justice and His mercy and His compassion at all times; too deep for us to comprehend

Ezekiel 18:21-23; 32 "'Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,' declares the Lord God, 'rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?'" **Ezek.33:11**

B. Two Major Cities Targeted for Instant Ruin (part to represent the whole)

1. Ar

"Surely in a night Ar of Moab is devastated and ruined;"

Same word that Isaiah uses in **6:5** – proclaiming *Woe* upon himself for he is *ruined, undone*

2. Kir

"Surely in a night Kir of Moab is devastated and ruined."

Van Parunak: The repetition of "*in the night*" suggests the suddenness and unexpectedness of the judgment, "*as a thief in the night.*" Mesha boasts of a night-time attack against Israelite Nebo in which he killed the entire population, and this may be an echo.

I. (15:2-9) FIRST LAMENT OVER MOAB – EXTENT OF THE DEVASTATION

A. (:2a) Devastation Exposes the Impotency of Their False Religion

"*They have gone up to the temple and to Dibon, even to the high places to weep.*"

Tone of weeping and wailing introduced right at the outset – more tears spilled in this passage than any other

Constable: Dibon was the site of a temple to the Moabite god Chemosh. Many of the people would go there to bewail Chemosh's inability to save them.

B. (:2b-4) The People Lament – Worldly Sorrow Over Sin's Consequences; No Genuine Repentance

"*Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba; Everyone's head is bald and every beard is cut off. In their streets they have girded themselves with sackcloth; On their housetops and in their squares Everyone is wailing, dissolved in tears. Heshbon and Elealeh also cry out,*

Their voice is heard all the way to Jahaz; Therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud; His soul trembles within him.”

Oswalt: typical signs of mourning and lament (22:1; 2 Sam. 3:31; Jer. 4:8; 41:5; Lam. 2:10)

Van Parunak: The cities named in 2-4 are north of the Arnon. They are the territory of Reuben and Gad, which Moab had taken away. Now Moab mourns their loss.

Motyer: The heaping up of names is characteristic of Isaiah . . . and here creates the impression of widespread disaster. . . The tragedy is so overwhelming that the military can only turn to helpless sorrow.

C. (:5a) The Lord Laments – Heart of Compassion

“My heart cries out for Moab;”

Should we identify the one lamenting here as the Lord’s prophet, Isaiah, or the Lord Himself? Look down in **vs. 9** and you see that the same first person pronoun is definitely used of the Lord as the one who is bringing the judgment. That should settle the question. Same person in both contexts

Does our heart cry out for the Moabites in our midst? Do we care that people are headed for eternal punishment without hope and without any refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ?

D. (:5b-9) Devastation Reaches Throughout the Land – Fleeing Fugitives Find No Rest

“His fugitives are as far as Zoar and Eglath-selishiyah, For they go up the ascent of Luhith weeping; Surely on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of distress over their ruin. For the waters of Nimrim are desolate. Surely the grass is withered, the tender grass died out, there is no green thing. Therefore the abundance which they have acquired and stored up they carry off over the brook of Arabim. For the cry of distress has gone around the territory of Moab, Its wail goes as far as Eglaim and its wailing even to Beer-elim. For the waters of Dimon are full of blood; Surely I will bring added woes upon Dimon, A lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon the remnant of the land.”

Van Parunak: The cities are now south of the Arnon, in Moab's proper territory. The nation loses not only the cities it had taken from Israel, but also its own territory. . . What is remarkable here is the repetition of the first person in v. 9. It identifies the first-person speaker as the one bringing judgment—the Lord! With the Gentiles, as with Israel, judgment is his strange work (28:21). He will certainly judge, but he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek 33:11).

Constable: The Moabite refugees would move from place to place trying to find security. Their movement would be generally south, so the enemy may have descended from the north. The whole country would suffer devastation. Even though people would flee, they would not escape destruction. A lion is frequently an image of a fierce, implacable attacker in biblical poetry (v. 9; cf. Amos 3:12).

Motyer: These verses are a long list of what touches the heart of God, who weeps as he smites. The grief of the judge of all the earth is one of the two striking truths of this oracle. The other is that all this total loss and suffering arises from the single sin of pride. . . The *lion* was used as a descriptive human title, denoting a fierce, implacable attacker destroying alike fugitives and

those who remain in the land.

Oswalt: The major emphasis is upon the effect, which will be that the Moabites will be so demoralized that their only response will be **weeping** and **flight**.

II. (16:1-5) OFFER OF REFUGE IN JUDAH

A. (:1) Condition of Submission (Offer of the Lord)

“Send the tribute lamb to the ruler of the land, From Sela by way of the wilderness to the mountain of the daughter of Zion.”

Send the lamb in a different direction – to Judah rather than to northern Israel (**2 Kings 3:4-5**)
“Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and used to pay the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wood of 100,000 rams. But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.”

Young: The Moabites know how to send the tribute to Zion; they are well aware of how God can be reached. In historical times the tribute had been sent to Samaria; now it is to be sent to Jerusalem herself, for in Jerusalem the Lord may be found.

Heb. 9:22 *“Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”*

John 1:29 Testimony of John the Baptist – *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

Difficult for prideful people to surrender their perceived autonomy – really they are under the thumb of Satan

Col. 1:13-14 *“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

B. (:2-3a) Call for a Decision (addressed to the leaders of Moab)

“Then, like fleeing birds or scattered nestlings, The daughters of Moab will be at the fords of the Arnon. ‘Give us advice, make a decision;’”

Motyer: Refugees are the most pathetic sight in war but girls suffer the cruelest fate.

We see newsreels today of the pitiful conditions of refugees; strung along the road; carrying their few possessions; no place left to call home; under the pressure of attacking, marauding forces

C. (:3b-4) Plea for Refuge (addressed to Judah)

“Cast your shadow like night at high noon; Hide the outcasts, do not betray the fugitive. Let the outcasts of Moab stay with you; Be a hiding place to them from the destroyer.

For the extortioner has come to an end, destruction has ceased, Oppressors have completely disappeared from the land.”

Introducing the idyllic rule that will emerge in Judah in the millennial kingdom; transition phrase

D. (:5) Promise of Messianic Administration in Lovingkindness and Faithfulness and Justice and Righteousness

“A throne will even be established in lovingkindness, And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David; Moreover, he will seek justice And be prompt in righteousness.”

- Combination of ruling in authority and in lovingkindness
Not the type of rule that was modeled in the Middle East
- Combination of judging in faithfulness and righteousness

All emanating from the “*tent of David*” – the Messianic reign of Christ

III. (16:6-12) SECOND LAMENT OVER MOAB – CULPABILITY FOR HER DEVASTATION -- FALLEN BECAUSE OF PRIDE AND IDOLATRY

A. (:6) Fallen Because of Pride – Exposing the Self Deception of Idle Boasts

“We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride; Even of his arrogance, pride, and fury; His idle boasts are false.”

Jer. 48:7 (parallel passage) *“For because of your trust in your own achievements and treasures”*

Jer. 8:29 *“We have heard of the pride of Moab – he is very proud – of his haughtiness, his pride, his arrogance and his self-exaltation”*

How does Pride prevent sinners from seeking refuge in Jesus Christ?

- Pride puffs one up with a sense of false importance – based on Worth and Works
- Pride creates a spirit of independence that refuses to submit to the Lordship of Christ
- Pride prefers its own wisdom to the revelation of God
- Pride seeks its own agenda rather than the interests of the kingdom of God
- God resists the proud but gives grace only to the humble

Motyer: In verse 5, four words (love, faithfulness, justice, righteousness) described what the Moabites might have enjoyed. In this verse, four words tell what they chose instead: pride, conceit, pride and insolence.

B. (:7-8) The People Lament -- Worldly Sorrow Over Sin’s Consequences; No Genuine Repentance

“Therefore Moab shall wail; everyone of Moab shall wail. You shall moan for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth As those who are utterly stricken. For the fields of Heshbon have withered, the vines of Sibmah as well; The lords of the nations have trampled down its choice clusters Which reached as far as Jazer and wandered to the deserts; Its tendrils spread themselves out and passed over the sea.”

No more dainty pleasures and sweet pastries; no more joy of wine; complete devastation

C. (:9-11) The Lord Laments – Heart of Compassion

“Therefore I will weep bitterly for Jazer, for the vine of Sibmah; I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh; For the shouting over your summer fruits and your harvest has fallen away. And gladness and joy are taken away from the fruitful field; In

the vineyards also there will be no cries of joy or jubilant shouting, No treader treads out wine in the presses, For I have made the shouting to cease. Therefore my heart intones like a harp for Moab, And my inward feelings for Kir-hareseth.”

Constable: Even when He must judge people, the Lord has pity on them and grieves over the destruction that He must send (cf. Hos. 11:1-9).

D. (:12) Fallen Because of Idolatry – Exposing the Impotency of Their False Religion

“So it will come about when Moab presents himself, When he wearies himself upon his high place, And comes to his sanctuary to pray, That he will not prevail.”

(16:13-14) POSTLUDE: SECOND PRONOUNCEMENT OF DEVASTATION

A. Introduction to the Second Oracle

“This is the word which the LORD spoke earlier concerning Moab. But now the LORD speaks, saying,”

Are we dealing with a different crisis [most commentators] or the same events but with the emphasis on the imminent timing [Motyer]??

B. Precise Timing of the Fulfillment

“Within three years, as a hired man would count them,”

Van Parunak: An indentured worker watches the calendar carefully, and does not work a day longer than the agreement. God's promise of judgment will not linger past its appointed time.

Grogan: refers either to the contract of a laborer with his master (cf. Gen 29:18; Lev 25:50, 53) or to that of a mercenary soldier with his superior. In either case the point is the same, for the exact calculation of the period is important to the transaction. The prophetic ministry did not require any such timed predictions . . . Their fulfillment would, of course, provide additional clear evidence of their authenticity.

C. Extent of the Devastation

1. Glory Exchanged for Humiliation

a. Leadership

“the glory of Moab will be degraded”

b. People

“along with all his great population,”

2. Significance Exchanged for Insignificance

a. Tiny

“and his remnant will be very small”

b. Impotent

“and impotent.”

CONCLUSION:

What is our heart disposition towards the lost today? Too often our eyes are dry when they should be filled with tears.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can you guard against feelings of self righteousness?
- 2) How can you guard against a judgmental spirit?
- 3) How can you pursue loving your enemies instead of seeking revenge?
- 4) How can you tune the harp of your heart to play chords of compassion and mercy towards the lost?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: The prophecy is filled with the names of various cities throughout Moab, far more than the other burdens. This list invites comparison with two other texts:

- Many of these cities are listed in Num 32:3, 34-38 as belonging to Reuben and Gad. Their territory lay north of the Arnon, and Moab lay to the south. That they are now here described as Moabite suggests that Moab conquered them.
- The Moabite Stone (sometimes called the Mesha Stele after its author)¹, an inscription by Mesha king of Moab (2 Kings 3:4-5) about 800 BC, in which he boasts of having captured many of these cities for Kemosh his god.

Constable: The literary structure of this oracle is generally chiasmic, focusing the reader's attention on security in Zion (16:4b-5). It is very difficult to date. One writer believed this invasion took place around 718 B.C. when Sargon the Assyrian descended on the tribal peoples of northwest Arabia (cf. 21:16-17), but this is not at all certain. Another speculated that Tiglath-pileser's 732 B.C. or Sennacherib's 701 B.C. invasions of Moab may have fulfilled this prophecy initially. Moab lay east of Judah and the Dead Sea, between the Arnon and Zered rivers, and occupied an area about 30 miles long and 30 miles wide. The Moabites were more friendly neighbors of Judah than the Edomites or the Ammonites, who also lived east of the Jordan River. Notice the more friendly tone of this oracle compared with the two preceding ones.

James Faris: Moaning for Moab

A scattering of cities referenced throughout the land to give a sense we are speaking of the whole nation; Great emotion in this section; need to understand beginnings of the nation; had the blessing of the Lord in a certain sense; had been told not to disturb their cousins from the family of Abraham in their journey to the Promised Land; Deut. 23:3-4 cursed; not a friendly nation to the people of God; God wants to instruct us in our emotions towards those who are our enemies;

not supposed to be cheering as we see them receiving judgment; our heart needs to be tuned to bring it into harmony with the emotions of God

3 Areas in Which Our Hearts Should be Tuned

1. See the Reality of the Great Destruction God brings about on account of Pride

People leaving their homes and carrying whatever they can; economy is ruined; fleeing as refugees; river full of blood that has been shed; the reality of what God brings to those who reject Him with hardened hearts; we see the justice and judgment of God; don't take this lightly

2. See the Reality of Offer of Escape and Hope

God speaking through the prophet to command them to send a lamb for tribute; their wealth and bargaining chip was sheep; they were shepherders; Offered King Ahab up to 100,000 lambs per year for their freedom; yet here commanded to send one lamb; would have required humility to admit they had nothing and must find their only hope in the God of Jacob; John the Baptist: *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*; 16:1-5 difficult grammatically; ESV gets it right; we see the love of God for the people of Moab; story of Ruth from Moab; come and bow before the Savior

3. See How We Need to Mourn and Weep Over Hardened Hearts

Why shouldn't we cheer that God's enemies are brought low? It is now our duty to love all men, no matter how wicked; this command does not extend to the saints in glory with respect to the damned in Hell; we do now know whom God has elected; he might be our companion in glory; the heart of a true evangelist; think of how the great missionaries have wept over the lost; having a great heart for men; our tears should flow freely; Luke 13:34-35 – compassion of Christ; Ezek. 18:23

David Silversides: The Gospel of God the Only Hope

Preachers tempted to avoid these chapters in Isaiah; lengthy, historical, references that are not well known; a certain complexity; What has that to do with us? Everything in Scripture is relevant; Jer. 48 describes the ruin of Moab more fully – at the hands of the Assyrians and then completed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon; Lot's incest with his eldest daughter Gen. 19:37; movements that spring from a turning away from the truth are the most difficult enemies for the church of God; God's sovereign grace displayed in book of Ruth;

1. The Liability of the Guilty

The ruin of Moab described; two cities destroyed in a night; the lamentation before their idols; but to no avail; people experiencing misery and suffering as they fled; springs are stopped up so land becomes dry and barren; vs. 8 the howling reaches the extremities of the borders of Moab; shows what the God of heaven can do when He judges sin; how much more can He cause weeping and gnashing of teeth in the world to come; without the Lord Jesus you are exposed to the judgment of this God

2. The Cause of Human Guilt

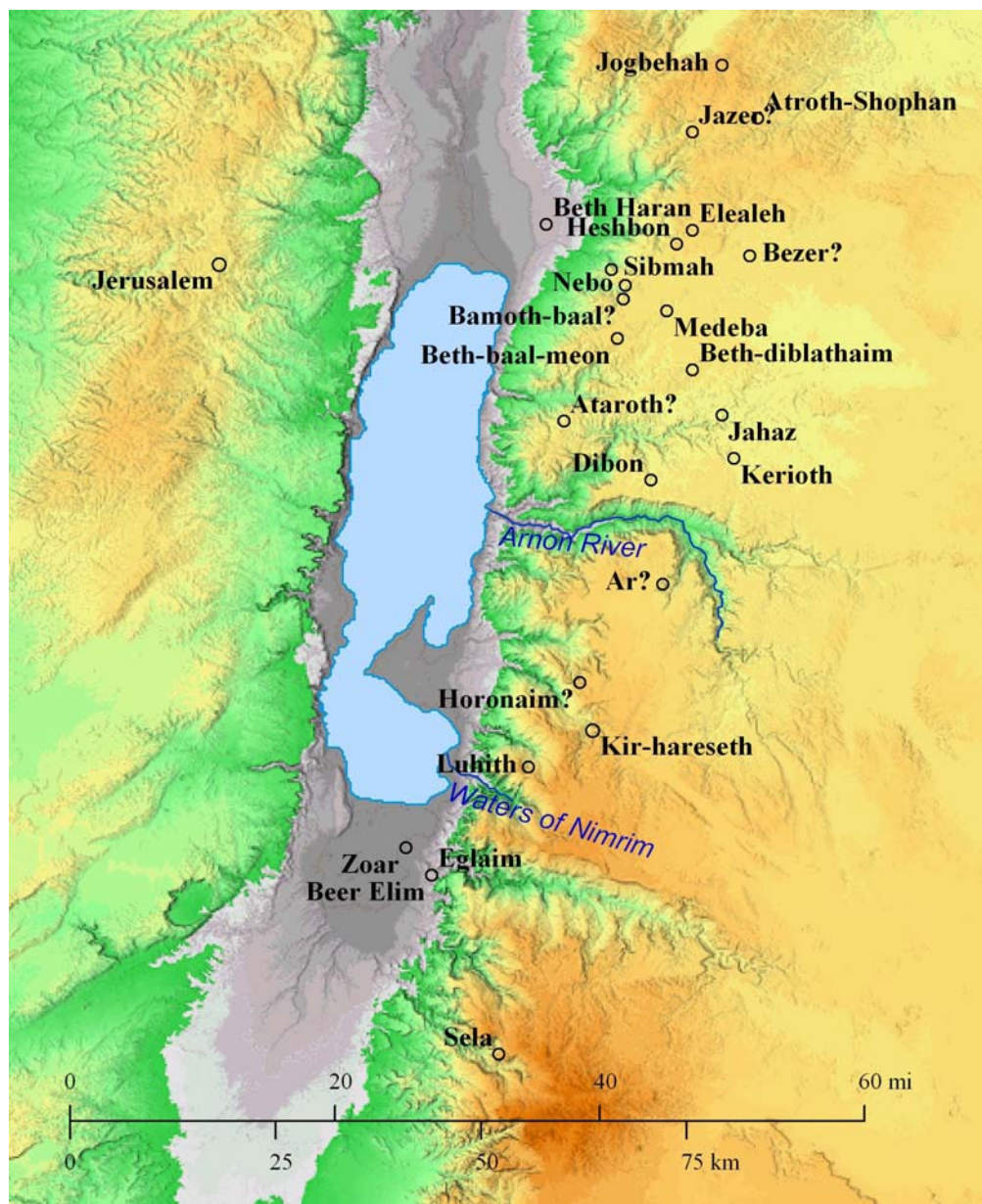
What had Moab done to bring such a visitation of divine wrath? In some ways, nothing out of the ordinary; Pride – led to cruelty and falsehood and pretense that would not stand up in the end; your pride lies behind your delusions that either God doesn't punish sin or my sins are not deserving of such judgment; cf. Adam and Eve trying to hide from God – ridiculous; look at the futility of your own religion; no more rejoicing and singing and joy; they sought the wrong solutions (vs. 12); if you seek for deliverance outside of biblical Christianity you will never find it; they wearied themselves seeking a solution;

3. The One and Only Refuge (16:1-5)

Motyer: If faith sees the present as ordained by God, it sees the future as secure in his sovereign purposes. Love (*hesed*) is the Lord's covenanted love for his people, prompting all he is and all

he does towards them, guaranteeing that he will never let them go, steadfast in all his obligations. . . Here it is the mark of the coming kingdom. That a *throne will be established* is the opposite of what Moab is experiencing, the changing fortunes of human rule; there will be no more fright or flight. *Faithfulness* means reliability or steadiness and is the opposite of fickleness and capriciousness. This is also the mark of the coming king, who will sit enthroned (lit.) “*in the tent of David*”, i.e. he will not be a usurper but one with a true lineage, an undoubted claim. Thirdly, the king will administer his kingdom (lit.) “*judging and seeking justice and swift in righteousness*”. Thus, when the Moabites come in desperate need, there is held out to them, without question, the Messianic best that Zion can offer. Nothing could show more clearly that Messianic faith as Isaiah cherished it was consciously universal.

Van Parunak: Nice map of the region of Moab



TEXT: Isaiah 17:1-14

TITLE: JUDGMENT ON DAMASCUS – DON'T FORGET GOD

BIG IDEA:

DON'T FORGET GOD BECAUSE HE WON'T FORGET YOU – FORGETTING GOD DISHONORS HIM GREATLY BUT DOES NOT CANCEL OUT HIS COVENANTAL REMNANT PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION:

Events of this past month have focused the world's attention on the nation of Syria and its capital city Damascus. Is the U.S. going to launch some type of military strike against Damascus and Syria in the coming days? Can we let a nation use weapons of chemical warfare and not respond in some fashion? On the other hand, how much difference is there from killing people with chemicals vs killing them with other types of weapons? Are other nations going to support such an initiative? What will be the longer term implications of getting involved in their internal conflict? How would things escalate? What are we prepared to do? What are the implications for Israel? It is certainly a complicated situation over there – if we enter into any type of conflict, it is difficult to anticipate any outcome that is favorable to U.S. interests, much less the protection of Israel.

Brigadier General **Salim Idris**, who Sen. John McCain has called a "fine leader" and who leads the Supreme Military Council of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which is supported by the Obama administration, told Al Jazeera in a May 8 video interview that "**Israel is an enemy country**" and that Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad and the Lebanese terrorist group Hizballah are "Israeli collaborators."

<http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/terence-p-jeffrey/us-backed-syrian-rebel-commander-israel-enemy-country-assad-and>

This general thinks that Assad (the current leader of Syria) is a coward for not going to war with Israel! The reality is that all of those Muslim countries hate Israel.

Maybe the Muslim leaders should pay some attention to what the Scriptures say about the ultimate destiny of their countries. We have a text this morning that is essentially ripped right out of this morning's headlines. **What does God have to say about the nation of Syria??**

DON'T FORGET GOD BECAUSE HE WON'T FORGET YOU –

- In Judgment
- In Salvation – as the Remnant

FORGETTING GOD DISHONORS HIM GREATLY BUT DOES NOT CANCEL OUT HIS COVENANTAL REMNANT PROGRAM

(:1a) PRELUDE

"The oracle concerning Damascus."

Context: judgment against the nations – that is why prophet titles this as concerning **Damascus**; they were in an alliance with the northern kingdom which will actually receive more focus here in Chap. 17;

Another name for Syria would be Aram (the Aramaens);

Assyria is a different country farther to the North – the world power at the time that was rolling over other nations and causing Syria and Israel (also known as Ephraim – capital city of Samaria) to form a military alliance for protection.

This was the context for **Isaiah 7** for King Ahaz in the southern kingdom – he ended up seeking an alliance with Assyria to protect him against the Syria-Israel union – trying to pick which dog would win out so that he would end up on the victorious side.

God says: Put your trust totally in Me as your stronghold and fortress and defender and Savior.

Beall: Damascus was a very important city in the ancient world, since it lay squarely on the main land route between Mesopotamia and Egypt. The New International Dictionary of the Bible states that “It is watered by the Barada and the Wady Awaj, Abana, and Pharpar of the OT (2 Kings 5:12 [“Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?” Naaman asked]). A 2,000 foot elevation gives it a delightful climate. Its gardens and olive groves still flourish after millennia of cultivation. Caravan routes from the east, west, and south once crossed in the city, carrying treasures of silks, perfumes, carpets, and foods. It was a rich city whose merchandise was far-famed (Ezek 27:16).

I. (:1b-3) DEVASTATION COMING FOR SYRIA AND ISRAEL

Capital of Syria = Damascus; Capital of Israel or Ephraim = Samaria = “*the fortified city*”

A. (:1b-2) Present Prosperity is No Guarantee of Future Security – Devastation is Coming

“Behold, Damascus is about to be removed from being a city, and it will become a fallen ruin. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; They will be for flocks to lie down in, and there will be no one to frighten them.”

Look at how the nations in the Middle East want to wipe Israel off the face of the map.

Lord can quickly redraw the map of nations

Oswalt: denotes imminent action – So they should look for something to be happening soon

There was a massive destruction in **732 BC** ... but not to the extent that the language of this chapter can be satisfied. We have here another example of short term and long term fulfillment of prophecy. The city of Damascus does not lie in a pile of rubble – it continues to be one of the longest inhabited cities in the world. There is an end time destruction coming that will be the ultimate fulfillment.

B. (:3) Dominion and Glory Can Be Short-Lived – Devastation Will Be Humiliating

“The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim, and sovereignty from Damascus and the remnant of Aram; They will be like the glory of the sons of Israel, ’ Declares the LORD of hosts.”

Look at the departure of the glory of God from the northern kingdom, Israel – the splitting of God’s people over 200 years ago destroyed the unity of the kingdom – the 10 northern tribes under Jeroboam broke off from the oppressive leadership of Rehoboam and the two southern tribes; history of Israel was one of constant wicked leadership – a succession of 19 kings who are each described as wicked – at least the south had the occasional good leader; look how long God put up with Israel before sending her off into the Assyrian captivity

“the fortified city” = Samaria, the capital

722 BC – 10 years later, the Assyrian armies rolled over Ephraim as well

Van Parunak: The joint reference to Damascus and Ephraim shows that the historical context is ch. 7, where Ahaz was choosing between joining their coalition against Assyria, and appealing to Assyria for help against them.

Young: In that word “glory” Isaiah comprises everything which the natural man would boast in. Included are fortresses, leading personalities, mighty troops, power and splendor of weapons. All in which men had vaunted will be taken. The glory will have departed.

Oswalt: the concept of glory in Hebrew carries with it the connotations of permanence, abundance, significance, and reality. The glory of Jacob, as shared by Syria, will be none of these. God will expose to the world that the “glory” of Israel, which she has achieved through her own strength, is nothing but a fraud.

II. (:4-6) GLORY FADING AWAY FOR SYRIA AND THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL – YET A SMALL REMNANT PRESERVED

*“Now it will come about **in that day** that the glory of Jacob will fade,”*

Van Parunak: The order of the three “*in that day*” sections [vv. 4, 7, 9] is negative, then positive, then negative again.

Borgman: Glory of Jacob will get skinny; it will thin out;

3 Images presented to paint the story of this declining glory:

A. Image of the Decline of the Physical Body -- Prosperity Eroding from Fatness to Leanness
“And the fatness of his flesh will become lean.”

Fatness portrayed here as a good and desirable attribute = prosperity; you don’t want to look anorexic

B. Image of Reaper (Assyria) Easily Gathering in the Harvest – of Ephraim and Damascus
It will be even like the reaper gathering the standing grain, as his arm harvests the ears, Or it will be like one gleaning ears of grain in the valley of Rephaim.”

Van Parunak: Assyria will reap Ephraim and Damascus as easily as a reaper gathers the crop at harvest time. They will not be able to offer any resistance. . . Revelation uses this image to describe the day of the Lord, and the gathering of believers together with the destruction of the wicked (**Rev 14:14-20**).

Again: you have the near term threat of the Assyrians in 732 under Tiglath Pilezer, but the language has ultimate fulfillment in the eschatological Day of the Lord

Wikipedia: A valley descending southwest from Jerusalem to the Valley of Elah below, it is an

ancient route from the coastal plain to the Judean Hills, probably named after the legendary race of giants.

Very fertile valley – so much to harvest there

The mention of the place name **Valley of Rephaim** brings immediately to mind dramatic events in the life of the people of Israel, particularly the wars with Israel's mortal enemy, the Philistines, who suffered two decisive defeats here by the Israelite armies under the leadership of their great warrior-king, David, but not before he had first sought the guidance of the God of Israel with the question: Shall I go up to the Philistines? Wilt Thou deliver them into mine hand? (**2 Sam. 5:19**). David's unshakeable faith in his God ensured that the issue would never be in doubt: And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer (**2 Sam. 5:25**). The Valley of Rephaim is about four kilometers southwest of Jerusalem.

http://www.testimony-magazine.org/back/Special_Issues/Oct90/art16.htm

C. Image of Olive Tree Yielding Only a Little Fruit = Faithful Remnant

*“Yet gleanings will be left in it like the shaking of an olive tree, Two or three olives on the topmost bough, Four or five on the branches of a fruitful tree, **Declares the LORD, the God of Israel.**”*

There will not be complete obliteration of God's people

III. (:7-8) FAITH REFOCUSING ON THE ONLY TRUE GOD

A. (:7) Positive Focus – Where to Look for Help

1. Creator God

“In that day man will have regard for his Maker,”

Eschatological timeframe – generic *man* mentioned here – will include people from all nations

2. Covenant God

“And his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel.”

Van Parunak: An unusual verb, meaning “to gaze intently at,” that is, for help. An interesting clue to its meaning is its use in 2 Sam 22:42, and the use of another verb to replace it in the parallel passage Ps 18:42:

2Sa 22:42 *They looked [יִשְׁעוּ from שָׁעָה], but there was none to save; even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.*

Psa 18:41 *They cried [יִשְׁוּעוּ from שָׁוָע], but there was none to save them: even unto the LORD, but he answered them not. . .*

Syria and Ephraim looked to alliances for security. The only true source of security is the Lord.

Isa 45:22 *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

Literally, *“his eyes are toward the Holy One.”* The expression often denotes dependence and subservience:

Psa 123:2 *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.*

B. (:8) Negative Focus – Where Not to Look for Help = Man-Made Idols

“And he will not have regard for the altars, the work of his hands,”

“Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made, even the Asherim and incense stands.”

Beall: Vv 7-8 may refer to the time mentioned in 2 Chron 30:11 when three of the northern tribes did humble themselves and worship the Lord at Hezekiah's invitation. This was in response to the harsh judgment described in vv. 4-6. It is also possible that these verses refer to the end of the tribulation period (compare Isa 2:20-21). At that time, God says, Israel will look to the Lord (the Holy One of Israel) rather than the pagan altars and Asherah poles . . .

IV. (:9-11) ROOT SIN = FORGETTING GOD AND SEEKING SECURITY BY THE ARM OF THE FLESH

A. (:9) Forsaken Destiny = How they ended up despite their prominence

1. Chief Cities

“In that day their strong cities will be like forsaken places in the forest, Or like branches which they abandoned before the sons of Israel;”

What does it feel like to be *forsaken* and *abandoned*?

This is what the Lord experienced for us in our place on the cross

2. Entire Land

“And the land will be a desolation.”

B. (:10a) Forgetful Loyalties = What went wrong at the core

*“For you have forgotten the God of your salvation
And have not remembered the rock of your refuge.”*

Psalm 106 review – 8 Ways in which we tend to forget God – from the history of Israel

I. (:6-12) MEMORY LOSS -- FORSAKING GOD’S GOODNESS

Root problem cropped up again: they *“rebelled”* by the sea; Motivated by Fear

Caused them to doubt the love and faithfulness of God

II. (:13-15) IMPATIENT INDULGENCE -- FORSAKING GOD’S PROVIDENTIAL CARE

unhappy with the menu and with the scheduled meal times

Problem of Contentment and of Faith

III. (:16-18) ENVOIOUS OF GOD’S APPOINTED LEADERS -- FORSAKING GOD’S AUTHORITY

IV. (:19-23) MATERIALISTIC IDOLATRY -- FORSAKING GOD’S GLORY

From worshiping the majestic God of the universe to worshiping a golden calf;

Idolatry = giving the preeminence to something other than God

V. (:24-27) INCESSANT GRUMBLING -- FORSAKING GOD'S PROMISES

1. Discontent -- "*Then they despised the pleasant land*"
2. Lack of Faith -- "*They did not believe in His word*"
3. Spreading Discontent to Others -- "*grumbled in their tents*"
4. Ignoring the Word of God -- "*they did not listen to the voice of the Lord*"

VI. (:28-31) UNHOLY ALLIANCES (RELIGIOUS COMPROMISE) -- FORSAKING GOD'S HOLINESS

VII. (:32-33) ANGRY SELF-WILL -- FORSAKING GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

VIII. (:34-39) FELLOWSHIP WITH THE WORLD -- FORSAKING GOD'S UNIQUENESS

C. (:10b-11) Futile Alliances Infused with Idolatry = How they tried to recover in vain

"Therefore you plant delightful plants and set them with vine slips of a strange god. In the day that you plant it you carefully fence it in, and in the morning you bring your seed to blossom; But the harvest will be a heap in a day of sickness and incurable pain."

Beall: Instead, Israel planted pleasant plants and foreign seedlings--i.e., made foreign alliances with idolatrous nations (as with Syria), and nourished the relationship, but the harvest was ultimately nothing but ruin in the day of sorrow.

Oswalt: No matter how successful one's techniques for forcing the best out of one's life, the harvest will be a bitter disappointment if those techniques avoid dependence upon God. Life's rewards have a way of slipping through the fingers of those who have grasped at those rewards, or they suddenly lose significance when they have been seized (40:24). But in God, life is given back to those who have surrendered it for love of him (65:21, 22; Matt. 16:25).

V. (:12-14) GOD TRIUMPHING ULTIMATELY OVER ISRAEL'S PILLAGING ENEMIES

A. (:12-13a) The Nations Roar and Rumble

"Alas, the uproar of many peoples who roar like the roaring of the seas, and the rumbling of nations who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters! The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters,"

Beall: Speaks of the "*uproar of many peoples*" -- it is likely that the prophecy does not speak of the events of the 700's, but rather to the time when all the nations will be gathered against Jerusalem to fight against her, but will not prevail

B. (:13b-14a) God Rebukes and Removes

"But He will rebuke them and they will flee far away, and be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind, or like whirling dust before a gale. At evening time, behold, there is terror! Before morning they are no more."

C. (:14b) Justice Reigns and Rewards

"Such will be the portion of those who plunder us, And the lot of those who pillage us."

You cannot escape the universal harvest law: “As a man [or nation] sows, so shall it also reap.”

CONCLUSION:

Stay tuned to world events in Syria. God is still working out His program for history. We need to keep our faith focused on the one who is our refuge and fortress and salvation.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do nations think they will escape the inevitable cycle of decay and ruin?
- 2) When is it too late to look for God for help and deliverance?
- 3) What steps can we take to remember the God of our salvation?
- 4) What will be the portion of those who persecute God’s people?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: The entire segment (17:1–18:7) serves as an excellent midpoint summary to hold before the reader again the central issues: refusal to depend upon God is foolishness which will result in destruction by the nations. Nevertheless, God is in control of the nations and he will not permit them to obliterate his people. Despite all the raging of the nations, he is their master.

Constable: Isaiah revealed the reason for this defeat. In the day of God's judgment (cf. vv. 7, 9), Jacob's prosperity would become lean, as when one grows old and loses his former strength, because of her unbelief: her lack of trust in God. She would experience a thorough reaping of her population, as reapers harvested abundant grain crops in the productive valley of Rephaim near Jerusalem. Yet a remnant would survive, like the few olives or fruits left after a harvest for gleaners to collect. This is what Yahweh, the God who had pledged Himself to Israel, declared. .

The land would be a desolation because the Israelites forgot their God and tried to supply their own needs independent of Him. The description of cultivating plants in these verses represents a pagan custom designed to secure the favor of local gods. Rather than trusting in their saving God, the Israelites had planted little seedlings of faith in idols. The Israelites' horticultural attempts had been frustrating, as had their attempts to produce satisfaction in life and divine help by pursuing other gods.

Brian Borgman: The Oracle Against Damascus

Introduction: Difference between Syria and Assyria; also known as Aram; Assyrians were dominant world power; northern kingdom formed alliance with Syria for protection; tried to draw Judah into the alliance; This is first word of judgment against Syria in the book; message to Ahaz: Don't put your trust in the arm of the flesh or political alliances; look to the Lord God – He is your rock and refuge and salvation;

vv.1-3 Damascus being the capital stands for the whole nation; I am going to pluck you right off the map; you will end up as a little rubble heap; Even pagan cities have a measure of common grace upon them – God using the language of forsaking and abandoning them; to talk about Syria’s sin is to immediately implicate the sin of the northern kingdom; think of being a parent and your teenage son gets in trouble with a neighbor kid who instigated the problem; you focus your discipline on the one who is yours; only spends 2 verse on Syria; God always promises a remnant to His true people but leaves no one for the pagan nations; “*glory of Jacob*” usually brings to mind positive connotations; but Israel was faithless and the glory departed; 1 Sam. 4 – ark of covenant taken by the Philistines caused daughter-in-law to go into labor and name child Ichabod = *the glory has departed*; Ezekiel vision of Shekinah glory departing from temple area; Arameans had been a nation of strength and might – but that will fade just as glory of Israel; if glory of Israel will fade and depart, how much more that of the worldly, carnal power of Syria; comparison that would have been offensive to Israel;

Verse 4 starts new section; “*now in that day*” – what will happen to the faithful when God executes judgment? Glory of Jacob will get skinny; it will thin out; fatness = prosperity; some of us are quite rich I suppose; prosperity going to turn into anorexia; they will end up skin and bones; What will that process look like? The reaper harvesting the grain – they get just about everything – not all of Israel is true Israel of God; 2 Chron. 30 – some men fled from northern kingdom down to Judah; Matt. 13; Rev. 14;

Verse 7 – Remnant remains faithful; few little olives at top of tree and few little ears of grain on ground; there will be some from all nations and tribes; captivated and fixated on some object; political danger and upheaval all around; they have their eyes fixed in faith on their Creator; Holy One of Israel = absolute holiness of God revealed in chap. 6 – always in connection with His covenant keeping righteousness; there is much that is swirling around us and can distract us today; Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus; true faith demonstrated by what we fix our vision on in times of upheaval; same 2 verbs used again but negatively this time; absolute renunciation of all self reliance and religious superstition;

Verse 9 – Looking at the apostates; those who were harvested; marked by destruction; terminology of forsaking, abandoning and desolation; this is what God did to His Son for those 3 hours on the cross; endured those things for us; this will happen to real people we know in hell; gives the reason why – you have forgotten the God of your salvation; to act in unbelief and make alliances is to forget God; Ps. 106; texts from Jeremiah; Hos. 2:13; 13:5-7; horrible feeling to be forgotten; If God’s preeminent concern is for His own glory, then the greatest insult you could heap on Him is to forget Him; if anyone deserves to be remembered it is the God who made us; how we live is the indication of whether we truly remember God – not just performing religious habits; natural propensity of our hearts is to forget God – that is why Psalms stress remembering Him; planting pleasant plants is reference to pagan worship; “desirable one” is reference to Adonis worshiped in Syria; Ridderbos quote; when people forget God they try to fill in the hole with something else – it grows up quickly but has no staying power; worst sickness and suffering you experience cannot be compared to agony of God’s wrath;

V.12 – Word of Comfort to the Remnant -- Assonance in the Hebrew text – rhythm in use of same sounds – horror of enemy coming in – rumbling waters of a flood; there is a force and power in that imagery that is frightening; force of water is overwhelming so that there is nothing you can do; God can just speak the word of rebuke and stop the rumbling waters; God blows the

water away like chaff; Weeping may last for a night but a shout of joy comes in the morning; God's message of hope is always the same to His people; I am in control; the enemy will not consume you; I will disperse them and protect you from them; they must obey my command; I am God and I am with you; John Witherspoon – Princeton Univ President who was the only clergy to sign Declaration of Independence; began to preach the necessity of independence instead of Christ; led to downfall; impact greatly diminished for next 50 years; remnant must not be caught up or sidetracked in even the most appealing of causes; God has called the church to its mission of the gospel; we cannot make an impact by putting our confidence in the arm of the flesh

Kevin Swanson: A Remnant Preserved in the Apostasy of the West

Same themes repeated for emphasis because they are the fundamentals; Israel is the target of this burden; 210 years prior the Northern Kingdom had broken off under Jeroboam; problems ever since; even after the schism they were to consider each other as brothers; led to unhealthy alliances; apostates sometimes team up with those who are even more ungodly; all 19 kings were wicked; constant revolution; 2 Kings 17:7ff.; The shocking thing about the judgment to come was how thorough it was; God cut off the masses of the northern kingdom; Christian world view slipping terribly; headed into a remnant situation

Vine: Forgetfulness of God brings barrenness; there may be much labour and activity in the spirit of self-reliance, but it produces no real fruit . . . the oracle points, in vv. 12-14, to the time yet future, when the nations, rushing like mighty waters, gather together “*against the Lord and against His Anointed*” (Ps. 2:2), only to be driven like chaff, and “like the whirling dust before the storm” (cf. Joel 3:11,12; Zech. 9:14; 14:2,3; Ps. 46:2).

TEXT: Isaiah 18:1-7

TITLE: MESSAGE TO THE NATIONS – THE TRANSITION FROM WOE TO WORSHIP

BIG IDEA:

STAND STILL AND SEE THE SALVATION OF THE LORD AND WORSHIP HIM

INTRODUCTION:

This past week our nation remembered the anniversary of the awful events of 9/11 – the destruction of the two **World Trade Centers** in NYC and the loss of almost 3,000 lives. People continue to die from cancer from what they were exposed to in the suffocating cloud of dust and smoke and rubble. I saw some TV footage I had not seen previously – video shots taken by ordinary citizens who were caught up in those events. You could hear their anguished cries as they recorded the scene – “Oh my God . . . Oh my God . . .” When such **national Woes** hit home there are no words to express the panic and fear and sense of helplessness.

We are wrestling with another potentially volatile situation in dealing with the national Woe that is associated with **Syria’s use of chemical weapons**. What should the response of our nation be? I was shocked to read the Public Relations piece the Russian President artfully crafted and distributed through the New York Times – lecturing our President and our nation on how to pursue peace and righteousness on the world stage. [Let me just read you some excerpts.] This advice coming from the KPG director who excels at abusing personal rights and oppressing people around the world. Yet now he is offering himself as the **voice of reason**.

The best response our administration could come up with was to try to indict Putin for his stance against the **homosexual agenda** – advising him to turn his attention to protecting these poor, vulnerable objects of bigotry and prejudice as the Summer Olympics approach next year. How tragic! The United States is on the wrong side of this moral issue as compared to the repressive regime of Russia who at least recognizes the dangers to any culture of taking a permissive and even supportive stance towards homosexuality. What confusing times! We have national Woes popping up all over.

To say nothing of those **personal Woes** that impact our lives more directly. How do we respond when our comfort and peace is threatened or disrupted by various pressures and trials? How does God want us to respond?

MESSAGE TO THE NATIONS – THE TRANSITION FROM WOE TO WORSHIP

STAND STILL AND SEE THE SALVATION OF THE LORD AND WORSHIP HIM

4 Stages in the Pathway to Gentile Salvation – Moving from Woe to Waiting to Watching to Worship

I. (:1-2) WOE -- DANGEROUS THREATS CAN STIR UP A FRENZY OF PROTECTIVE ACTIVITY

“Alas, oh land of whirring wings which lies beyond the rivers of Cush, which sends envoys by the sea, even in papyrus vessels on the surface of the waters. Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth, to a people feared far and wide, a powerful and

oppressive nation whose land the rivers divide.”

Context: In between the **Oracle concerning Damascus** (17:1-11) and the **Oracle concerning Egypt** (19-20) stand two sections introduced by the same word “*Alas*” or “*Woe*” – **Chapters 13-23** speak of God’s judgments against the nations – this portion comes right in the middle of that discussion – 5 chapters on either side -- we know how important the middle section is as a point of emphasis in all of the chiasmic arrangements we have been studying – so we are dealing with something that is thematically very important for Isaiah – chapter break really should have been at 17:12

1) **17:12-14** (also the conclusion to chapter 17 and oracle concerning Damascus)

God Will Triumph Over Israel’s Pillaging Enemies – Judah can take comfort –

Emphasis on Judgment of the Gentiles

2) **18:1-7** (also the introduction to chapter 19 and the oracle concerning Egypt)

God Will Triumph Over Israel’s Pillaging Enemies – Gentiles will end up worshipping –

Emphasis on Salvation of the Gentiles (in the midst of judgment)

Make no mistake – God will triumph

“*Woe*” – something that should grab your attention; a cause for concern and worry here; often followed by a pronouncement of doom; connected to **17:12-14** which is introduced by the same word; that is a swing passage – Interjection – often expressing dissatisfaction and pain, Ah, Alas;

Turning attention to the area **south of Judah** – Ethiopia and Egypt – land beyond the rivers of Cush

Very obscure passage – lots of uncertainty in interpretation

Look at the **danger** this land faced from Assyria – but they themselves are described as a *powerful and oppressive nation* themselves

Look at how the U.S. responds to the danger posed by nations like Syria that manifest the capability to use chemical weapons or weapons of mass destruction – sets in motion a frenzy of activity

How do we respond to dangers in our own lives – send out a flurry of emails and swift messages – alerting everyone and trying to galvanize support

Young: This is a land in which there is a rustling of wings, a buzzing of insects, as it were, a land in which the hordes swarmed and buzzed, devastating regions about them, like swarms of obnoxious insects. Isaiah mentions some of the characteristics of these people and gives a certain air of mystery to the whole description. The land is in agitation and sends messengers from tribe to tribe, for on the horizon were the signs of an oncoming enemy; a conflict was in the offing, and the people are in an agitated condition. . . Inasmuch as the vessels are of papyrus, it would seem that the sea must be inland = the Nile and its tributaries [quotes Pliny]

Motyer: *The land of whirring wings* originally referred to Egypt with its endemic profusion of flying insects, but Egypt is not now mentioned and the *whirring wings* constitute a picture of the busy, restless world.

[Another option] **Oswalt:** interpretation rests upon the LXX and Targum, both of which identify

this phrase as a figure referring to ships. The prophet may be intending to say that the ships of the Ethiopians whiz up and down the rivers like winged insects. This view accords well with the reference to rivers in the second line of the verse and with the opening lines of v. 2. It also supports the picture of the Ethiopians as emissaries to the world. Finally, the references to sails as wings are almost universal among sailors.

Constable: Taken together these descriptions represent all great, aggressive nations.

Beall: To whom are the messengers going? Some feel they are going to Jerusalem to try to strike an alliance with Judah; some even think the Medes are in view (so Kissane, Oswalt); more likely, however, is that they are going to their own tribes (so Keil, 350; Young, 1:476) to warn of an Assyrian invasion.

People are described as **tall and smooth** – Herodotus claims that on every third day the Egyptian priests shaved the entire body

That **Protective Activity** can manifest itself in a variety of forms:

- Don't put your confidence in the arm of the flesh – no matter how strong and powerful you think you may be

- Don't put your confidence in the United Nations

- Don't put your confidence in whatever peace treaties and alliances you are able to negotiate

II. (:3) WAITING -- WAIT FOR THE LORD TO MANIFEST HIS DOMINION

“All you inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth, as soon as a standard is raised on the mountains, you will see it, and as soon as the trumpet is blown, you will hear it.”

Context has been talking about situation faced by **Ethiopia** – but worldwide application here

“Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord” – you won't be able to miss it; when the Lord move into action, it will be evident

Like the NT concern of some believers that perhaps they had missed the Rapture – you won't be able to miss it because the Lord will snatch you up (even though He comes as a thief in the night on that occasion); but when He returns for that great and final confrontation, there will be no mistaking His battle cry

Waiting to **see** and **hear** the Lord spring into action and engage the threat

Postmill stance: we need to actively bring about the **dominion** in every realm of society – this pre-mill perspective is vastly different

Again, there is a **near term** application (Lord striking down the Assyrians in Isaiah's day) and an **ultimate fulfillment** in the Day of the Lord

When the Lord straps His sword on His thigh and mounts His white horse to lead into battle all those who are followers of the Lord of hosts – you will know that something dramatic is

happening

- Requires waiting to see the Lord respond and answer our prayers; Illustration: email from 3 years ago – someone had committed to praying for some of our family needs – Lord has answered – sent him back word of thanks to encourage him
- Requires waiting for the Lord to provide direction and guide our paths

III. (:4-6) WATCHING -- THE OPPRESSIVE INVASIONS BY WORLD POWERS WILL BE NIPPED IN THE BUD BY THE LORD WHO REIGNS OVER ALL

“For thus the LORD has told me,” – The message God wants delivered

This is the main section for us to study and gain application insights:

A. God is Totally Engaged from His Majestic Throne Above

“I will look from My dwelling place”

- Sees all that is taking place
- Is very engaged – not distant and removed
- Has a settled dwelling place that is secure and supreme

B. God Works Quietly Behind the Scenes – *“quietly”* -- 2 simple analogies from nature; Any farmer knows that a good harvest depends on the right combination of sunshine and moisture

1. Analogy of Burning Heat

“like dazzling heat in the sunshine,”

2. Analogy of Hidden Moisture

“like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.”

Silent -- Seems very passive – like there is no engagement; not making anything happen; Yet both the heat and the dew contribute greatly to the ultimate harvest; God is working productively behind the scenes from His throne above

Young: standing in remarkable contrast to the agitation of Ethiopia with her swiftly traveling messengers, is the quietness of God who alone can control the destinies and movements of nations

Oswalt: The truth is that the quiet look of the Sovereign is of greater importance than the mightiest of the world’s armies (Ps. 2:1–4; 33:13–17; 80:14; Lam. 5:1; Isa. 63:15). For to him to do nothing (qw , “sit quietly”) but merely look on is of greater significance than all the deliberations in all the world’s chancelleries.

Motyer: As naturally and inevitably as there is heat with light and dew in harvest so the Lord is present, unobserved, remaining quiet. . . he is not only the transcendent God in heaven but the present God in the affairs of earth. But *heat* and *dew* are not just incidental to harvest, they are actual contributory factors in the ripening. Thus, the Lord is more than a watcher; he presides

over the process. . . People's attempts to run the world on the basis of either Assyria-like purposes of imperialism or Egypt-like schemes of collective security will collapse utterly.

C. God Works Visibly at the Last Minute at Just the Right Time

For before the harvest, as soon as the bud blossoms and the flower becomes a ripening grape,”

Van Parunak: How different his intervention is from that of men. We justify preemptive action, whether sanctions or war, to keep an adversary from growing too strong. Humans know that given time and resources, any one party can become strong enough to destroy any other. The Lord just sits back and lets them come almost to the full power, so that he can show how overwhelming his power is.

D. God Works Decisively to Purge the Wicked

“then He will cut off the sprigs with pruning knives and remove and cut away the spreading branches.”

E. (:6) God's Judgment Will be Total and Devastating and Humiliating

*“They will be left together for mountain birds of prey,
and for the beasts of the earth;
and the birds of prey will spend the summer feeding on them,
and all the beasts of the earth will spend harvest time on them.”*

Like road kill – carcasses left out in the open for the vultures and beasts of prey to pick apart Nobody comes along quickly to clean them up and offer a proper burial; they sit out there all summer and into the harvest – stinking, rotten mess

III. (:7) WORSHIP -- SUBMISSION AND TRIBUTE WILL BE GRATEFULLY OFFERED WHEN THE LORD REIGNS VISIBLY FROM MOUNT ZION

“At that time a gift of homage will be brought to the LORD of hosts from a people tall and smooth, even from a people feared far and wide, a powerful and oppressive nation, whose land the rivers divide-- to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, even Mount Zion.”

“At that time”

Martin: Possibly Isaiah was speaking of the millennial kingdom when peoples from around the world will worship the Lord (cf. Zech. 14:16) because of His gracious acts.

“Gift of homage”

Judah seems like such a small and insignificant parcel of land compared to the vast empires of Ethiopia/Egypt and Assyria – yet Jerusalem and Mount Zion will be the focal point for the reign of the Messiah – the city of God

Motyer: The omnipotent Lord brings the world home to Mount Zion for there alone he made his

name dwell.

(cf. Ps.68:31; Zech. 14:16; Acts 8:26-36)

How are we gratefully rendering our submission and tribute to the Lord right now as He reigns already in our hearts?

He has demonstrated that only His power can bring about peace and rest and security in the midst of all of our life challenges

CONCLUSION:

19:23-24 We see this emphasis on salvation of the Gentiles – 2 major warring nations oppressing Judah = Assyria to the north and Egypt to the south –
Pathway to salvation moves from Woe to Waiting to Watching to Worship
God has established His covenant people to be a blessing to the world

Vine: So it has been, and will be, in every crisis of the strife of nations, and especially when efforts have been put forth to crush God's chosen people. The passage gives us lessons of confident patience to await God's time of direct interposition for deliverance, assured that in all our experiences everything is under His absolute control. . . . Trials and difficulties are sent to cast us upon God in simple and unwavering dependence upon Him.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Contrast the frenzied activity of the world powers with the peaceful control exercised by the Lord – what lessons should we learn for our own peace and security?
- 2) Why isn't the Lord's dominion obvious to all people today?
- 3) Why does the Lord so often and for such long periods of time seem to be inactive and removed from the turmoil of the world's struggles?
- 4) What *gift of homage* are we willingly bringing to the Lord right now?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Grogan: Erlandsson (p. 74) notes that there is some kind of link with 17:12-14, which immediately precedes it. Both passages open with the exclamatory word *hoy*, translated “*Oh*” in 17:12 and “*Woe*” in 18:1. The word – whatever its exact significance – usually presages doom. Both passages seem to have chiefly in view the destruction of menacing Assyria.

Motyer: In 715 the Ethiopian Piankhi mastered Egypt, founded the Twenty-fifth Dynasty and

sought to play a part on the world stage. Envoys went to all the Palestinian states promising Egyptian aid in an anti-Assyrian rising. Isaiah mentions neither power but looks through the situation of the day to a wider horizon, not relating historical facts but the principles they embody. Seen on its own terms the world knows no security but collective strength (1-2a). Isaiah, however, has a better message to share, arising from the principles he has already drawn from the experience of Ephraim and Aram (17:1-11), in whose case collective strength failed (17:1-5). Security can be found only in the Lord (17:7, 10), and one day the remnant will enjoy it (17:3, 6). This is a microcosm of the Lord's plan for the world. He rules all the nations (17:12-14), and it would be better for the ambassadors of collective security (1-2) to take a different message to the far parts of the earth: to wait for the Lord (3), for he is planning his sudden intervention (4; cf. 17:13f.). The harvest expected from human plans will come to nothing (5-6) but a world remnant will gather to the Lord in Zion (7).

Van Parunak: Ethiopia is here pictured as sending out ambassadors to distant lands. This action aligns with Ethiopia's historical opposition to Assyria, recorded in 2 Kings,

2 Ki 19:9-10 And when [Rabshakeh] heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee:

In Isaiah's account, Rabshakeh concludes that Hezekiah is allied with Egypt.

Isa 36:6,9 Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him. 9 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

Beall: This woe is directed to Ethiopia, although no judgment upon Ethiopia is proclaimed in this chapter (judgment is, however, given in 20:4). The message of chap. 18 appears to be that although Ethiopia sends messengers around her country to warn of the impending Assyrian invasion, they should not fear Assyria, because the Lord will deal with her. The historical context appears to be sometime between 715 B.C., when the Ethiopians took control of Egypt, and 701 B.C., when Sennacherib invaded Judah and later Egypt.

Matthew Henry: The assurance God gives to his prophet, by him to be given to his people, that, though he might seem for a time to sit by as an unconcerned spectator, yet he would certainly and seasonably appear for the comfort of his people and the confusion of his and their enemies (v. 4): So the Lord said unto me. Men will have their saying, but God also will have his; and, as we may be sure his word shall stand, so he often whispers it in the ears of his servants the prophets. When he says, I will take my rest, it is not as if he were weary of governing the world, or as if he either needed or desired to retire from it and repose himself; but it intimates that the great God has a perfect, undisturbed, enjoyment of himself, in the midst of all the agitations and changes of this world (the Lord sits even upon the floods unshaken; the Eternal Mind is always easy), and, though he may sometimes seem to his people as if he took not wonted notice of what is done in this lower world (they are tempted to think he is as one asleep, or as one astonished, Ps. xlv. 23; Jer. xiv. 9), yet even then he knows very well what men are doing and what he himself will do.

TEXT: Isaiah 19:1 – 20:6

TITLE: GOD'S FUTURE PLAN FOR EGYPT – WHERE NOT TO TURN FOR DELIVERANCE

BIG IDEA:

EGYPT WILL FACE DESERVED JUDGMENT AND EXPERIENCE UNDESERVED BLESSING – BUT WILL NEVER BE A DEPENDABLE SOURCE OF SALVATION

INTRODUCTION:

As Isaiah continues in this section with his oracles against various nations, he comes to the country of Egypt to the south of Judah. You could say that Egypt and Judah have a significant history together. These 2 chapters should stir our memories of how God judged the idols of Egypt back in the Ten Plagues at the time of the Exodus. Surely God has already demonstrated His **supremacy** and **sovereignty** over the worldly power and wisdom of Egypt.

The lesson for Judah – for the people of God -- continues to center around the theme of the folly of looking to other nations for deliverance and the necessity of focusing their trust in God alone. Whether the temptation is for King Ahaz to make a pact with Assyria to the north (to escape the alliance between Syria and Israel) or for Judah to now look to Egypt in the south for help (as Assyria threatens to overrun the entire region), the answer is the same. There will be no escaping the judgment of God apart from turning to Him alone for mercy and trusting completely in Him.

Yet in this context of judgment against Egypt we find the **Grace of God** magnified as never before. For a nation as undeserving as the pagan enemies of Egypt, we are going to see God reach out in salvation and blessing to elevate these Gentiles to the same status of blessing of the people of Judah in the last days. Isaiah is going to present the gospel message in seed form as he shows us God's future plan for Egypt.

EGYPT WILL FACE DESERVED JUDGMENT AND EXPERIENCE UNDESERVED BLESSING – BUT WILL NEVER BE A DEPENDABLE SOURCE OF SALVATION

HEADING:

“The oracle concerning Egypt.”

I. (19:1-15) EGYPT CANNOT SAVE ITSELF – HUMAN WISDOM LEADS TO RUIN

A. (19:1-3) Internal Conflict Drives a Desperate People to Their Pagan Support Systems

1. Sovereign Dominion Stirs Helpless Desperation

“Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud, and is about to come to Egypt; The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.”

Chap. 18 – we had seen the swiftness of the ambassadors and envoys of Ethiopia or Egypt running about in their papyrus boats to try to galvanize the nation's defenses – Here we see the Lord in a far swifter mode of conveyance

The Lord's agenda of judgment against the nation is like a powerful freight train that continues to roll on and cannot be stopped. Here we see the next stop on the Lord's journey – turning His

attention to the nation of Egypt. The Lord is coming swiftly and in power and majesty and supremacy as He rides on the cloud.

MacArthur: Clouds are vehicles for the Lord's coming to execute judgment (Pss 18:10, 11; 68:4, 33; 104:3; Dan 7:13)

The two groups that respond to this impending wrath are

- The idols of Egypt
- The people of Egypt

Their response is the same – fear and panic and a sense of helpless desperation in the face of such sovereign dominion; it is not like the idols have any power to offer to the people

There is much **bravado** when people have the sense that God is removed and His presence is hidden; they express themselves in pride and arrogance and rebellion and self will; but when God shows up on the scene their countenance changes immediately

Beall: God is pictured as riding on a swift cloud, coming to Egypt to judge her, with her idols **tottering** (same word used of Ahaz's fear of the Syro-Ephraim coalition in **Isa 7:2**) before Him, and Egypt's heart melting (same word used by Rahab in Josh 2:11 to explain the Canaanites' fear of the Israelites [so also Josh 5:1]; also used in Isa 13:7 to describe the Babylonian response to the “day of the Lord”) in fear. It is interesting that the Canaanite god Baal is often depicted as riding on a cloud; here, however, it is the Lord who will show Himself superior to these worthless idols. . . . When there is a religious vacuum, spiritism takes its place—see Matt 12:43-45.

2. Internal Conflict Saps a Nation's Strength

*“So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians;
and they will each fight against his brother,
and each against his neighbor,
city against city,
and kingdom against kingdom.”*

Civil war brings about much pain and heartache – you have brother fighting against brother

Amazing that the United States was able to recover from its self-inflicted injuries of the great Civil War.

Nation divided against itself cannot stand

Oswalt: Throughout her history Egypt was especially prone to this kind of dissolution. After the six strong dynasties of the Old Kingdom (3000-2200 B.C.), there came a two-hundred-year period when each of the 42 nomes (city-states) became a country unto itself and general chaos reigned. Then the Twelfth Dynasty united the land for about two hundred years (1990-1785 B.C.), but again chaos took over for two centuries. So it went again and again.

3. Pagan Support Systems Only Increase the Confusion and Futility

“Then the spirit of the Egyptians will be demoralized within them; and I will confound their strategy, so that they will resort to idols and ghosts of the dead, and to mediums and spiritists.”

Earlier section (8:19-22), we had dealt with God’s warning against staying clear of the **occult** – list of 8 reasons was given – when people are faced with that emptiness and desperation, they try to fill the void with whatever is putting itself forward as a possible solution – Final answer: “*Should not a people consult their God?*”

Oswalt: As the more intellectualized and conceptualized polytheisms break down under the stress of the times, the more magical, subliminal spiritism reasserts itself.

Van Parunak: This section is chiasmatic. The correspondence between matching sections is marked not only thematically but also by how the Lord is described.

	Reference to the Lord		
Egypt is confused	LORD	1b	14-15
Human counsel fails before the Lord's purposes	LORD of Hosts	2-4	11-13
The economy collapses	(none)	5-10	

In this section, we read nothing of external enemies or the threat of captivity. The judgment takes the form of internal disruption of the society before the Lord.

B. (19:4-10) Cruel Oppression Delivers a Desperate People Over to Economic Ruin

1. (:4) Cruel Oppression

“Moreover, I will deliver the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel master, and a mighty king will rule over them,” declares the Lord God of hosts.”

Constable: Egyptian society was notable for its lack of unity throughout its history. There was frequent conflict between the Upper and Lower Egypt geographical factions. Kingdom periods, during which the Pharaoh was worshipped as god, were interspersed with long periods when the city states ruled themselves and the people worshipped innumerable gods. Sometimes her god-king was strong and the people united behind him, but when he was weak there was little social solidarity. Isaiah foresaw another period of social chaos coming when the Egyptians would look to idols and the spirit world for guidance. The sovereign God of armies would then deliver them over to the rule of a strong, cruel leader who would dominate them. The fulfillment may have been the Ethiopian Pharaoh Piankhi (715 B.C.), Pharaoh Psammetichus (670 B.C.), one of the Assyrian kings (Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon in 671, or Ashurbanipal in 668 B.C.), or the Persian Artaxerxes III Ochus (343 B.C.). Several conservative scholars prefer **Esarhaddon**. Depressed people are easy targets for despotic rulers.

Grogan: The fierce king of v.4 has been variously identified, but there can be little doubt that the most appropriate application is to Esar-haddon, king of Assyria, who subdued Egypt in 670 B.C. Ferocity was a general characteristic of all the Assyrian monarchs, whose cruelty was proverbial.

2. (:5-10) Economic Ruin

a. (:5-7) Land Devastated by Drought

“And the waters from the sea will dry up, and the river will be parched and dry. And the canals will emit a stench, the streams of Egypt will thin out and dry up; the reeds and rushes will rot away. The bulrushes by the

Nile, by the edge of the Nile and all the sown fields by the Nile will become dry, be driven away, and be no more.”

Young: Egypt is dependent for her daily existence upon the Nile. The melting snows in the mountains of central Africa produce a steady supply of water. Combined with the torrential rains which fall in the land of Ethiopia, an inundation occurs twice each year. The first of these begins about the 15th of July and continues throughout the summer, and the second occurs in October. At its height the river reaches twenty-five to thirty feet. Should this water fail, the land would indeed suffer.

Oswalt: If the Nile were ever shut off, this rich and seductive Egypt would cease to be. This critical weakness is what Isaiah is emphasizing in this strophe: why depend upon a country whose only resource for life was not in its own hands, but in the hands of Israel’s God?”

b. (:8-9) Business Devastated

“And the fishermen will lament, and all those who cast a line into the Nile will mourn, and those who spread nets on the waters will pine away.”

“Moreover, the manufacturers of linen made from combed flax and the weavers of white cloth will be utterly dejected.”

Van Parunak: vs. 9 -- Flax production requires rotting the stems in water so that the pulp can be washed away, leaving the fiber behind. This is impossible without a source of water.

Young: Not only is the Nile dry and its fish dead, but the land also is no longer watered so that plants may grow. Those who derive their livelihood from the growth of the land suffer as well as do the fishermen who depend directly upon the river.

MacArthur: Egypt was famous for its production of linen from flax. Both the growth of the plant and the manufacture of the cloth depended on water.

c. (:10) Society Devastated – Both Masters and Laborers

*“And the pillars of Egypt will be crushed;
All the hired laborers will be grieved in soul.”*

MacArthur: God was to remove the foundations, or “pillars,” on which the working class depended. The word refers either generally to the economic structure of the society or specifically to the upper class which organized the businesses of the land.

C. (19:11-15) Foolish Counsel Deludes a Desperate People to a Drunken Stupor

1. (:11-12) Vacuum of Wise Counsel – No Insight Into the Plans of the Lord

“The princes of Zoan are mere fools; the advice of Pharaoh’s wisest advisers has become stupid. How can you men say to Pharaoh, ‘I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings’ Well then, where are your wise men? Please let them tell you, and let them understand what the LORD of hosts has purposed against Egypt.”

Egypt prided herself on her great wisdom –

Grogan: Constructive, progressive, and stable rule necessitates the marriage of power and wisdom. These are the characteristics of God's great King (**11:1-5**), and they are the qualities of God himself. In vv. 1-4 he overcame the power of Egypt, and in vs. 3 we saw him bringing Egypt's wisdom to nought. This theme is now further expounded (cf. 1 Cor 1:20). Every great monarch feels the need of advice from wise counselors, but what if the wisest in the land have nothing but lunacy to offer (v. 11)? No matter how ancient nor how exalted as to its source was their lore, it made no difference to their ineptness (cf. Gen 41). The rhetorical question with its taunt at the ineffectual wisdom of paganism is reminiscent of the reiterated mocking questions in other passages (e.g., 41:26; 44:7; **45:20-21**). Zoan and Memphis (vv. 11, 13) were the two most important cities in Lower Egypt. They are mentioned together because of their administrative importance.

2. (:13-14) Deception of Foolish Counsel – Reduced to a Drunken Stupor

“The princes of Zoan have acted foolishly, the princes of Memphis are deluded; Those who are the cornerstone of her tribes have led Egypt astray. The LORD has mixed within her a spirit of distortion; They have led Egypt astray in all that it does, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit.”

Look at the various counselors and supposed experts in our society that continue to offer advice that steers our country away from the Lord – whether political counselors, economic experts, psychiatrists and medical doctors who want to offer counsel on human behavior, professors in our institutions of higher learning, etc. – they are consumed with a sense of how brilliant they are ... yet from God's perspective they are no better than **drunken fools** staggering around in their own vomit and leading an entire nation down the wrong path – blind leaders of the blind

Oswalt: Wisdom which is limited to this world is as short-sighted and confused as a person lost in a dense forest. Unless there is an overall perspective from outside this world from which to analyze and evaluate human experience, then no course of action makes any ultimate sense. This is why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

3. (:15) Vacuum of Productive Opportunity

“And there will be no work for Egypt which its head or tail, its palm branch or bulrush, may do.”

A curse for there to be no work to accomplish; man was created to be productive

Constable: The Egyptians were known for their wisdom and took great pride in it (cf. Matt. 13:54; Mark 6:2). Isaiah challenged their wise men to inform the people what Yahweh of armies had in store for them (cf. Joseph). He could frustrate their plans, but they could not discover His. Their unwise politicians had misled the people by failing to diversify the economy, among other ways. Too much of their hope lay in the Nile, which the people worshipped as a god. Zoan (v. 11, Gr. Tanis) was a chief city and often the capital of Lower Egypt, and Noph (Gr. Memphis, v. 13) was another chief city and former capital of the same part of Egypt.

Van Parunak: vs. 15 -- These terms represent all of society (as in 9:14). “*Head and tail*” represent the entire animal. “*Branch*” (the lofty palm frond) and “*rush*” (growing in the marsh) represent the highest and lowest plants. The prophet is describing a devastation of the land that has touched the entire society.

I. (19:1-15) EGYPT CANNOT SAVE ITSELF – HUMAN WISDOM LEADS TO RUIN

Now we move from poetry to prose, from judgment to blessing, from striking to healing

II. (19:16-24) EGYPT CANNOT SAVE YOU BECAUSE IT NEEDS SALVATION ITSELF – THE PROCESS OF SALVATION

“*in that day*” – used 5 times – establishes the structure of this section

A. (19:16-17) Conviction of Sin -- Starting Point of Conversion Process – Fear of God

“In that day the Egyptians will become like women, and they will tremble and be in dread because of the waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which He is going to wave over them. And the land of Judah will become a terror to Egypt; everyone to whom it is mentioned will be in dread of it, because of the purpose of the LORD of hosts which He is purposing against them.”

What a turnaround – now you have Egypt terrified of Judah; never been fulfilled to date; must look forward to end times

Lord will carry out His sovereign purposes for the nations

B. (19:18) Crossroads of Decision -- Pledging Allegiance – Salvation vs. Destruction

“In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will be speaking the language of Canaan and swearing allegiance to the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.”

Van Parunak: This contrast in the verbs suggests that we should see the numbers “five” and “one” as contrasting as well. Egypt had far more than six cities; Herodotus (2.177) says there were 20,000. If the verse accounts only for six of them, what happened to the other 19,994? Probably, we are to understand the numbers as giving a proportion. For every one that is destroyed, five will turn to the Lord (Calvin).

Thus understood, the verse reports the decision that Egypt will make in the face of the judgment of vv. 1-15, summarized in vv. 16-17. Most of them will repent and turn to the Lord. The next step after fearing God’s judgment is turning to him.

John Martin: [alternative view] It seems preferable to follow the reading preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Vulgate, namely, “the City of the Sun” (heres), meaning Heliopolis (cf. NIV marg. And Ezek. 30:17). Heliopolis, one of the major cities in the south end of Egypt’s Delta, was dedicated to worship of the sun god. Such a significant change (i.e. worshiping the Lord instead of the sun god) will prove to the world and to Israel that Egypt will be serious in its new worship.

Grogan: [in line with **Erlandsson**] v. 18 could refer to the conversion of Egypt to the worship of the true God ... sees in the five cities an allusion to the original conquest of Canaan by the Israelites. After the capture of Jericho and Ai by Joshua’s forces, their first great victory was over the kings of five important Canaanite cities, namely Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon (Josh 10). This victory led to the conquest of the whole country.

Oswalt: It appears to be identifying one of the five cities in a special way, not a sixth one. . . expresses the radical nature of the turning to God . . .

C. (19:19-22) Consummation of Salvation – Leading to Worship and Growing Knowledge

“In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border. And it will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Champion, and He will deliver them. Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it. And the LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them.”

Grogan: Pillars were associated with pagan worship in Canaan and so were prohibited to the Israelites (cf. Deut 7:5; 12:3), but it is clear from v.20 that something quite different is in view. Just as the altars constructed by the patriarchs were witnesses for the true God and his self-disclosure at these places, so various stones and pillars of witness were erected in the days of Joshua . . . The pillar-monument here, situated on the border of Egypt, probably symbolizes the claiming of the land for the true and living God, the Lord Almighty.

D. (19:23) Congregation United in Worship -- Reconciliation and Fellowship on Human Plane

“In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.”

E. (19:24-25) Congregation United in Blessing -- Unity of Saved Jews and Gentiles Experiencing God’s Blessings

“In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, ‘Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.’”

Summary:

Motyer: As Isaiah addressed his contemporaries his main thought in verses 1-15 was to expose the folly of an alliance with Egypt. To join with Egypt would be to associate with a nation under divine wrath (1), trust the promises of a divided people (2), look for help to a collapsing economy (5-10), expect wisdom where there was only folly (11-13) and believe that those who were unable to solve their own problems (15) could solve the problems of others! A devastating critique! But Isaiah’s use of verses 1-15 in its present context has a deeper purpose. Egypt stands for the Gentile world, heading into irreversible decline. Its real problem is divine opposition and yet no sins are specified such as would explain the Lord’s hostility. In a word, we have here the situation, first seen at Babel (Gn. 11), where humankind’s determination to be the solution to their own problems and to run the world without God automatically comes under disapproval and counter-attack. But divine opposition is not the last word; alongside the world’s problem (1-15) the prophet places the Lord’s solution (16-25). It is a point-by-point reply, couched in five “*In that day*” oracles:

Smiting (1-15)

The fear of the Lord (1)

Healing (16-25)

The fear of the Lord (16-17)

Confusion, disunity (2)	One language, one Lord (18)
Consulting the no-gods (3)	Reconciliation (19-22)
A fierce king (4)	Crying to the Lord (20)
	The healing Lord (22)
	Harmony in worship (23)
The Nile dried in judgment (5)	Highway for unity (cf. 11:15-16) (23)
	Co-equality in the Lord (24-25)
A spirit of bewilderment (14)	Divine blessing

* * * * * Part 2 of the Message

[TITLE: NAKED AND BAREFOOT WILL GET YOUR ATTENTION](#)

BIG IDEA:
PUTTING YOUR HOPE ANYWHERE BUT IN THE LORD ALWAYS LEADS TO BONDAGE AND HUMILIATION AND SHAME

Definitely **R-rated passage** – lots of violence, some language (where do you think we got the expression butt-naked?), and 3 years worth of nudity

INTRODUCTION:

Apostle Paul liked to point believers to his example: “*Imitate me as I imitate Jesus Christ*”; Not all behavior of God’s prophets is intended for imitation --

Sad reality – majority of folks are headed for an eternity characterized by **Shame** and **Bondage**. For the present, they are deluded – imagining themselves to be prosperous and in charge of their lives. In their pride and rebellion, they fail to see the consequences of placing their hope in the arm of the flesh.

We as believers should be characterized as those who make their boast in the Lord – *some trust in horses and some in chariots, but we will make our boast in the Lord our God*. We should be living as liberated servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, no longer under bondage to Satan, to the world, and to our own sinful nature.

Earlier signs in Isaiah [Sign of his 2 children: **7:3 Shearjashub** = “**a remnant shall return**”: **8:1-4** – **Mahershalalhashbaz** = “**Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey**”; **8:18**, – bracketing the most important sign of **Immanuel** in **7:14**; demonstrating that the Lord would keep His promises and fulfill His Word spoken through His prophet Isaiah – both in the immediate context and in the distant future of eschatological end times (“*in that day*”).

PUTTING YOUR HOPE ANYWHERE BUT IN THE LORD ALWAYS LEADS TO BONDAGE AND HUMILIATION AND SHAME

Last message:

I. (19:1-15) EGYPT CANNOT SAVE ITSELF – HUMAN WISDOM LEADS TO RUIN

II. (19:16-24) EGYPT CANNOT SAVE YOU BECAUSE IT NEEDS SALVATION ITSELF – THE PROCESS OF SALVATION

Today’s message:

III. (20:1-6) TRUSTING IN THE ARM OF THE FLESH (EGYPT AND ETHIOPIA) WILL BE FUTILE

A. (:1) THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS = CONQUEST OF ASHDON – ASSYRIA ON A ROLL

1. Calendar Date

“In the year”

Need to sketch the **timeframe** of the overall events

- In **722 BC**, nearly twenty years after the initial deportations, the ruling city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Samaria, was finally taken by Sargon II after a three-year siege started by Shalmaneser V.

Wikipedia: Assyrian Captivity of northern tribes: The captivities began in approximately 740 BC (or 733/2 BC according to other sources).

And the Elohim of Israel stirred up a spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tigathpileser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day. (**I Chronicles 5:26**)

In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. (**II Kings 15:29**)

- **711 B.C.** = date of fall of Ashdon (was it related to a 3 year siege??)
- **701 B.C.** = attack of Assyria against Jerusalem – **2 Kings 18**
- Also **701 B.C.** Assyrians defeated Egypt at Eltekeh; or **671 B.C.** = Esarhaddon's conquest

Constable: The year in view was 711 B.C. Like 7:1, 20:1 introduces the historical setting for the events that follow. For four years, Egypt had encouraged the city-states of western Palestine to resist Assyrian aggression—with the promise of assistance. In 713 B.C., Ashdod, the northernmost Philistine town that stood about 35 miles west of Jerusalem, had rebelled, . . . Rebellion continued, however, and pleas for help went out from Ashdod to Judah, Moab, and Edom. Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) responded to Ashdod's rebellion by sending his second in command, who reduced Ashdod to an Assyrian province. Egypt's promised help never materialized. In fact, the Egyptians handed Yamani over to the Assyrians in chains to avoid an Assyrian attack.

Beall: The setting of v. 1 is 711 B.C., when the Philistine city of Ashdod fell to the Assyrians. The “Tartan” of v. 1 is a high-ranking Assyrian official whom King Sargon (who reigned from 722-705 B.C.) had sent to defeat this important city (see Young, 2:52). Three years earlier (713 B.C.), Ashdod had revolted against Assyria, with the approval of the Ethiopian leader Shabako who controlled that area. At this time the Ethiopian Shabako controlled both Upper and Lower Egypt. But now Ashdod fell to the Assyrians.

Oswalt: Sargon had set up a regent favorable to himself, a man named Ahimiti. Now, probably with the backing of Shabako, Ahimiti was deposed and another man, Yamani, was made king, apparently in 713... Assyrians report a swift victory, with Yamani fleeing to Egypt for asylum and Ashdod falling in 711. The Egyptians, faced with an Assyrian army on their borders, lost all of their bluster about defying Assyria and meekly handed over a bound Yamani, undertaking to send him all the way to Assyria. Undoubtedly, this action created a chill in the hearts of Egypt's loyal allies and served to confirm the jaundiced view of Egypt held by people like Isaiah.

2. Commander

"that the commander"

Young: In the Scriptures the word Tartan occurs also in 2 Kings 18:17.

Timeframe for crisis against Jerusalem = **701 B.C.** which was the 14th year of Hezekiah's sole reign which began in 715 B.C.

2 Kings 18 -- Important context to see why Judah needed to learn this lesson God had for them in Isaiah 20

3. City Targeted

"came to Ashdod,"

Ashdod was one of the five key Philistine cities, along the coast of Canaan. Northernmost city; 33 miles west of Jerusalem; maybe 2 miles off the coast

Background: the place to which the victorious Philistines took the Israelite Ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 5). When the image of their heathen god Dagon in his temple at Ashdod was humiliated before the Ark of the Lord, and many of the people died of serious illness, the captured sacred Ark was sent to other Philistine cities. [Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible](#)

4. Commissioning Kingdom = Assyria under leadership of Sargon

"when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him"

Ironside: Sargon, the king of Assyria, was unknown to history until his name was, in our times, found upon monuments, and thus Isaiah's record confirmed. Scripture does not need to be vindicated by the often conflicting histories of ancient times nor by archaeological inscriptions, for we may be sure of this, the Bible is God's inerrant Word and therefore always right, even though some of the ancient records might be in conflict with it; but again and again it has pleased God through the spade of the archaeologist to give full confirmation of the truth of His Word concerning doubts and questions that unbelievers have been only too glad to raise.

5. Conquest

"and he fought against Ashdod and captured it,"

These events of v. 1 occur after the three year period that Isaiah acted out in vv.2-3; God had given the instructions ... Isaiah had obediently carried out the prophetic picture . . . now God was speaking to give the interpretation

B. (:2-3) THE SHOCKING SIGN = NAKED, BAREFOOT PROPHET

1. Immediacy of the Sign

“at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying,”

Beall: presumably three years before the defeat of Ashdod in 711 B.C.

Two timeframes involved here – command to go naked for 3 years and then after the 3 year period the interpretation given that the real import did not pertain just to the fall of Ashdod but more importantly to the conquest of Egypt by the Assyrians

2. Description of the Sign = Twofold Command

a. Stripping off all clothes = Naked

“Go and loosen the sackcloth from your hips,”

Dr. Justin Imel: Probably because of its association with repentance and the grief over one's sin, prophets often wore sackcloth.

<http://preachinghelps.com/isaiah/thenakedpreacher.html>

the customary clothing of prophets (Zech. 13:4) – combining physical discomfort (scratchy, hairy cloth) with spiritual discomfort due to the burden of communicating God's oracles of judgment

How naked??

Dr. Justin Imel:

- 1) The Hebrew word used here most often means completely nude.
 - a) It is used that way in Gn 2:25: *"The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."*
 - b) It is also used that way in Job 1:21: *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart."* Obviously the first use of "naked" in the text means nude.
- 2) It seems likely that Isaiah was to have his buttocks uncovered.
 - a) We are told that is how the Egyptians and Ethiopians would be carried off by the Assyrians (v. 4).
 - b) It's hard to imagine that Isaiah could have provided an ample prophetic image unless he was in the same state as the Egyptians and Ethiopians would have been.
- 3) Prisoners of war were often carried away completely nude to shame and humiliate them.
 - a) Is 47:2-3.
 - b) Nah 3:5 (this is an oracle against Nineveh concerning coming captivity).
 - c) Since Isaiah would show through his actions how the Egyptians and Ethiopians would be carried off, it's hard to imagine how he could have done so if he weren't nude.

Constable: The word "naked" (Heb. *'arom*) can mean: clothed only with a loin cloth, or totally naked (cf. 58:7; Gen. 2:25; 1 Sam. 19:24; 2 Sam. 6:20; Mic. 1:8; John 21:7).

Delitzsch: With the great importance attached to the clothing in the East, where the feelings upon this point are peculiarly sensitive and modest, a person was looked upon as stripped and naked if

he had only taken off his upper garment. What Isaiah was directed to do, therefore, was simply opposed to common custom, and not to moral decency. He was to lay aside the dress of a mourner and preacher of repentance, and to have nothing on but his tunic (*ketoneth*); and in this, as well as barefooted, he was to show himself in public. This was the costume of a man who had been robbed and disgraced, or else of a beggar or prisoner of war.

- b. Shedding the shoes = Barefoot
“and take your shoes off your feet.”

Significance? Poverty and Captivity

3. Complete Obedience

“And he did so, going naked and barefoot.”

What would the reaction of the people have been?

Oswalt: In a culture which makes well-balanced behavior a fetish (except in regard to sporting events), the prophets would not be welcomed. We are ill at ease in the presence of fanatics, people who are wholly committed to an idea, a program, or even another person. Our ideal is coolness, a noncommittal reserve which prevents us from belonging to anything but ourselves or to attachments we have defined.

What would our response be to a John the Baptist??

4. Challenges of Being the Lord’s Servant / Mouthpiece / Object Lesson

“And the LORD said, ‘Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot’”

Lord showing His approval of the obedience of His servant – despite how shocking the deportment

Look at what God commanded Abraham to do in terms of offering up his only son Isaac as a sacrifice;

Look at what God commanded Hosea to do = take a prostitute Gomer as his wife

5. Duration of the Sign

“three years”

Long time to exist in such a state as an object lesson

6. Target Recipients of the Sign

“as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush,”

Things are not going to end well for them

Motyer: It was captive Egyptians Isaiah was forecasting. We can sense the element of drama in the announcement. Since (as we might say) any fool could have predicted that Ashdod’s

rebellion would come to grief, we can hear the wisecracker saying, 'What a lot of fuss about the obvious! Tell us something we don't know!' The message was not what they expected nor, enamoured as the politicians of Jerusalem were with Egypt, what they wanted to hear. But it came with doubled force: the word of explanation and prolonged act of embodiment of the message.

C. (:4) THE SHOCKING FULFILLMENT = BONDAGE AND HUMILIATION AND SHAME

1. Delivered Over to Bondage

"so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush,"

Constable: That he had portrayed the Egyptians and Cushites, and not the people of Ashdod, would have shocked the Judeans, because many of them favored relying on Egypt and Cush for protection against Assyria. Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in **701 B.C.** when the Assyrians defeated Egypt at Eltekeh. Another less likely possibility, I think, is Esarhaddon's conquest of Egypt in **671 B.C.**

Beall: The humiliation of Egypt spoken of here occurred about 40 years after this prophecy, in 671 B.C. under Esarhaddon

2. Delivered Over to Humiliation

"young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered,"

Van Parunak: Isaiah may have retained a loincloth. "*Naked*" here need not mean bare-skinned, but that he is without his outer garment. Cf. 2 Sam 6:14, 20, where Michal accuses David of uncovering himself when in fact he was wearing a linen undergarment.

But inscriptions from the ancient world give clear evidence that defeated foes were often led into captivity completely naked.¹ Even in our day, the Abu Ghraib experience shows how conquerors used nakedness to humble and demean their adversaries. This is the fate that awaits Egypt.

3. Delivered Over to Shame

"to the shame of Egypt."

D. (:5-6) THE LASTING APPLICATION = FUTILITY OF TRUSTING IN THE ARM OF THE FLESH

A. (:5) Agonizing Over the Crushing of Their Hopes

"Then they shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast."

B. (:6a) Coming to Grips with the Lessons of History

*"So the inhabitants of this coastland will say **in that day**, 'Behold, such is our hope, where we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria;'"*

Why this designation: “*inhabitants of this coastland*”?

Young: The answer appears to be that he gives a geographical designation to the people which characterizes them for what they really are and desired to be. Judah wanted to forget her heavenly calling, to turn from trust in God and, like a profane nation, place her trust in a human power. She was willing to act like an inhabitant of the coast where a profane people dwelt. Well and good, so she shall be called. Paul similarly wrote to the Corinthians that he could not write to them but as unto carnal, “*for ye are yet carnal*” (1 Cor. 3:1, 3). Those who wanted to trust Egypt were no true people of God, no holy nation, but merely inhabitants of the coast.

C. (:6b) Facing a Hopeless Eternity

“and we, how shall we escape?”

Young: those who trust in the arm of the flesh can expect nothing but disillusionment.

CONCLUSION:

Jer. 9:23-24 “*Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth*”

Ps. 118:8 “*It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man*”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of pagan support systems do people turn to for deliverance today?
- 2) How are people deluded by foolish counsel in crisis situations today?
- 3) Why would the Lord follow a promise of united Assyria-Judean-Egyptian worship of the true God with another warning about impending judgment against Egypt and Ethiopia?
- 4) How does God get people’s attention today to listen to His message?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Constable: This oracle clarifies that God's purposes for Egypt, another nation the Judeans wanted to trust for help during this time of Assyrian expansion, would involve judgment followed by blessing. The passage consists of three palistropic (chiastic) parts.

A Egypt's smiting by God predicted 19:1-15

B Egypt's healing by God 19:16-25

C Egypt's smiting by God exemplified ch. 20

When Assyria swallowed up Syria in 732 B.C. and then Israel in 722 B.C., many of the Judeans began looking south to Egypt for help against their Mesopotamian foe (cf. chs. 30—31). Isaiah warned his countrymen against relying on Egypt, as he had warned them against putting confidence in other foreign powers. Whatever people trust in place of God eventually disappoints them.

The prediction of Egypt's smiting (19:1-15) begins and ends with references to the Lord's action (vv. 1, 14-15). In between, the prophet announced Egypt's social (vv. 2-4), economic (vv. 5-10), and political (vv. 11-13) collapse. The whole point is that God ultimately controls the fate of nations—not social, economic, and political conditions.

Van Parunak: The oracle falls into three parts. The second (19:16-25) consists of five paragraphs introduced with “*in that day*.” The third is set off with a separate historical notice (20:1).

The first and third describe the Lord's judgment on Egypt, while the second describes Egypt's conversion to the Lord along with Assyria. Each of these three conveys an important lesson for us.

- The first judgment section describes the internal disruption of Egyptian life, and reminds us that the counsels of man are powerless compared with the Lord's purposes.
- The last judgment section looks at Egypt's external relations, both with her allies and with Assyria, who conquered her. We see the futility of trusting in the arm of flesh.
- The central section is a remarkable declaration of God's purpose to bring the Gentiles to himself. It gives a picture of the process of conversion.

The overall structure of salvation surrounded by judgment reminds us of the burden of Moab (ch. 15-16). There, the threat of judgment surrounded an invitation to Moab (16:1-5) to send her tribute to the Messianic king and seek his protection. Sadly, Moab, though related by the flesh to Israel, rejected this invitation because of her pride (16:6) and idolatry (16:12). Egypt, though unrelated, will accept it.

Brian Borgman: Messages to Cush and Egypt (Chap. 20)

Peculiar passage to say the least; God has commanded his prophets to do strange things; End of Chap. 19 we see glorious prophecy of God saving three great nations; why does Isaiah seem to regress here; people might have doubted that such strong enemies could ever be brought into faithful subjection to God – sense of incredulity; you look at some people and think that person could never be saved; God's arm is so strong that He will crush Egypt and Cush in the near future – two powers that seem unstoppable; reminding the people who really is the sovereign King; Or some may have been trying to justify an alliance with Egypt against Assyria; Still these people are under the immediate judgment of God and He will not tolerate any alliance; God shows He is powerful enough to bring these powerful, arrogant pagan nations to its knees; Egyptians never recorded any of their defeats – had a very high opinion of themselves; not to be the anchor of hope for the people of God; don't rest on the arm of the flesh to accomplish your purposes [even when you have the capability to manipulate things to accomplish your purposes]

1. The historical setting – 2 Kings 18:17ff – merely 11 years earlier the Assyrians had destroyed the northern kingdom – so there was some punch to this blasphemous mockery; none

of the gods of the other lands have been able to protect their territories; “If you would only give in, look what you can have?” The big temptation is to go to Egypt for help.

Ashdod – in the Gaza strip – things getting very close to Jerusalem; Philistines had not been able to stand against Assyria; rebelling against their vassal treaty; Philistines decided they preferred to keep their lunch money rather than give it over to the big bully; had the Egyptians whispering in their ears that they would be there to help them;

Timing of the word that came to Isaiah – when siege began or when Ashdod fell??

This message comes to Isaiah when the pro-Egyptian sentiments in Judah would have been very high;

Sackcloth: connected with fasting, mourning, repentance; rough clothing of the prophet of God; Elijah and John the Baptist; Isaiah was of royal stock, upper crust; yet wearing sackcloth

Being barefoot a sign of either captivity or abject poverty – usually went hand in hand; these acts will draw attention to the man of God – no shoes and no outer garment – just long johns; Jewish skivvies; one of the culturally and socially elite

2. Sign is against Egypt and Cush – the very people that Judah was tempted to trust in; Notice the reality behind the symbol – nakedness was humiliating and degrading; parading captives through town;

Excursion on symbolism used in the prophets: they never had an enviable office; think of what they did:

- **Jeremiah** – various object lessons – visible illustrations; basket of figs; forbidden to marry; etc.
- **Hosea** – go marry a prostitute; you are to be a living illustration; your heart will be broken as she leaves you again and again for other men
- **Ezekiel** – take a brick and pretend it is Jerusalem; lay down on one side for 30 days and then the other for 30 days; cook your food over human dung ... Ok, cow dung

God takes that which we know and then makes that transfer to the truth He wants us to understand; from the known to the unknown; these men knew what it meant to die to self to serve God alone (5 servant songs in Isaiah coming up)

Think about the humiliation of the Son of God for 33 years on earth; infinite condescension in His birth; doesn't even have a mid-wife at birth; laid in a feeding trough; his father works with his hands to make a living; goes to the people He has created to save them; endures the ultimate humiliation in being hung naked on Roman cross

3. Response of the people – v.5-6

The “*they*” in v. 5 is the people of God who wanted to look to Cush and Egypt for help; People of God are **shattered** – their hopes are crushed; like a piece of china that is dropped and broken into a thousand pieces; they feel **shame**; don't buy into the psycho babble between guilt and shame; all that we have done has been done before the eye of the holy God; that in which you boast is your glory; don't glory in wealth or power but in God alone; where will we hide when God comes to judge?

Heb. 2:3 “*How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*”

2 Kings 19:1 – God's purpose was accomplished – Hezekiah put on sackcloth and went to the Lord in prayer and dependence

God makes threats in Chap. 20 – those threats accomplished His purpose; the elect take the threats of God seriously and these threats motivate repentance and perseverance

TEXT: Isaiah 21:1-10

TITLE: TERRIFYING REPORT OF THE FALL OF BABYLON

BIG IDEA:

HORROR STRIKES THOSE WHO PERCEIVE THE DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES OF TRUSTING IN THE ARM OF THE FLESH

INTRODUCTION:

Horror movies have never been something that our family has watched. How can you call it entertainment to be scared out of your wits by graphic images of blood and gore? Yet in this short oracle concerning Babylon, the prophet finds himself immersed in a horror reality movie that affects him both physically and emotionally. The prophet is impacted so intensely because he is both a faithful communicator of God's hard messages and one that empathizes with the suffering of God's people. He hates to see Judah going down the destructive path of trusting in the arm of the flesh. Just as we saw last week that they were tempted to trust in Egypt; now we are going to see similar lessons today as they are tempted to trust in Babylon to combat the threat of Assyria.

HORROR STRIKES THOSE WHO PERCEIVE THE DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES OF TRUSTING IN THE ARM OF THE FLESH

Many preachers today are not struck with such horror; they are false prophets who blindly go about trying to soothe people by saying "Peace, Peace" where there is no peace; by removing the language of sin and guilt and judgment from their messages; by avoiding the hard parts of God's Word and picking and choosing what they want to preach ... not so for the prophet Isaiah. He truly was faithful to proclaim the whole counsel of God just as the Apostle Paul testified at the conclusion of his ministry. He felt the burden of God's message – communicated by this introductory word "oracle" – and he was terrified by the consequences that God promised would result from trusting in the arm of the flesh.

I. THE PROBLEM IDENTIFIED BY THE PROPHET

II. THE PAIN EXPERIENCED BY THE PROPHET

III. THE PREDICTION ANNOUNCED BY THE PROPHET

IV. THE PERSPECTIVE MAINTAINED BY THE PROPHET

I. (:1-2) THE PROBLEM IDENTIFIED BY THE PROPHET -- ATTEMPTS AT STOPPING THE AGGRESSOR – HARSH VISION OF UNRELENTING ATTACKS

A. Cryptic Identification of Babylon as the Focus of the Oracle

"The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea."

We know from vs. 9 that **Babylon** is in view – remember Chap. 13-14 the first oracle delivered in this series of judgments against the nations concerned God's judgment in the last days against Babylon; **conflicting imagery** – nothing could be more different than the desert and the sea; God will eventually bring to desolation (desert) that which seems to have the potential for fertility (sea)

Vine: “*The desert of the sea*” is Babylon (cp. **Jer. 50:38; 51:13**, 36, 55).

Seems like this could be **prophetic** of how the Lord would eventually judge Babylon and dry up the waters around her to make her a desert area where there had been abundant seas

Rich Cathers: reference to the open plain area around the city of Babylon. It had once been flooded with the water of the Euphrates, looking like a sea, but when the city grew, the marshes were drained.

Jim Bomkamp: Today, the city of Babylon lies in ruins within the country of Iraq.

Two major options for what destruction of Babylon is in view in this section:

- 1) **539 B.C.** – major fall of Babylon when it was a big time world power –
Attractive because of the feasting picture in **Daniel 5** in the court of Belshazzar (vs.4);
This is the more the major fall in view back in the earlier oracle
- 2) **689 B.C.** – immediate fall of Babylon before it becomes such a major world player – ties into the context of the previous chapter – warning about putting trust in the arm of the flesh – Egypt and now Babylon; idea of dealing treacherously fits this context

Is. 39 [we had looked at the previous chapters last week which dealt with the threat from Assyria and how Judah was tempted to trust in Egypt] – here we see some of the interaction between Judah and Babylon

Martin: passages referring to the fall of Babylon in **539** indicate that it was something about which Israel was to rejoice (because it soon resulted in the return of the Jews to their homeland), whereas this fall of Babylon was terrifying, something to be feared. “The Desert by the Sea” (v.1) most likely refers to the area around the gulf known today as the Persian Gulf, that is, territory near Babylon.

As already mentioned, in Isaiah’s previous oracles (chaps. 13-20) he wrote of the Assyrian incursion into other countries in the ancient world and the effects it had on the Syro-Palestine region. In 722 B.C. a Chaldean prince from the Persian Gulf region, named Marduk-apal-iddina (called Marodach-Baladan in 39:1), revolted against Assyria, captured Babylon, and was crowned king of Babylon. Elam, a nation northeast of Babylon, supported his revolt. Not till 710 B.C. was Sargon able to evict Marduk-apal-iddina from Babylon. After the defeat of Sargon in 705 Marduk-apal-iddina along with Elamite troops revolted against Sennacherib. In 702 Sennacherib finally defeated him (and Elam) and devastated his home area around the Persian Gulf. Undoubtedly Isaiah was prophesying about this situation. Hezekiah, king of Judah, and other members of his royal court felt that Marduk-apal-iddina would be able to break the strength of the Assyrian Empire. But Isaiah was warning them that this would not happen.

Complex Solution:

In this whole section we have seen there is an immediate context and an end times ultimate fulfillment as well; Here it is even more complex – because there is an intermediate context as well – all 3 of these historical and future contexts are in play in this passage – very complicated which lends itself to the vague language that is used; difficult to pin down the specific references; but easy to take away the main principles of the teaching

B. Cosmic Imagery Picturing Unrelenting, Suffocating, Destructive Force of the Attacks

“As windstorms in the Negev sweep on, It comes from the wilderness, from a terrifying land.”

Describing the attacks of that savage and brutal nation = Assyria?? Medes and Persians?? Babylonians?? All of them??

- Unrelenting – wave after wave; they keep springing up; not just one incident
- Suffocating – no place to hide or escape
- Destructive – consumes everything in its path; terrible impact on people’s lives

Imagine being caught in the windstorms that are stirred up from the Negev

Impact = Terrifying – Judah constantly under siege and in danger – still true today

C. Cruel Insight -- No Stopping the Savage Brutality of the Attacks

“A harsh vision has been shown to me;

The treacherous one still deals treacherously, and the destroyer still destroys.”

Isaiah did not long for such a message as this; painful to be shown the incessant nature of such treacherous attacks

No justice or righteousness being administered here; Assyria/Babylon?? is not yet getting what she deserves; the world can be a harsh and treacherous place; the law of the kingdom is not what is being practiced – you don’t see the meek inheriting the earth; you don’t see blessing heaped on those who are poor in spirit; you don’t see humility and a servant spirit being rewarded

Babylon deals treacherously as well – Which nation is in view here??

D. Contrasting Intentions – Arm of the Flesh vs the Providence of the Lord

“Go up, Elam, lay siege, Media;

I have made an end of all the groaning she has caused.”

Difficult to tell who is speaking here and what this is about ...

- Calling upon Elam and Media to join in confederacy against the Assyrians before the fall of 689?
- Calling upon the Medes and Persians to finally conquer Babylonians in 539 and deliver the Jews
- End times application??

Elam not really a factor in the 539 incident – has been subsumed into the Persian kingdom – but from Isaiah’s perspective it was the Medes and Persians that would eventually prove Babylon’s undoing

Think of all of the groaning of the people of God in captivity in Babylon – at some point, God makes an end of this Just as in the last days He will make an end of all of her groaning ... Only God can make an end of all the groaning

But for the prophet, the dominant emotion is not one of rejoicing – but of severe horror over all that God’s people will experience in terms of suffering until that blessed millennial kingdom;

look at all that must happen before there will be a complete end to the groaning

II. (:3-4) THE PAIN EXPERIENCED BY THE PROPHET – ANGUISH OF ISAIAH – HORROR OVERWHELMS GOD’S PROPHET

A. Physical Anguish – Cramping and Labor Pains

*“For this reason my loins are full of anguish;
Pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in labor.”*

Not just hours of labor pains ... but centuries of labor pains that will culminate in some terrifying horrors in the last days

B. Sensory Anguish – Cannot Hear or See

*“I am so bewildered I cannot hear,
so terrified I cannot see.*

So much is going on – Isaiah cannot even wrap his mind around all of the details; but he comes away with the emotional impact of severe anguish

C. Mental and Emotional Anguish – Completely Wasted

*“My mind reels,
horror overwhelms me;”*

He is completely overcome

D. Prolonged and Intensified Anguish

“The twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling.”

Hoped for resolution keeps getting prolonged; it seems like the times of suffering will never end

III. (:5-9) THE PREDICTION ANNOUNCED BY THE PROPHET -- ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FALL OF BABYLON – HOPES CRUSHED BY THE SHATTERING OF THE ARM OF THE FLESH

A. (:5) Complacent Unpreparedness

1. Climate of Feasting

“They set the table, they spread out the cloth, they eat, they drink;”

Third person here does not seem to fit God’s people as well ...

Seems to best fit the context of **Daniel 5** and the Babylonians; They seem unconcerned; complacent; more concerned with comforts of life and entertaining; oblivious to the imminent danger; not standing watch like they should

2. Command to Forearm Your Troops

“Rise up, captains, oil the shields;”

Mobilize; Arm your troops

Bomkamp: The oiling of shields was felt in that day to cause swords and spears to bounce off of the shields.

Cathers: shields were often made out of leather. The leather was oiled to keep it from drying out and cracking.

Or were the shields made out of metal??

Eph. 6 – putting on the whole **armor of God** – you wouldn't want to go into battle unprepared with your armor sitting in the corner all dusty

B. (:6-7) Call to Attention

1. Position the Lookout

“For thus the Lord says to me, ‘Go, station the lookout, ”

2. Commission the Lookout

“let him report what he sees.”

a. Commissioned to Watch

b. Commissioned to Warn

3. Instruct the Lookout

*“When he sees riders, horsemen in pairs, A train of donkeys, a train of camels,
Let him pay close attention, very close attention.”*

This is how the Medes and Persians would attack

C. (:8-9) Crisis Alert

1. Standing Watch

*“Then the lookout called, ‘O Lord, I stand continually by day on the watchtower,
And I am stationed every night at my guard post. ”*

2. Seeing

“Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs.”

3. Shattered Hopes

*“And one answered and said, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon; And all the images of her
gods are shattered on the ground.””*

Look at all that Assyria destroyed in 689 B.C.: crushing the hopes of Judah in terms of trusting in Babylon

- The military power of Babylon
- The culture of Babylon
- The religion of Babylon

This is a foretaste of the further destruction of Babylon in 539 B.C. when all of her hopes were

crushed and then her ultimate demise in **Rev. 14:8; chapters 17-18** where she becomes a representative for the worldwide anti-God system
Again, **all 3 contexts are in view**

IV. (:10) THE PERSPECTIVE MAINTAINED BY THE PROPHET -- APPLICATION BY THE PROPHET OF GOD -- HARD TIMES LIE AHEAD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD BEFORE MILLENNIAL BLESSING

A. Compassion for the Afflictions of God's People

"O my threshed people, and my afflicted of the threshing floor!"

Understand that we will experience much suffering;
Don't be surprised at the calamities that arise among international affairs even in our day;
God is still in control; He uses trials to purify His people;
He will be faithful to His promises about end time blessings

B. Faithfulness to Communicate God's Hard Message

"What I have heard from the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel, I make known to you."

Only the promises of the Word of God bring hope and comfort to an afflicted people

Grogan: The people of Judah, who had already suffered much at the hands of the Assyrians, are depicted as prostrate – and yet alive – like grain that has fallen – bruised and yet safe – on the threshing floor after the thresher has battered it severely with his flail (v.11). The image underlining their helpless condition was also perhaps intended to convey a note of hope. Judah was not chaff but grain, and the Lord Almighty who had used Assyria to bring the downfall of Babylon was also the God of Israel who would protect his people and fulfill his purposes for them. Their main human hope had gone, but this would leave them free to put their trust in the Lord.

CONCLUSION:

I. HARSH VISION OF UNRELENTING ATTACKS

II. HORROR OVERWHELMS GOD'S PROPHET

III. HOPES CRUSHED BY THE SHATTERING OF THE ARM OF THE FLESH

IV. HARD TIMES LIE AHEAD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD BEFORE MILLENNIAL BLESSING

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Does the prospect of your unsaved neighbors ending up in Hell strike you with any sense of horror?

- 2) What are some examples of preachers today shrinking back from preaching the whole counsel of God?
- 3) What are some practical ways we can fulfill our mission today as Watchmen?
- 4) How can we demonstrate compassion for the people of God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Jim Bomkamp: quoting Barry G. Webb: as the eighth century drew to a close, Judah's attention began to swing away from Egypt and towards Babylon as a prospective ally against Assyria (witness the warm reception given to the ambassadors by Hezekiah in 39:1-4). But Isaiah sees in this vision that Babylon, like Egypt is doomed, and so, by implication are those who align themselves with her. . .

Erlandsson writes about how that Sennacherib recorded his victory over the city of Babylon in 689B.C. and how that he filled the city with corpses and that all of the gods of the Babylonians were smashed and the buildings and walls were razed only to have huge amounts of water poured out over their ruins.

Brian Borgman: The Oracle Against Babylon

Immense difficulty in identifying what the prophecy refers to; very cryptic language; what happens to the prophet physically and emotionally as he receives this word from the Lord is the main thing that comes through with clarity; vs. 9 identifies oracle is against Babylon; fell twice – a little fall and a big one; most commentators fall to the Medo Persian destruction in **539 B.C.**; Isaiah lived during time of world power of Assyria; intermediate world power would be Medes and Persians; this is actually Babylon's destruction in **689** from Assyria when they attempted an anti-Assyrian alliance with Judah; Two main reasons persuading me towards the first fall of Babylon before it became a world power:

- Parallels the oracle from Egypt – Egypt attempted to get Judah into anti-Assyrian alliance; Is. 39; why was Babylon being so nice to Hezekiah? Subversive motivation; Hezekiah in moment of weakness and pride shows off for the king of Babylon; prediction of Babylonian Captivity; just concerned selfishly with peace in his times
- Babylon trying to allure Judah into alliance; but they will be slated for massive destruction so there will be futility in trusting in them just as in Egypt

Begins the same way other oracles have begun in this section; *burden*: something that needed to be delivered and something that weighed the prophet down with tremendous responsibility;

“*the wilderness of the sea*” – peculiar statement; fertile crescent with Tigris and Euphrates flowing through it = desert area where Babylon sat; a massive land surrounded by the sea; desert = notion of testing and barrenness

Windstorms come up from the south repeatedly; speaking of Babylon attacking Israel; *land of dread* – reference to wilderness wanderings; Hezekiah plants the seeds that will later grow into Babylonian Captivity where people of God recognize they are in another wilderness wandering;

language of Exodus used for new exodus they will need;

v. 2 – *harsh* – hard, burdensome vision – if this dealt with destruction of Babylon, why would that be so grievous to Isaiah? Time to rejoice for people of God; even at end of age in Rev. 17-18; Ps. 137 prayer – there is rejoicing; Isaiah sees Judah heading down the wrong path;

Assyria is the betraying one who deals treacherously; this would be language used in Is. 31:1; quoting the Babylonian ambassadors – Elam and Media have already taken up arms and joined in; by 539 Elam was not even around; all of the misery that Assyria has caused will cease because we are going to take care of it – boast of Babylon; this is the scenario that fits best

Who cares?? Accuracy of interpreting scriptures is a big deal;

Vs. 3 – start to see the impact of the vision on Isaiah; impacted physically and emotionally so that he talks in terms of terror, horror, anguish, trembling, etc.; God’s revelation came through human beings who have real feelings; not just some detached mechanical view of dictation; some of the men whom God has used the most have known the depths of depression = Luther, Spurgeon (called it melancholy in those days); if we believe the realities of heaven and hell then we are talking about weighty matters; we should be depressed at times; no use for a Christianity that is happy all the day – we sing some of the stupidest songs; there is a seriousness about the things that we believe; unless my neighbors repent they will spend eternity in hell – why doesn’t that weigh us down more?

“*loins are full of anguish*” – doubled over with physical cramping; feel labor pains as if giving birth (used of end times as well); bewildered so you cannot hear anything anyone says; the walls have closed in; so terrified he couldn’t see – his people are about to make the hugest mistake of their whole history

Vs. 4 – my heart beats wildly – having heart palpitations; so much anxiety; his heart was pounding out through his chest; this horror descended upon him and enveloped him and overwhelmed him – fits Is. 39; when he realized what Hezekiah had done, he was horrified;

Night time was a time of rest and meditation for Isaiah; engaged with God and had communion with God; but when this oracle came the night was now terrifying; like when kids are scared of the darkness; a long and horrifying night is coming for the people of God and they don’t even know; **Dan. 8:27** – had just received a fairly lengthy vision; was exhausted and sick for days; same kind of experience; done in emotionally; wasted; physically sick

Vs. 5 – casual, confident way they are approaching life – eating and drinking; “Let’s put oil on the shields” – “anoint” – about to join an alliance with the ungodly and rely on the arm of the flesh and spears and swords and do it under the false notion that it is sanctioned by God; evangelicalism believing that we could bring the nation back to God if we could just anoint a political party and hope that God will bless it; if only we had the right representatives then we could turn this nation back to God; church too absorbed in the culture wars and has forgotten its mission; like battle over homosexuality – in order to keep our culture from going downhill we need to put our time and money in fighting their agenda; salt of earth does not mean we will be a powerful lobbying special interest group; not supposed to baptize the political process; should not just give up on culture and society; but the anointing the church has is on its preaching; the power of the gospel rather than the power of the political process; Augustine had the balance:

citizen of city of man and of city of God which is where the priority always fell; if we have our priorities right we will be good citizens of man; did the Apostle Paul start political campaigns?

Vs. 6 – the vision and its explanation – prophet takes the position of a watchman at his post and reports what he sees; moves from second person to third person but still Isaiah is in view here; the prophet is the watchman on the wall like in Ezekiel 3; the herald has no right to change the message; even though God says the people will not listen to you or respond to the preaching, the herald still needs to be a faithful spokesman in pronouncing judgment; every time you stand and preach you do not have to preach redemption in Christ; sometimes the message can just be of judgment; you don't have the prerogative to change the aroma, just to emit the smell; accurately report everything that you see at that important strategic location

Vs. 7 – “*then he called like a lion*” (marginal reading) – be bold in proclamation; the minister must be a bold mouthpiece of God; look at what passes for preaching and church and worship and Christianity today; we must take preaching seriously and hearing the Word seriously; I can be a laid back person – but intense when it comes to preaching; a false prophet just goes around healing wounds slightly – but God did not send him; in the last days men want teachers to scratch their itching ears – saying “Peace, Peace” when there is no peace; fire comes out of the man of God; 1 Thess. 2:1-5 -- did not come to you as men-pleasers; the prophets preached before an audience of one; there is a price to be paid for such preaching that is faithful and penetrates man's souls; must preach the whole counsel of God; must be a directness about our preaching

Vs. 9 – Assyrian retaliation against Babylon in 689 B.C. – destroyed as a military power and its theology is ruined as well; futile to put your hope in Babylon; this will be true in 586 B.C. and then ultimately in Rev. 17-18 where Babylon transcends the land and stands for an entire ungodly world power;

Vs. 10 – Tenderness of prophet in addressing the people of God; to be a threshed one is not to be in good shape; affliction is coming; life won't be easy; Act 14:22; Word of God sustains the people of God; why the double title for God: Covenant God of Israel in charge of all the armies; covenant promise and covenant protection; hard to maintain the walk of faith and not to compromise

Van Parunak: Burden on Babylon

God's Word speaks to international affairs; trust in God through all the difficulties and challenges that must unfold in this world; Just finished 8 chapters that covered 5 burdens; now we have 5 more burdens in just 3 chapters; these are shorter but much more enigmatic; very abstract; **Motyer** suggests that the first five line up with the second five; chap. 13 and 14 also refer to Babylon = the first burden which has a parallel in the 6th burden; last burden in each section deals with expectation of Gentiles turning to the Lord; God is sovereign over all the earth; brings his judgments against the nations as He pleases; all culminate with the day of the Lord; looking ahead to that time;

When we see disasters around the world in our day; do not be surprised – nothing new; under God's control – He has shown He is able to predict these things; we must not trust in alliances or men's wisdom or the brilliance of our policies; can't find someplace to run away to where we will be safe; world has been falling apart since the beginning

What makes a desert a desert? Less than 2 inches of rain a year; very dry; what characterizes a sea is lots of water; What is Iraq like? Would you call it a desert or a sea? A desert; a terrible place; area where Tigris and Euphrates come together – marshy area -- until Hussein dug canals and tried to drain the marshes; both wet and dry at the same time??

Little local dust storms arise; could develop into huge whirlwind of sand storms;

Prophet describing something he finds very distasteful; many images of dismay and personal pain heaped together; I lament of what God is showing me; a twofold disaster – coming invasion of Jerusalem by Babylon and then the Fall of Babylon itself

Treachery in view is the visit of Babylonian King in Is. 39; Sennacherib is off the picture; trying to form an alliance; came to invade Jerusalem less than 100 years later; Babylon dealt treacherously with Judah

The nations to whom Babylon fell = rise of those Medes and Persians who would destroy Babylon (Elamites had been absorbed by the time of the conquest – but Isaiah would have known them as that at this time)

In time of suffering cling to God's Word; He will bring you through it

TEXT: Isaiah 21:11-17

TITLE: YOU CAN COUNT ON THE FULL EXECUTION OF GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD

BIG IDEA:

THERE WILL BE NO STAY OF EXECUTION WITH RESPECT TO GOD'S JUDGMENT PLANS FOR THE NATIONS – REGARDLESS OF HOW GENERAL OR HOW PRECISE THE REVELATION OF HIS TIMELINE

INTRODUCTION:

Verses 11-17 are definitely related to the earlier oracle against Babylon in the first half of chapter 21 because Edom and Arabia are some of the allied countries that would have taken Babylon's side against the threat of Assyria. It is the invading force of Assyria that all of these nations fear in the short term. It will be the subsequent power of the Babylonian empire that will be prominent down the road. Ultimately, the **Day of the Lord** will bring its own fearsome and cataclysmic judgments before the dawning of the Millennial Kingdom.

We need to remember some of the **common themes** that we have seen throughout this section of judgment against the nations (**chapters 13-23**):

- God is in control of the destinies of all nations – not just concerned with His covenant people Israel – so we know that God is in control of the details of our lives – to say nothing of the turmoil that we see in the warring nations in our day
- What God has planned, He will faithfully carry out in accordance with His timetable; so whether it looks like He is actively working or not, we can be assured that He is accomplishing His gameplan
- There will be both near term impacts in terms of judgment and long term related to the Day of the Lord [and as we saw last week and will be true also in this passage – intermediate impact as well]
- These messages serve as a warning to the pagan nations that they are accountable to the God of Israel, and as an encouragement to God's people that their enemies will be judged
- God does offer a Light to the Gentiles in terms of His mercy and His willingness to graft outsiders into the blessings of His protection and provision
- Main Point: It would be folly to trust in any of these other nations or their gods; You must trust in the Holy One of Israel alone, the Lord of Hosts

But then we need to ask ourselves, “What is **distinctive** about these two oracles? Why did God include them here? What do they contribute to this section on God's judgment against the nations?” What we see here is a **contrast** in these two short oracles regarding how specific or how precise God makes His revelation of prophetic judgment. For **Edom**, God does not give any timetable – despite the desire of the inquirer to know How Long?? But for **Arabia**, the judgment will be swift and be carried out within one year's time. Significance???

But whether the timeframe is indeterminate or of relatively short and defined duration (one year), **the impact and certainty of judgment** against the nations is the same. The issue is not one of duration. It is whether you will repent and return to the Lord and trust in Him alone. Certainly God's people cannot trust in any of these faltering nations who will be defeated and reduced to refugee status themselves. Don't think that God will ease off and take it easy on anybody.

THERE WILL BE NO STAY OF EXECUTION WITH RESPECT TO GOD'S JUDGMENT PLANS FOR THE NATIONS – REGARDLESS OF HOW GENERAL OR HOW PRECISE THE REVELATION OF HIS TIMELINE

In our system of justice, there is always hope of a stay of execution; we put people on death row, but they keep getting 3 squares a day for decades because we can't pull the lever; or in some cases the governor issues a pardon; now there is a huge political movement to abolish the death penalty all together

Mankind always seeks a stay of execution – can you let me off the hook?

I. (:11-12) ORACLE OF DUMAH (SILENCE) – HOW MUCH LONGER? UNCERTAIN TIMELINE BUT HOPE WILL BE FOLLOWED BY EVEN MORE SEVERE HARDSHIP

The Revelation of Silence (Dumah) Introduced

“The oracle concerning Edom.” Or Dumah

Probably not a place name here (we will find about the locality from the later designation of Seir) – change around one letter and move it from the front to the back of the word and instead of Edom, you have **Dumah** = Silence or Stillness – this is the type of silence associated with the dead in the Psalms

Brian Borgman: Silence that accompanies death:

- **Ps. 94:17** *“I would have been a goner, in the place of the dead”* = place of deadly silence; *“If the Lord had not been my help, My soul would soon have dwelt in the abode of silence.”*
- **Ps. 115:17** *“The dead do not praise the Lord nor do any who go down into silence”* -- sometimes silence can be eerie; not here the silence of peaceful communion with God; but devastation and destruction have settled and all is done;

W. Fitch: Perhaps it might be said that the very indefiniteness is the message.

God is not showing His whole hand here – He wants man to seek out His revelation – encourages the inquirer to come back time and again and continue to inquire – however, much we can get of God's Word, we need to digest and act upon – but God is not obligated to share all of the details of His timeline – has no bearing on the certainty of fulfillment and the urgency laid upon us to respond now in repentance and faith

Chiastic structure

A1. The Incessant Inquiry from Edom (Seir)

“One keeps calling to me from Seir,”

Look at how this one from Edom keeps on calling continually – emphasis on the incessant nature of the inquiry – like kids who ask the same question over and over because they have not been satisfied

Martin: Seir is an alternate name for Edom because the mountains of Seir were given as a possession to Esau and his descendants (Josh. 24:4). The name Dumah may be a wordplay on “Edom” since Dumah means silence or stillness. . . More likely, however, Dumah is a

transliteration of Udumu or Udumai, the Akkadian designation for Edom. . . It did not look like the situation would change soon.

Grogan: Seir is the rocky, mountainous area in Edom's heartland – often employed as a symbol for Edom itself (**Num 24:18** – speaking of conquest by the Messiah; Judg 5:4).

B1. Key Question Asked: How Much Longer?

"Watchman, how far gone is the night? Watchman, how far gone is the night?"

Edomites apparently feel that the length of their judgment and darkness has already gone way too long.

Kids asking Dad, "Are we there yet?" What type of trials in our lives have led us to cry out to God, "How long??" health issues, financial hardships – when will I be delivered?

Sense of urgency in asking the question twice

At least the inquirer is asking the right person = Watchman appointed by God

Examine the "How Long" Psalms

B2. Key Question Answered: Uncertain Timeline -- No Permanent Relief Until After the Day of the Lord

"The watchman says, 'Morning comes but also night.'"

Message of Ecclesiastes – futility of life apart from connectivity to the Sovereign God who controls all

Yes, morning is coming (I am not telling you how soon); but don't get too excited or anticipate it too much because after that there will be even more severe hardship; you are not going to escape into some type of nirvana

Oswalt: The guard's answer is enigmatic at best and is capable of at least three interpretations. He may be saying that while morning is coming, another night will follow. Or he may be saying that morning for some will be night for others. Or yet again, he may be saying that while morning will come, it is still dark. Each of these positions has strong advocates and the grammar does not rule out any. In any case, the seer cannot predict unequivocal hope. **He can see some hope, but there is also impending doom.** His invitation for them to inquire again suggests the last interpretation: although morning is surely coming, **it is still night and too early to tell what the day portends for them.** This would fit an eighth-century date, when the near and far events were yet intermingled in the prophet's vision.

[you could combine position #1 and #3 in some form and that is what I would favor]

A2. The Incessant Inquiry Encouraged – Seek Out God's Revelation from God's Watchman

"If you would inquire, inquire;"

"Come back again."

Orient yourself towards repentance and seeking the Lord???

More likely just a simple double statement encouraging them to come back to the watchman at a later date and inquire again

Van Parunak: The oracle consists of a single enquiry uttered during the night. A long, sleepless night could indeed be described as a “*burden of silence*,” particularly when the only one around to talk, the watchman, doesn't say much. . .

Here, the promised fall of Babylon will be followed by further times of difficulty. Each mighty empire in Nebuchadnezzar's vision will bring its own round of oppression and deliverance, all under the Lord's guidance. Cf. Zech 1:17. The morning is coming, but night will again follow, and then morning, and then night, cycle after cycle of trouble until the final great Day of the Lord arrives.

Beall: The watchman theme is continued, as Isaiah speaks briefly against Dumah, i.e., probably Edom (note, however, that **Oswalt** thinks that the reference to Dumah is to the city in northern Arabia known by that name, 300 miles SE of Jerusalem; this view is quite possible [p. 398]—as **Oswalt** explains, Dumah's fate would be of great interest to Edom [Seir] because if it fell, their eastern trade connections would be terminated).

Motyer: God's program is carried forward not only in great dramatic acts (9) but also in long tracts of time when nothing seems to be happening. Isaiah imposed on his enquirer the bitterest medicine of all, the discipline of sticking it out.

II. (:13-17) ORACLE ABOUT ARABIA – PRECISELY ONE YEAR UNTIL FLEEING REFUGEES REDUCED TO A VERY SMALL DEFEATED REMNANT

(:17a) The Oracle about Arabia Introduced

“The oracle about Arabia.”

Matthew Henry: Arabia was a large country, that lay eastward and southward of the land of Canaan; much of it was possessed by the posterity of Abraham. The Dedanim here mentioned, (v.13) descended from Dedan, Abraham's son by Keturah; the inhabitants of Tema and Kedar descended from Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 3, 13, 15. The Arabians generally lived in tents, and kept cattle, were a hardy people, inured to labour; probably the Jews depended upon them as a sort of a wall between them and the more warlike eastern nations; and therefore, to alarm them, they shall hear the burden of Arabia, and see it sinking under its own burden.

A. (:13b-15) The Plight of the Fleeing Refugees

1. (:13b) Caravans of Dedanites Seeking/Providing? Temporary Shelter

“In the thickets of Arabia you must spend the night, O caravans of Dedanites.”

W. Fitch: Dedanites = travelling merchants. The dislocations caused by war and the insecurity which follows to distant places are seen oppressing them. At the time of the Assyrian attacks the merchants have to leave the normal trading routes and lodge in the forests.

Oswalt: Translators are divided as to whether the parallelism dictates that the caravans of Dedan, like the inhabitants of Tema, are to care for the needy, or whether the caravans are the needy to whom the people of Tema bring both food and water . . . this indefiniteness is entirely in keeping with the general lack of specificity in the chapter as a whole.

2. (:14) Inhabitants of Tema Providing Basic Provisions – Water and Bread

“Bring water for the thirsty, O inhabitants of the land of Tema,”

“Meet the fugitive with bread.”

Grogan: Dumah, Tema, and Kedar all occur in Genesis 25:13-16, in the list of Ishmael’s descendents.

Martin: The **Dedanites** (21:13) were a tribe from southern Arabia. **Tema** (v.14; cf. Job 6:19; Jer. 25:23) was a well-known oasis in northwestern Arabia, and **Kedar** (Isa. 21:16-17; cf. 42:11) was in northern Arabia.

3. (:15) Fleeing Refugees Decimated by Battle

“For they have fled from the swords, From the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, And from the press of battle.”

Terrible weapons have been unleashed against these people; they have fled from the unrelenting battle that has decimated their numbers

B. (:16-17a) The Purging of the Fleeing Refugees

“For thus the Lord said to me,”

1. Precise Timeframe for Defeat

“In a year, as a hired man would count it, all the splendor of Kedar will terminate;”

cf. workers who punch a clock; very precise timing of their labor; they are ready to punch out at the appointed hour

how quickly God is able to blow away the glory of man:

Is. 40:8 *“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.”*

James 1:10-11 *“like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.”*

James 4:14 *“You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”*

Job 14:1-2 *“Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth and withers.”*

Ps. 37:1-3 *“Do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious toward wrongdoers. For they will wither quickly like the grass and fade like the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good.”*

By contrast, the person of God and the Word of God endures forever

2. Pitiful Remnant Left Standing

“and the remainder of the number of bowmen, the mighty men of the sons of Kedar, will be few;”

(:17b) The Oracle About Arabia Authenticated

“for the LORD God of Israel has spoken.”

Oswalt: The audacity of such a statement is lost on us today. What does Israel’s God have to do with Babylon or Edom or Arabia? They have their own gods to whom their destiny is committed. Yet the Israelite prophet dares to say that it is *his* God alone who holds the nations in his hand.

Constable: The preceding oracle promised prolonged recurring trouble for Edom, but this one warns that the Arabians would suffer defeat soon. . . The place that refugees from advancing Gentile armies would seek security, Arabia, would soon prove insecure. Israel should not trust in this neighbor but in her Lord.

Martin: In 715 Sargon II wrote that he had defeated a number of Arabian tribes and had them deported to Samaria.

Van Parunak: The other burdens concern the outer arc of the fertile crescent (Babylon, Damascus, Egypt, Jerusalem, Tyre, Philistia), or countries along the inner edge (Moab, Edom). Arabia covers everything in the middle. Their remoteness cannot protect them from the coming judgment. When God’s wrath falls, there is nowhere to hide.

Beall: This prophecy probably refers to 715 B.C., when Sargon defeated a number of Arabian tribes. Though v. 13 refers to a forest, there are not any forests in Arabia. Probably the idea is that the caravans must go far off the beaten path, in order not to be seen, because the enemy is about. Dedan is probably modern al-Ula, 90 miles SW of Tema (which, in turn is 200 miles SW of Dumah). Tema is an oasis where Nabonidus set up his capital during his self-imposed exile from Babylon (549-539 B.C.). vv. 14-15 seem to indicate that Tema will be giving aid to those fleeing the enemy (Sargon?) attacking from the north. According to vv. 16-17, the Lord has told Isaiah that within a year (“figured as precisely as an indentured servant would calculate his time of service” [Oswalt, p. 402]) the glory of Kedar (a region in the NW portion of the Arabian desert, containing the cities mentioned above) will be no more (the glory, v. 16] will have fallen under the weight [v. 15] of the battle; note too the paronomasia of the end of v. 16 [“and all the glory will fail”). As both Oswalt and Young note, in v. 17 there is a long genitive construction describing the military leaders of Kedar, but it is abruptly halted by a single word: “they will be few.” God himself has declared this judgment upon Arabia.

CONCLUSION:

Deut. 29:29 *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”*

The goal is not knowledge of the ways of God ... but obedience

There needs to be a sense of urgency in seeking His wisdom and acting on it – regardless of whether His prophetic timeline is revealed in detail or just in generalities.

YOU CAN COUNT ON THE FULL EXECUTION OF GOD’S PROPHETIC WORD

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What periods of hardship in your life have caused you to cry out to the Lord, “How Long?”
- 2) What are the functions of a watchman and how would you relate those to the spiritual leaders in the church?
- 3) How can the unsaved be deceived by temporary prosperity into overlooking the oncoming certain wrath of God?
- 4) How can we be more diligent to inquire after God’s revelation?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: Dumah refers to the oasis in northern Arabia known today as Dumet ej Jendel. This oasis stood at the intersection of the east-west trade route between the Persian Gulf and Petra and the incense route running northward from the Red Sea to Palmyra. It is about three hundred miles southwest of Jerusalem. The fate of Dumah would be of great interest to the people of Edom, because were it to fall to the enemy, their eastern trade connections would be cut off. Furthermore, as noted above, if a rebellious Babylon wished to influence western Asia against Assyria, the route across the desert would take on increased importance, both to Babylon and to those who looked to Babylon for support. . .

Like the oracle to Babylon, this oracle would apply to both the eighth and the sixth centuries. In the late eighth century, both Sargon and Sennacherib led campaigns into northern Arabia, Sennacherib’s taking him all the way to Dumah. Likewise, in the sixth century the last Babylonian king, Nabonidus, moved his capital to Tema (v. 14), and made a concerted effort to bring the Arabian tribes under his control. So Isaiah’s words could be directed to his contemporaries and yet have larger applicability in the future when God’s trustworthiness and lordship of history would be subjected to an even more severe test.

Phil Pockras: Judgment of Nations

Why all these prophecies about all these heathen lands? God does not just pay attention to those whom He calls “My people.” Nations are threatened and warned and upon them comes destruction. Edomites were distantly related to the Israelites. Came from Esau, Jacob’s older brother; cf. graveyard at night – what would you hear there? Silence, stillness, death; How long are we going to have trouble? How long is this night going to go on? Not asking about repentance; Their present distress will seem to end for a time but more night came;

Van Parunak:

Burden of Dumah -- Probably not a place name here; means Silence = a burden; Isaiah is the watchman; Seir is a place identified with Edom; Can you encourage me down here in Edom? Yes, the Assyrians will be destroyed (morning), but then Babylonians will follow (more night); the continual cycle of world kingdoms; disaster and then recovery and then disaster; God showing that men cannot run the world with any long term success; don’t trust in a short term solution; Parallel to end of chapter 14 to Philistia; Seek ye the Lord while He may be found;

invitation to Edom to come

Burden of Arabia – cf. this to Moab – picture of refugees fleeing from enemy; tragedy of war forces out refugees; Arabia is open area with just sand and a few oasis; you can't escape even if you are just in the desert; not a lot of forest in Arabia; but off the road in the wilderness area; they take refuge where they can hide; Where do they seek help? Not from the Lord; Men seeking help from men is the picture we have here; God is sovereign over all the earth;

Brian Borgman: Oracles Concerning Edom

On the surface, these two oracles seem minor or insignificant; upon scratching a little deeper we see a seed planted here that will blossom in the NT; “*What of the night?*” language is ambiguous and obscure; Dumah = silence; prophets made plays on words to grab attention of audience; takes one letter from Edom and moves it from front to the back so that it means silence; Edom descended from Esau who was a reprobate – “*Jacob I loved and Esau I hated*” – self made, self-willed man; Edom's future fate will simply be the silence of death; But the first picture you get is not one of silence; one coming from mountain range of Seir crying out (present participle) – continually crying out; Isaiah appointed as watchman in last section; here is a pagan Edomite who recognizes the prophet of God as the mouthpiece of God; something unique about Israel's God; How much of the night has passed? How long until morning? Asked twice because of urgency; We all have at least to some degree a sense of that type of question; When is this going to be over? The oppression and tyranny and darkness are too much; Unbelievers feel the pain of the night; have something in them that longs for the dawn; Following the dawn will be another night; If you are going to seek, then seek; If you really want to seek truth then make it the imperative in your life and do everything you can to seek it; Deut. 4 search with all of your heart; Light of the Gentiles (chap. 9) reference; Edom is going to be destroyed, no doubt about it; Shuv = OT word for repentance; make your resolution like that of Ruth: Your God will be my God; attach yourself to the people of God

Oracle Against Arabia

Addressing all of the Arabian tribes which have their lineage through Ishmael; Dedanites = more narrow reference; from Keturah = Abraham's second wife; those dwelling in SE area of Arabia; as the Assyrians come all the way down into Arabia you would have to spend the night out in the thickets and bushes where they would have cover and be safe; invasion would be thorough and intense; amazing geography coverage; the other Arab tribes will have to help with bread and water; not until the Babylonians come in that there will be utter destruction; splendor of northern Arabia would be no more – Assyrians would come in and devastate it; we live in a very pluralistic society today; everybody has a right to their own view of truth; worst thing you can do today is claim the exclusivity of Christianity; we are considered the narrow minded bigots; myth that Christians, Jews and Arabs all worship the same God; they have rejected the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; to dare to speak an authoritative word of truth is reviled today; prophet speaks here to Arabs; we serve the living and true God; Jesus: If you do not believe Me you do not believe the Father; so these other religions worship an idol;

Bruce Parnell: Further words of judgment against nations surrounding Israel – Dumah and Arabia; Edom descends from Esau; Edom helped out invading armies against Israel; one of the smaller clans of Edom; Arabia is a large region with a lot of nomadic tribes; some of these descended from Ishmael; close relatives to the Israelites but outside of the covenant people; some similar themes to earlier prophecies:

- God holds all men everywhere accountable; God is not just concerned with the Jews

- God holds out His hand in mercy to the nations; a warning and an invitation that is given
- This message has application to the Jews to give them assurance that the Lord is active in their situation and ruling over all things

Contrast with regards to God's Timing – on the one case we find somewhat of an imprecise word and a waiting upon God; but with Arabia there is an immediate word given; that contrast is what stands out in the passage; we need to wait upon the Lord with active and urgent expectancy

Dumah: Only 2 short verses; somewhat cryptic; hard to discern; name Dumah means Silence = the way that God seemingly treats Dumah; God has been silent until someone comes from Dumah and asks a question of God's prophet; What is the function of a Watchman? Not sleeping but actively on alert; make sure no enemies come and climb up over the wall while he is on guard; seeing if any enemy is approaching; There is urgency in his question; he needs to know what is going on; How goes it tonight? Is all well? There is some type of relief or peace that will bring to end the present night = difficulty of Assyrian invasions; but that morning will not last = trouble that would overwhelm Dumah; God extends this invitation to seek the Lord and inquire of Him about their condition and their deliverance; they have done the right thing to come and ask of the watchman = coming to ask of God; extends mercy to them; message that is rich with gospel implication; doesn't appear like anything drastic is going to happen immediately; imprecise timing; very different from word to Arabia; don't be deceived by the time of peace

Arabia: Very precise timing of one year; instead of living in your homes or tents you will flee as refugees; they will need help with food and water; though they might be skilled in their archery they will not prevail but will fall within one year's time; confirms this with testimony from the Lord; you need to take immediate action when the siren sounds for coming tornado as opposed to just conditions favorable for tornado

How should we respond in these two different cases? The response is the same = Urgent action called for; when the siren sounds it is evident that you need to take action immediately; you can see the threat; but when the threat may be less well defined, you still need to be alert and take urgent action; appealing to the Lord and waiting upon Him; a stretch of time when it appears as if God is not doing anything;

Expressed elsewhere in the Scriptures in different language; Theme in the Psalms of *waiting upon the Lord* = not just a passive twiddling of the thumbs but has earnest seeking after God with anticipation; expression of faith that we belong to Him; *seeking God's face* (Psalm 27); God invites us to pour out our hearts before Him in prayer; lay our burdens before the Lord; our tendency is to go and to look elsewhere for solutions to our problems; Come to God for solutions; personal duty to watch and pray; the Lord honors this coming to the watchman; today who are the watchman? Come to listen to the ones charged with preaching the Word of God; elders and pastors and teachers charged with guarding the flock He has purchased with His own blood; **Acts 20** – watch, pray, instruct, guard, battle for the flock; think of the responsibility of parents; be watchmen on the walls of your households; **Heb. 13** – obey your leaders and submit to their authority; invitation to come and inquire

TEXT: Isaiah 22:1-14

TITLE: JERUSALEM UNDER JUDGMENT – THE VALLEY OF VISION

BIG IDEA:

THE REFUSAL TO TRUST IN GOD CONSTITUTES THE UNPARDONABLE SIN AS DIVINE PROTECTION IS REMOVED FROM THE SELF RELIANT WHO BLINDLY PARTY THEIR WAY TO DESTRUCTION

INTRODUCTION:

We have been studying the section of chapters 13-23, the judgments against the various nations surrounding Judah. Now we find that there is no home town discount – no free pass for God’s people in His appointed city of Jerusalem. In fact, we are familiar with God’s principle that **greater light actually brings greater accountability**. When you consider all of the privileges of God’s chosen people, His expectation for them (like the parable of the Vine in Chap. 5) is that they would flourish spiritually and produce good fruit. Unfortunately, as we see here from the prophecy God gave to His servant Isaiah, that was not the case.

THE REFUSAL TO TRUST IN GOD CONSTITUTES THE UNPARDONABLE SIN AS DIVINE PROTECTION IS REMOVED FROM THE SELF RELIANT WHO BLINDLY PARTY THEIR WAY TO DESTRUCTION

We are going to see a people that are partying hard – they are feeding every fleshly lust imaginable – they have managed to tune out the message of God’s prophet with his warnings of coming judgment -- but they are about to hit rock bottom.

(:1a) HEADING OF THE ORACLE

“The oracle concerning the valley of vision.”

Cf. the contradictory designation of Babylon in **21:1** as the “*desert of the sea*”

Here we have the place of God-give revelation referred to as a *valley* when we would expect the designation, the *mountain* of God; Mount Zion

Beall: There is not much vision in a valley! (most think “valley” is used here metaphorically and ironically.)

Van Parunak: Jerusalem, though built upon three hills, is itself dominated by the Mount of Olives. Ps 125:2 reminds us that “the mountains are round about Jerusalem.” “In the last days, the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills” (2:2), but today one looks up from Jerusalem to the mountains. When Jerusalem is depicted as a valley, we are looking at her as she is now, vulnerable, subject to sin, and needful of the Lord’s protection (here, Ps 125:2). When she is depicted as above the other mounts, we see her in her millennial glory (e.g., 2:2; Ps 48).

Young: The inclusion of Jerusalem in such a list [of pagan nations under God’s judgment], however, is really not incongruous, for Jerusalem has looked to flesh; she has placed her confidence not in the living God whose prophets dwell within her walls, but in that mighty power of man which finally came to supreme expression in the empire whose name heads the

[list]. For this reason Jerusalem has in effect become like the worldly powers; and she, too, must Be included in the list of oracles.

MacArthur: The unrepentant inhabitants displayed a marked lack of vision in their oblivion to the destruction that awaited them.

Oswalt: Surely the reference to “*vision*” is a sarcastic one, for the people described in this chapter are people whose paramount *lack* is vision. The jubilant people cannot see the inevitable destruction that waits them; the leaders cannot see that God the Sovereign Creator is a better defense than arms and fortifications; ... In fact, then, the people of Israel are no better off than the Gentiles around them. Their perspective is the same as the world’s and therefore they fall under the same judgment as the world.

I. (:1b-3) UNEXPECTED REVERSAL OF FORTUNES

A. (:1b-2a) Bluster Replaced by Despair

1. (:1b) Despair – Last Ditch Retreat

“What is the matter with you now, that you have all gone up to the housetops?”

Borgman: Cf. words of Christ to His mother at the wedding feast of Cana – “What’s your problem, What’s up with you?” Expression of surprise and astonishment and rebuke and repudiation; they have been warned of the impending doom and their response should be repentance and seeking after God; they don’t get it; prophet expected a certain response from the people of God and they did not respond

Different reasons to go up to the flat roof tops – perhaps associated here with partying; or are they viewing in horror the enemy that is besieging them and certain to overwhelm them?? They woke up too late to their fate – seems to be some type of contrast with the beginning of verse 2

Were they rejoicing in the Lord’s deliverance from Sennacherib in 701 B.C. (chaps. 36-37)?

Were they still partying and oblivious to the coming judgment??

More likely, just having their eyes opened to the coming judgment –

2. (:2a) Bluster – Boisterous Party Time

“You who were full of noise, you boisterous town, you exultant city;”

Their lives were characterized by fleshly indulgence; exuberance, noisy partying – **2 Pet. 2:1-10** picture of false prophets excusing a life of sensuality and indulgence while oblivious to the signs of the times

Historical context has multiple layers like we have seen previously; there is the Babylonian Captivity under King Nebuchadnezzar and even end time events that we have difficulty anticipating in the day of the Lord

B. (:2b-3) Bravery in Battle Replaced by Capture in Flight

“Your slain were not slain with the sword, nor did they die in battle. All your rulers have fled together, and have been captured without the bow; All of you who were found were taken captive together, though they had fled far away.”

Death came through starvation or disease

Van Parunak: The city has been besieged, and its citizens die of famine. This was a prevalent problem in 586 BC. E.g.,

Lam 4:9-10 *They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field. 10 The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.*

Recall the flight of King Zedekiah from Jerusalem, when he was captured and brought to the King of Babylon.

Jer 39:4-7 *And it came to pass, that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain. 5 But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him. 6 Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. 7 Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon.*

2 Kings 25:4-7 *“Then the city was broken into, and all the men of war fled by night by way of the gate between the two walls beside the king’s garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. And they went by way of the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho and all his army was scattered from him. Then they captured the king and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and he passed sentence on him. They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon.”*

II. (:4) UNMITIGATED REMORSE OF THE PROPHET

“Therefore I say, ‘Turn your eyes away from me, Let me weep bitterly, Do not try to comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people.’”

“Remorse” = associated with deep grieving and compassion but has the awareness and acknowledgement of guilt as well

Isaiah refuses shallow attempts to cheer him up, to comfort him

The harsh reality of the destruction of Judah overwhelms him

III. (:5-8a) UNILATERAL REMOVAL OF GOD’S COVENANT PROTECTION

“Unilateral” = one-sided; this is God primarily at work in removing the defense of Judah and bringing about this attack on Jerusalem

A. (:5) Divinely Orchestrated Day of Destruction

1. Divine Control

“For the Lord God of hosts”

2. Terrifying Captivity

“has a day of panic, subjugation, and confusion”

Panic = very intense form of anguish

Subjugation = bondage and captivity

Confusion = disorientation; no clear vision and direction

3. Shameful Blindness

“in the valley of vision,”

4. Hopeless Despair

“A breaking down of walls and a crying to the mountain.”

Picture of hopelessness and helplessness

B. (:6) Emboldening of Enemies -- Minor Players Given Starring Roles – Piling On

1. Elam

“And Elam took up the quiver”

2. Military Might

“with the chariots, infantry, and horsemen;”

3. Kir

“And Kir uncovered the shield.”

Motyer: The Hebrew of verse 6 is very rhythmical, being three lines of three words each. It has a drum-beat, marching effect, matching its content. . . “If you could see coming what I see coming, there would be no rejoicing” – Such a forward view makes the reference to Elam intelligible. Isaiah has long known that Jerusalem will fall to some foe, though not to Assyria. It was revealed to him at the time of the Babylonian visit (chapter 39) that Babylon would be the destroyer. This truth is here veiled by referring to Babylon’s remoter ally, Elam, and to the unidentifiable Kir in verse 6. Consequently, the perfect tenses of verses 3-7 must be prophetic perfects, the certainty of the already-decided acts of God.

C. (:7-8a) Description of Defeat

1. Pervasive Penetration

“Then your choicest valleys were full of chariots,”

The enemy was everywhere; superior numbers and superior military strength;
Judah unable to protect their most important valleys

2. Strategic Vulnerability

“And the horsemen took up fixed positions at the gate.”

No way of escape; point of entry was now in enemy control; could be a long term siege or a quick assault; no way to dislodge the enemy from their positions of strategic advantage; the war was essentially over

3. Divine Abandonment = Explanation for such a surprising and total defeat
“*And He removed the defense of Judah.*”

The divine protective covering has been removed

IV. (:8b-11) UNBELIEVING RELIANCE ON THE ARM OF THE FLESH INSTEAD OF TRUST IN GOD

A. (:8b-11a) Depending on the Arm of the Flesh

1. Weapons

“*In that day you depended on the weapons of the house of the forest,*”

MacArthur: Constructed by Solomon out of cedars (1 Ki 7:2-6), the structure housed weaponry (1 Ki 10:17) and other valuables (2 Ch 9:20; Is 39:2).

2. Walls

“*And you saw that the breaches in the wall of the city of David were many;*”

Then you counted the houses of Jerusalem, and you tore down houses to fortify the wall.”

3. Water

“*And you collected the waters of the lower pool.*”

“*And you made a reservoir between the two walls for the waters of the old pool.*”

Motyer: When God [chose to set His name on the city of Jerusalem] he knew all about its vulnerable water supply. It was no accident or oversight; the potter made it so on his wheel. He did not leave his city short of water; Hezekiah did not improve the supply, he only redirected it. But the Lord arranged the supply in such a way that living in Jerusalem was a perpetual exercise of faith, a perpetual challenge to find security in the Lord – and Hezekiah’s tunnel contradicted the way of faith.

B. (:11b) Rejecting Trust in God

“*But you did not depend on Him who made it,
Nor did you take into consideration Him who planned it long ago.*”

Van Parunak: vv. 9-11a describe two steps that they take to prepare for attack: improve the fortifications, and secure the water supply. They are arranged as an alternation. . . The gathering together may refer to routing the rain water collection system to ensure that all possible water is captured in the city's reservoirs. . .

The reference here may be to the 1750's tunnel that Hezekiah dug under the Ophel to bring the water of Siloam to a reservoir within the city walls, in preparation for the anticipated siege of Sennacherib.

2Ki 20:20 *And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?*

2Ch 32:30 *This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David.*

V. (:12-14) UNREPENTANT REVELRY THAT CONFIRMS THEIR CONDEMNATION

A. (:12) Clear Call To Repentance

*“Therefore **in that day** the Lord God of hosts, called you to weeping, to wailing, to shaving the head, and to wearing sackcloth.”*

Distinction between God’s general call to all men to repent and trust in Him = the gospel message and the effectual call where God sovereignly saves those whom He has elected to salvation; Here we are talking about that all important general call to repent:

- This was the message of the prophets throughout the OT
- This was the message of John the Baptist – Repent and prepare the way for the King who is coming to offer entrance into His kingdom
- This was the message of Peter on the day of Pentecost – **Acts 2:38**
- This was the message of the Apostle Paul and all preachers in the NT church
- This had better be the call we are extending every day to those around us

When Christian think of the call to repentance, they usually think of that initial salvation experience – the requirement to repent and believe the gospel. But repentance should be part of the ongoing pattern of a godly walk of growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col. 2:6 *“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”*

1 John 1:9 what characterizes a genuine believer is this ongoing pattern of repentance – *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

B. (:13) Continuation in Unrepentant State of Fleshly Indulgence

“Instead, there is gaiety and gladness, Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine: ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.’”

I like **Ian Wright’s** sermon title: **Party Time on the Titanic.**

Hedonistic life philosophy quoted by Apostle Paul in **1 Cor. 15:32** “If the dead are not raised” – if this life is all there is ... gets back to the certainty of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; there is future accountability

C. (:14) Confirmed Condition of Condemnation – The Unpardonable Sin

“But the LORD of hosts revealed Himself to me, ‘Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you until you die,’ says the Lord God of hosts.”

Better translation: “*even unto death*” – not trying to imply that death will bring any relief or improvement in their status; they remain confirmed in their state of guilt and unforgiveness until the end

CONCLUSION:

Christ talked about the unpardonable in terms of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Anyone who is not receptive to the ministry of the Holy Spirit which is essential for salvation, has doomed themselves to eternal judgment. The warnings in the Book of Hebrews speak to the issue of Apostasy – for those who have been associated with all of the blessings of the true faith, but choose to turn their back and spurn God’s goodness and kindness, there is no recovery.

Heb. 10:26-39

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can people be so oblivious to their coming destruction?
- 2) What are some of the weapons and defense mechanisms of self reliance that we resort to today?
- 3) What causes our hearts to weep for others as Isaiah does here for the people of his city Jerusalem?
- 4) How can we expose for people the folly of adopting a hedonistic and nihilistic philosophy of life?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: This burden has three parts. Each has a different addressee (the city; Shebna, the chief steward; and Eliakim, another palace functionary). In addition,

- 1b-14 is set off by the inclusio describing the inappropriate joy of the people, and other internal symmetry.
- Each of the three sections ends with a summary of divine judgment (vv. 14, 19, 25).

The common theme through the entire oracle is the sin of self-reliance: of a city toward itself, of a powerful man toward himself, of those who trust in a capable and responsible public servant. Our trust is to be in the Lord alone, and he will take away any other source of confidence.

The oracle concerning the city is divided into six paragraphs, arranged A BC BC A. The last three all begin with a reference to the “*day*” (5, 8b, 12).

- The outer layers (A) describe the joy of the people, criticized by the Lord.
- The B sections describe enemy action against Jerusalem. The second member (5-8) is surrounded by additional information that it is the Lord who brings this disaster upon them.
- The C sections contrast Isaiah's response to this threat with that of the people.

Notice the repeated use of verbs of “looking” at the beginning and end of this paragraph (and contrast with Isaiah's command, “look away,” in v.4). Historically, the city has been a place of vision (v. 1), but the people's vision is corrupt and misdirected.

Brian Borgman: Valley of Vision

Designation of “*valley*” has more to do with what is coming upon them than a geographic designation; place of darkness and despair and even death; ironic; Jerusalem was the place of vision and revelation; those who had been so privileged with the law and revelation would soon be in a place where they could not see anymore; the darkest days of Judah’s history are being prophesied; invasion of Babylon in view; people continuing in rebellion (**Amos 8:11** “*a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord*”);

prophetic perfects – talks to them using past tense but referencing future events; there is coming a day when you will die a worse death than by the sword; **Lam. 4:9-10** – these words come to pass during days of Jeremiah; there will be a devastation and horror you do not understand; **Deut. 28:49-57** – cursings for being covenant breakers;

Vs. 3 – your rulers don’t even get their swords out of their sheath; they turn and run and will be caught; these are the ones you are depending on for protection; **2 Kings 25:1ff** – notice the language; Isaiah sees this; captivity and horrors of war coming upon them

Vs. 4 – state of melancholy for Isaiah; beside himself; frustration and despair and anguish; Jews trying to console him; “Lighten up;” times are good, the interest rates are low; you can live with a superficial, phony happiness, but don’t try to change my outlook; let me weep bitterly; he too was the weeping prophet; truth of God gripping the servant of God; loves the people of God and mourns for them

Vs. 5 – moving to the “*day of the Lord*” – any period of time where God visits His people for both blessing and judgment – context determines the emphasis; repeated cyclically through history; this day not only reflects the Babylonian Captivity, but destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and end times; God works according to patterns; panic is bigger than just worry; being brought into bondage; confusion – not knowing which way is up; **Deut. 28:15ff**; “*confusion and rebuke . . . because you have forsaken Me*”; irony = this takes place in the valley of vision where there will be no revelation and light; why were the breaches there in the walls? Neglect by the people of God??

“*crying to the mountain*”

- **Rev. 6:15-17** kings and rulers of the earth see the wrath of the Lamb and cry out for mountains and rocks to fall upon them
- Or could be an allusion to the uselessness of their cryings; they only reach the tops of the mountains and that is all

Vs. 6 – Babylonian allies now join forces; even these little nations have joined in

Vs. 7 – you are going to be up to your elbows in chariots (like tanks) – virtually unstoppable; they were fast; men could fight with swords or bows and arrows from the chariots; Babylonians were the masters of war; a thorough invasion – to be at the gate of a city you were invading was to be at its most vulnerable spot

Vs. 8 – “covering” is the better word – even though all of this has come upon Jerusalem, Judah will come to the place it will be utterly humiliated; left naked; humiliated; **Lam. 1:8**; “*she did not consider her future*”; she will still not be any wiser; God brings discipline on His people to bring them into humiliation so that they will turn back to Him; remember in whom you should trust and hope; looking to Solomon’s armory – built with cedars of Lebanon – looking to military strength; name of God in Psalms = “*My strength*”;

Vs. 9-11 – unique and intense tragedy; but Judah still remains self sufficient; city of David was point of great pride for the Jews; where God’s name dwelt; “*I love the gates of Jerusalem more than all the tents of Jacob*,” God can give two hoots about our nostalgic and nationalistic feelings; He doesn’t get teary-eyed at The Star Spangled Banner; walls are now in utter ruin; trying to store enough water for contingency of water supply being shut off; counting houses so they know which ones to tear down to get construction materials to fix the breaches in the wall; making preparations as the enemies close in; great failure = their self sufficiency; depending on walls and water and weapons; your problem is that you forgot Me; Good to make preparations ... but take action in faith – in dependence upon God; Rom. 4 – Abraham trusted in the Lord as the preeminent way to magnify God; God is infuriated when His people fail to trust Him; I am worthy of being your refuge and strong tower;

Vs. 12 – Call to repentance; not just external forms; Pharisees were good at just doing the outward forms; external symbols of what should be internal reality; genuine heartfelt repentance; We have the temple of the Lord; we are special; nothing will happen to us; instead they should have had a broken and contrite heart; Don’t minimize the external call of commanding all men to repent; they will be held accountable for refusing that call; even though we know that men can only respond when God makes the call effectual and invincible;

Vs.13 – a little bit of an enigma; is Isaiah talking about his day or still looking into the future? Both are true; they didn’t heed Isaiah’s call or Jeremiah’s call; they respond with nihilistic hedonism (Nothing matters / pleasure matters the most); indulging instead of fasting; throwing a party instead of mourning; what a wicked philosophy on life;

Vs. 14 – This iniquity will never be atoned for even unto death; (NASV not clear here); there is such a thing as an unpardonable sin; to reject God’s mercy and to refuse repentance is unforgiveable; **Jonathan Edwards**: “there is no wrath like that stirred up by mercy scorned;” **Rom. 2:4**; scorning the kindness of God; every day unbeliever is adding to his account in the First Bank of the Wrath of God with compounded interest; One day God will empty out the account; Isaiah a type of Christ the Suffering Servant who wept over Jerusalem;

Bruce Parnell: The Valley of Vision: Prophecy Against Jerusalem for Refusal to Repent

Vs. 14 makes me shudder; cf. message in Hebrews about trampling underfoot the blood of Jesus to the point where there is no opportunity for repentance; “valley of vision” – title given to the entire nation of Judah; God’s covenant people in the middle of all of these pagan nations also labeled as under judgment and needing repentance; title of honor but shows how shameful their situation was in light of the privilege of God’s light and revelation; they had covered their eyes and plugged their ears; had come to neglect God’s Word and ways; pursued their own wisdom; not atonement for refusal to repent;

Vs 2-4 – prophetic perfects – shows the certainty that this will come about; great change takes place in the midst of celebration; houses had flat roofs; people would go up there for a variety of

reasons – here because it is their last defense – there are enemy soldiers in the street breaking down the doors; this is their last refuge; sound of soldiers marching in the streets; horses and chariots chasing down those who are trying to get away; very different sounds than that of a party;

Note Isaiah's compassion; he is not taking delight in this judgment; God continues to warn His rebellious people; weeping here; cf. Jesus weeping over Jerusalem because they would not repent;

Vs. 5-7 – Elaborate on the judgment that falls; this day of judgment comes from the Lord; not just a chance circumstance; God is the author of this judgment;

Vs. 8-14 – Recount steps along the way to that judgment; especially refusal of Judah to repent when chastised by God; Jews looked to their own defenses – what they could do to defend themselves; summer retreat or garrison of soldiers and weapons? We will be OK because those soldiers will come and break through this siege and deliver us; didn't happen; collected their water; built a larger reservoir; fortified the walls where they were weak; taking stones from other houses they tore down; they did everything they could think of that was humanly possible to stave off this siege; but isn't that the point? They stopped at human efforts; acted as if God were an afterthought – even worse – that God was not even a factor; your last and first refuge should be God and God alone – not the rooftop; look at the depth of their self reliance;

When God warns we should listen; repentance is a mark of a man after God's own heart like David being confronted by Nathan; sober warning here; Heb. 10; if you refuse to repent there is no atonement and Christ is not for you; Message of Peter on Day of Pentecost = Repent and believe

TEXT: Isaiah 22:15-25

TITLE: *YERTLE THE TURTLE CONDEMNED IN THE CHURCH --
SELF-RELIANCE CONDEMNED IN TWO CONTRASTING LEADERSHIP MODELS*

BIG IDEA:

SELF-RELIANCE LEADS TO CONDEMNATION – WHETHER THE FAULT LIES WITH THE LEADER (AND HIS PRESUMPTUOUS SELF PROMOTION) OR WITH THE PEOPLE (AND THEIR PROCLIVITY FOR HERO WORSHIP)

INTRODUCTION:

In the first half of the Oracle of the Valley of Vision directed against Jerusalem, we saw the big picture of what happens when a nation forgets God and chooses to trust instead in their own defenses. God brings devastating panic and bondage and confusion. We saw Isaiah weeping over the apostasy of God’s people who were immersed in a culture of self indulgence and frivolity when they should have been weeping in genuine repentance over their careless indifference and carnal partying. This unbelief on their part constituted the unpardonable sin.

In the second half of the chapter, the same theme of condemning self-reliance is developed by looking at specific case history of two particular individuals – Shebna and Eliakim. We have jumped from the big picture to a very specific Pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey approach. These two prominent leaders represent two very different types of failures that lead to the same end result.

2 CONTRASTING LEADERSHIP MODELS INVOLVING PROMOTION AND CONDEMNATION

I. (:15-19) EXAMPLE OF PRESUMPTUOUS SELF PROMOTION LEADING TO CONDEMNATION = SHEBNA

Pronunciation: *sheb-naw'*

A. (:15-16) Exposing Self Promotion

“Thus says the Lord God of hosts, ‘Come, go to’”

1. Prominent Role of Shebna

“this steward, to Shebna, who is in charge of the royal household,”

Might sound to us like some type of lower level servant – almost like the butler in a Downton Abbey – but actually this position is second only to King Hezekiah; he is functioning as the chief of staff; he is in charge of the daily affairs of the kingdom; like the position Joseph had in the house of Potiphar and royal court of Pharaoh (Gen. 39:4; 41:40)

Young the phrase *“this steward”* probably contains a shade of contempt . . . this position, borrowed from Egypt, was probably “a threat to the true nature of the kingship and the theocracy”

He controls **access to the King** – very critical function

[cf. Isa 36:3,11, 22; 37:2]

2. Perverse Intentions -- Challenging the Authority and Heritage of This Outsider

*“What right do you have here,”
“And whom do you have here,”*

Almost identical question that the prophet had for the nation back up in **verse 1**

Exactly what are your intentions? What are you trying to accomplish? What is your motivation? How loyal are you to God’s agenda and God’s kingdom purposes?

Motyer: The first interrogative (*ma*) questions Shebna’s personal right, the second (*mi*) implicitly denies him a position by reason of family name.

Oswalt: Probably Shebna had come out from the city in a handsomely equipped chariot (v. 18) to survey the work on his memorial. He may have been feeling particularly expansive and pleased with himself. If so, these biting words must have been especially humiliating. This kind of experience was typical of the prophets: when they were least wanted, in moments of fear or pride or self-sufficiency, that was the moment they appeared.

He is outed as a **usurper**

Name of his father not given; possibly from an Egyptian family; from the intensity of the prophet’s rebuke it would seem that more was involved than just his mindset of selfish ambition; probably was advocating for some type of Egyptian alliance to protect the nation against the Assyrian threat

Beall: It may be simply that Shebna was advocating pro-Egyptian policies (see chaps. 30-31).

Van Parunak: Isaiah here suggests that he is an opportunistic intruder with no real interest in Jerusalem.

3. Presumptuous Self Promotion – Seeking a Kingly Legacy in Jerusalem

*“That you have hewn a tomb for yourself here,
You who hew a tomb on the height,
You who carve a resting place for yourself in the rock?”*

The king’s tombs were very impressive back in those days; just think of the Egyptian pyramids

Motyer: His tomb-making aimed at **permanence** (hewing, rock), **prominence** (on the height) and **self-perpetuation** (your resting place/‘a dwelling for himself)

Young: Shebna wants a luxurious sepulcher, and this personal desire overshadows his concern for the welfare of the nation.

B. Explaining the Problem of Self-reliance on the Part of the Leader and His Selfish Ambition -- Seeking Fame and Power and Perks

What type of leadership did Shebna demonstrate?

Cf. our political leaders

Cf. our spiritual leaders in the church

Look at the example of the apostles themselves when they engaged in self promotion – **Matt. 20:20ff; Mark 10:35ff**

Certainly Shebna is no type of Christ

C. (:17-19) Pronouncing Condemnation

1. Contrast Between Majestic Sovereignty and Imagined Sovereignty

“Behold, the LORD is about to hurl you headlong, O man.”

“And I will depose you from your office, and I will pull you down from your station.”

Statements like bookends or another chiastic structure here –

Young: The cognate accusative lends force to the statement, *throw thee out a throwing*.

Van Parunak: The word rendered “*mighty captivity*” is literally “hero, champion.” It is likely a sarcastic statement: “*The Lord will carry thee away, you Big Man.*”

2. Captivity as a Nobody in a Vast Abyss

“And He is about to grasp you firmly, and roll you tightly like a ball, to be cast into a vast country;”

Motyer: Presumably, Shebna was removed to Assyria in one of Sennacherib’s forays, but this is not recorded. Shebna’s self-glorification, epitomized by his *splendid chariots* brought no security.

3. Death, Dispossession and Degradation

a. Death

“*There you will die,*”

Oswalt: Not *here* in dignity and honor (v. 16), but *there* in disgrace and ignominy. In many different ways the Bible tells us that true honor and glory come to us as gifts from God. That which we grasp for ourselves, like the manna kept overnight (Exod. 16:20), will only decay and grow foul.

b. Dispossession

“*And there your splendid chariots will be,*”

His private collection of fancy toys and fast sports cars – all of the things he spent his life accumulating and worshipping

Van Parunak: One way a king honored a high official was to provide a special chariot:

Gen 41:43 *And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.”*

c. Degradation / Humiliation

“*You shame of your master's house.*”

No honorable legacy for Shebna – he will be remembered all right – but for all the wrong reasons

Beall: v. 19 indicates that ultimately Shebna would be banished, though for the time being he was apparently only demoted to scribe.

II. (:20-25) EXAMPLE OF HERO WORSHIP RESULTING FROM DIVINE PROMOTION BUT STILL LEADING TO CONDEMNATION = ELIAKIM

Pronunciation: ee-LAI-uh-kihm

A. (:20-23) Extolling Divine Promotion – 8 Key Points to this Description of the raising up of Eliakim:

Only 4 short verses – but beautiful and powerful – express so much truth that is compressed into such a small window – this is why we study the book of Isaiah – we would be impoverished spiritually to the extent that we miss out on these precious gems that God has provided

1. The Significance of the Time Reference (repeated in vs. 25)

“Then it will come about in that day,”

Lord of Hosts is in control of all events and all nations and all individuals – no matter how important they might seem in their own right

Eliakim is going to be a **type of the Messiah** to come – there are end times implications for all that is said here

There is a special day coming that God wants His people to look for and anticipate

2. The Emphasis on Divine Initiative – repeated use of “I”

“That I will summon”

The exact opposite of self promotion as seen under Shebna; accomplishing the role reversal
2 Kings 18:18

3. The Identification of *Eliakim* – Threefold reference:

a. Significance of designation as *“My servant”*

Van Parunak: This phrase is applied to our Lord in **Rev 3:7**. Later in Isaiah he will frequently be called *“the servant of the Lord.”* The Messiah is the ultimate one with authority over David's house, and in this sense Eliakim, the royal steward who serves faithfully in the place of self-serving Shebna, is a type of our Lord as Jehovah's faithful servant. . .

b. Significance of name *Eliakim* -- means *“God will raise up”*

c. Significance of designation of his father – *“the son of Hilkiyah”*

“Yahweh is my portion”; so Eliakim is a legitimate heir; not a usurper

4. The Investment with Authority to Govern

a. By virtue of his Clothing

*“And I will clothe him with your tunic,
And tie your sash securely about him,”*

Clerics like to put on special clothing and gain for themselves instant respect and credibility –

something that distinguishes them from the laity; “Look at me, I am special”

Oswalt: The terms used here for *robe* and *sash* appear elsewhere only for garb worn by the priests. This does not mean necessarily that the court officers had usurped the prerogatives of the priests, but rather that there were standard terms for ceremonial clothing.

- b. By virtue of his Commissioning
“I will entrust him with your authority,”

All authority derives from God; He gives it to whom He will
Look at the Great Commission where the Head of the Church invests all of us with His authority to evangelize and disciple the world

- 5. (:21) The Characterization of His Leadership – Shepherding Model vs Domineering
“And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.”

Beall: Eliakim will exhibit paternal care and love for his people, not self-serving pride.

1 Thess. 2:11

Genuine care; self-sacrificing love
Still requires strength to protect and provide and guide and nurture

- 6. (:22) The Exclusive Sovereignty of His Governing Role -- Metaphor of the Key of the Kingdom

*“Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder,
When he opens no one will shut,
When he shuts no one will open.”*

Motyer: *Key* – the authority to legislate and make binding decisions

Symbol of Power, control, authority

This language goes way beyond Eliakim; specifically applied to Christ in the NT (**Rev. 3:7**);
People are either inside the kingdom or shut out on the outside; Christ holds the key –
He is the Door to the sheepfold – only way of entrance; **John 14:6**

Look at how Christ gave Peter the keys to the kingdom in similar delegated fashion (**Matt. 16:19**)

- 7. (:23a) The Security that Provides an Anchor of Stability for God’s People
“And I will drive him like a peg in a firm place,”

Initial connection would be with the image of tent peg – anchoring the tent securely to the ground; but the next 2 verses make plain that the reference is to a peg driven into a wall to hang objects on;

The peg of the Messiah is one that can never be removed (not so for Eliakim)

Our lives our built on the Solid Rock of Jesus Christ, the anchor of our soul; not shifting sand

Solid Foundation

8. (:23b) The Majestic Glory of His Legacy

“And he will become a throne of glory to his father's house.”

Shebna desired a majestic glory for his legacy ... but was consigned to an ignominious death in a far away country in relative obscurity and shame

Van Parunak: Two metaphors are combined chiastically.

- **A throne.** The expression probably means, not “glorious throne,” but “a throne on which glory sits,” that is, he will be the podium from which the family's glory will shine forth.
- **A nail.** The purpose of the nail is not to hold boards together, but as a storage mechanism, on which things of value are hung.

Note “*They shall hang upon him.*” The people see his reliability,. He is far more reliable than Shebna. But the people are still addicted to self-reliance. Now they put their trust in him, and as a result, judgment must fall.

B. (:24) Problem of Self-reliance in the Form of Hero Worship on the Part of the People

So they will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, offspring and issue, all the least of vessels, from bowls to all the jars.”

Cryptic verse – but the key to understanding vs. 25 – goes way beyond the problems of nepotism

The tendency of humans is to put their trust in a prominent leader – one who has special charisma; or special giftedness – they **hang their hopes** on their identification with him rather than trusting directly on the Lord God.

- This happens in the arena of political governing
- This happens in the arena of the church

It is incumbent upon the spiritual leaders not to encourage such behavior (even though they may like the attention and the perks) but rather to point people to faith in Christ; emphasize that they are but the channel; they are using spiritual gifts they have been given; they do not have inherent greatness

Motyer: . . . the trust which should be reposed in the Lord is transferred to a human being. Just as an individual is not sufficient for himself (Shebna) neither is he sufficient for others (Eliakim). . . The collapse comes by a combination of internal weakness (*give way*) and external action (*be sheared off*), for no-one is sufficient to be “*the trusted one*” nor will the Lord allow it.

C. (:25) Pronouncing Condemnation

“In that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘the peg driven in a firm place will give way; it will even break off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off, for the LORD has spoken.”

Oswalt: Commentators have had difficulty with this verse because it seems to reverse field so

abruptly. How can Eliakim, who has been so roundly praised, be the one who fails and is cut off? For it is surely Eliakim to whom reference is being made. However, reflection shows that a word on Eliakim's fall is not at all unlikely in this setting. Over and over Isaiah had to say that any word of present deliverance was only temporary and that any word of future hope was beyond the fire. Thus it is not surprising that the prophet would hasten to add that despite his faithfulness and the lofty things said about him, Eliakim was merely human and that if the nation reposed all its hopes in him, those hopes would certainly be dashed. The nation's only hope was in God and in that kind of repentance which would enable whole-hearted commitment.

Surprising conclusion – **The Peg of Man** will disappoint – no matter who the man is
I would not want my spiritual fortunes hanging on the peg of Joel Osteen
But the point of the passage is – make sure that you are not hanging your spiritual fortunes on the **best** human spiritual leader you can think of – say John MacArthur or any of the famous preachers on the radio or TV
The Peg of Man cannot support you – it will give way; it will break off and fall – you will be left with a broken life – you must put your faith in the Lord alone

Maybe there was something that Eliakim could have done better to divert the attention of the people back to God ... maybe the fault was all on the side of the people

The Mark of a Diotrephes – when he is confronted and challenged to consider whether he is exalting himself and promoting himself as a **Shebna** – he will lash out and be defensive; he won't even seriously consider the exhortation – His intentions are to promote himself – he just doesn't want to get exposed; He loves to take the seat at the head of the table; he loves the adulation of the assembly; he can't get enough respect and appreciation; he has an insatiable appetite for more prominence and power; On the other hand, Eliakim was no Shebna ... but still the people got it wrong

Borgman: “Even the best of man is only man at best”

John the Baptist had it right: “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” **John 3:30**

CONCLUSION:

Yertle the Turtle

by dr. seuss

On the far-away island of Sala-ma-Sond,
Yertle the Turtle was king of the pond.
A nice little pond. It was clean. It was neat.
The water was warm. There was plenty to eat.
The turtles had everything turtles might need.
And they were all happy. Quite happy indeed.

They were... untill Yertle, the king of them all,
Decided the kingdom he ruled was too small.
"I'm ruler", said Yertle, "of all that I see.
But I don't see enough. That's the trouble with me.
With this stone for a throne, I look down on my pond
But I cannot look down on the places beyond.

This throne that I sit on is too, too low down.
It ought to be higher!" he said with a frown.
"If I could sit high, how much greater I'd be!
What a king! I'd be ruler of all that I see!"

So Yertle, the Turtle King, lifted his hand
And Yertle, the Turtle King, gave a command.
He ordered nine turtles to swim to his stone
And, using these turtles, he built a new throne.
He made each turtle stand on another one's back
And he piled them all up in a nine-turtle stack.
And then Yertle climbed up. He sat down on the pile.
What a wonderful view! He could see 'most a mile!

"All mine!" Yertle cried. "Oh, the things I now rule!
I'm the king of a cow! And I'm the king of a mule!
I'm the king of a house! And, what's more, beyond that
I'm the king of a blueberry bush and a cat!
I'm Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me!
For I am the ruler of all that I see!"

And all through the morning, he sat up there high
Saying over and over, "A grat king am I!"
Until 'long about noon. Then he heard a faint sigh.
"What's that?" snapped the king
And he looked down the stack.
And he saw, at the bottom, a turtle named Mack.
Just a part of his throne. And this plain little turtle
Looked up and he said, "Beg your pardon, King Yertle.
I've pains in my back and my shoulders and knees.
How long must we stand here, Your Majesty, please?"

"SILENCE!" the King of the Turtles barked back.
"I'm king, and you're only a turtle named Mack."

"You stay in your place while I sit here and rule.
I'm the king of a cow! And I'm the king of a mule!
I'm the king of a house! And a bush! And a cat!
But that isn't all. I'll do better than that!
My throne shall be higher!" his royal voice thundered,
"So pile up more turtles! I want 'bout two hundred!"

"Turtles! More turtles!" he bellowed and brayed.
And the turtles 'way down in the pond were afraid.
They trembled. They shook. But they came. They obeyed.
>From all over the pond, they came swimming by dozens.
Whole families of turtles, with uncles and cousins.
And all of them stepped on the head of poor Mack.
One after another, they climbed up the stack.

Then Yertle the Turtle was perched up so high,
He could see forty miles from his throne in the sky!
"Hooray!" shouted Yertle. "I'm the king of the trees!
I'm king of the birds! And I'm king of the bees!
I'm king of the butterflies! King of the air!
Ah, me! What a throne! What a wonderful chair!
I'm Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me!
For I am the ruler of all that I see!"

Then again, from below, in the great heavy stack,
Came a groan from that plain little turtle named Mack.
"Your Majesty, please... I don't like to complain,
But down here below, we are feeling great pain.
I know, up on top you are seeing great sights,
But down here at the bottom we, too, should have rights.
We turtles can't stand it. Our shells will all crack!
Besides, we need food. We are starving!" groaned Mack.

"You hush up your mouth!" howled the mighty King Yertle.
"You've no right to talk to the world's highest turtle.
I rule from the clouds! Over land! Over sea!
There's nothing, no, NOTHING, that's higher than me!"

But, while he was shouting, he saw with surprise
That the moon of the evening was starting to rise
Up over his head in the darkening skies.
"What's THAT?" snorted Yertle. "Say, what IS that thing
That dares to be higher than Yertle the King?
I shall not allow it! I'll go higher still!
I'll build my throne higher! I can and I will!
I'll call some more turtles. I'll stack 'em to heaven!
I need 'bout five thousand, six hundred and seven!"

But, as Yertle, the Turtle King, lifted his hand
And started to order and give the command,
That plain little turtle below in the stack,
That plain little turtle whose name was just Mack,
Decided he'd taken enough. And he had.
And that plain little lad got a bit mad.
And that plain little Mack did a plain little thing.
He burped!
And his burp shook the throne of the king!

And Yertle the Turtle, the king of the trees,
The king of the air and the birds and the bees,
The king of a house and a cow and a mule...
Well, that was the end of the Turtle King's rule!
For Yertle, the King of all Sala-ma-Sond,
Fell off his high throne and fell Plunk! in the pond!

And to say the great Yertle, that Marvelous he,
Is King of the Mud. That is all he can see.
And the turtles, of course... all the turtles are free
As turtles and, maybe, all creatures should be.

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does one transition from a mindset of being a steward to one of presumptuous self ambition?
- 2) What are some of the perks that spiritual leaders could selfishly strive after?
- 3) How can we better appreciate the sufficiency of Christ who never disappoints our hopes and expectations?

4) Are there any leaders in whom we are investing too much devotion or trust instead of looking directly to the Lord for our hopes?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Young: For a proper understanding of the situation we must briefly consider the nature of the theocracy. The kingdom of God was to be a nation in which God Himself ruled. His human representative was the king, who was to be a man after His own heart. In his entire life the king was to exemplify the justice and righteousness of the God for whom he acted. Indeed, he was a type of the great King to come, the Messiah. In the administration of the divine government, it was to be expected that the king would have helpers; but none would occupy his own central position . . . One office, however, which was very prominent in Egypt is notable in the Israel of David's day for its absence. That is an office corresponding to the vizier. In the erection of such an office, there might very well be a threat to the true nature of the kingship and the theocracy. A king, such as David, who was determined to honor God in all his dealings, and who understood the nature of the theocracy, would see this danger. AT the time of Solomon, on the other hand, when worldliness had entered in and the true character of the theocracy was no longer a concern, such an office might be created. . . In Isaiah's day at any rate the position had grown in significance, so that it overshadowed both that of scribe and recorder and probably other offices as well. . . Probably the safest thing to say is that he was second to the king. His position then, if unwisely or wickedly employed, would be a threat to the theocracy. Inasmuch as Shebna occupied a position of such great significance and was misusing that position, Isaiah calls attention to the office as well as to the man.

Motyer: Eliakim, in contrast, ran the risk of becoming the one whom others trust (see below on verses 23b–25) and in this exposes another alternative to the way of true faith. The reliable office-holder attracts to himself the respect and confidence of people, but should this become a reliance on a human person replacing reliance on the Lord, the end is calamity (25)—both for the person who is thus foolishly trusted and for those who find their security in him or her. Thus human beings are neither self-sufficient (Shebna) nor sufficient for others (Eliakim). In each case there is a fatal usurpation of the place due only to the Lord. Isaiah reiterates the message of 2:22, 'Stop trusting in man'.

Constable: The oracles against Shebna and Eliakim that follow are the only ones on individuals in chapters 13—27. They show that the choice between faith and works, with its attending results, is individual as well as national. They also provided immediate signs of the prophecies that Isaiah gave here concerning the fate of Jerusalem in the future. Shebna was as self-reliant individually, as the people of Jerusalem were collectively (vv. 15-19). Eliakim was an object of trust by the members of his family and the residents of Jerusalem and so risked taking the Lord's place in their affections (vv. 20-25).

Brian Borgman: Valley of Vision – Pt. 2

Our joy must be rooted in reality; not the frivolous, superficial, shallow type of joy that marks our day; Your problem is you didn't repent and you didn't trust God; moving from national scene to these two examples; Egyptians want to form an alliance with Hezekiah; Shebna advocating for an Egyptian alliance; brings the wrath of God;

Vs. 16 -- Why are you in the position you are in – in Jerusalem, the capital of the people of God; you don't really belong here; no family ties or blood lines; cf. draft dodgers who become part of the White House – you don't belong here; What gives you the right to a full royal burial; the nation is falling apart and he is making sure his tomb is a place he will be remembered for generations to come; using his power and position to make a name for himself

Vs. 17 – “*Behold*” – the word of attention; God is going to act; you think you are BMOC but you are nothing; you are a squirt; He is about to violently hurl you right out of office; Hebrew doesn't have a bunch of adjectives and adverbs like English – they double or triple up words to make a more colorful image; crumple them up like yesterday's newspaper; language is emphatic; getting him as tight as possible so he will fly further;

Shebna a mirror image of the nation as a whole; brought forward as an example of judgment; our political leaders are a mirror image of our society – God has given us what we are;

Eliakim -- “*my Servant*” – important title in Isaiah; given to the Lord Jesus Christ; God will raise up and establish as opposed to Shebna;

Can't imagine looking at any of our current political leaders as a father figure; comfort and source of strength

Will hold things together as a tent peg; brings stability; wickedness in the king would undermine stability; Eliakim is the exception to the rule as a godly leader

Vs. 24 – nepotism = to show favoritism to family members; from immediate family members to obscure fifth cousins; they come out of the woodwork and cling to his fame and position and prestige; he doesn't do anything about it; he will let everyone hang on his peg; he is still a fallen human being and gives in to the pressure of fame and position; it is sad; we like stories that end well; we would like Eliakim to ride off into redemptive history with no spots or wrinkles; the overseer should not be a new convert so that he would not give into pride = the desire to get the fringe benefits out of the position; all of the heroes in the bible have flaws and sins

Principles:

- It is good and right to hope for and work for the replacement of selfish leaders with godly leaders; that's what Geneva was all about and the New England Puritans; all rulers should be subject to God; bad leaders are a scourge in the hand of God – still put there by God
- The best of men are still men at best – fallen and sinful and imperfect; their service will be imperfect
- Eliakim's failures actually point us to the glories of the true Servant of God; Messiah will be the truly selfless servant, exalted servant; shepherd king; who will rule in righteousness; Rev. 3:7; He admits and excludes from the kingdom; Col. 1:17 – holds all things together; shares His reign with His family

Van Parunak:

Joseph was over the house of Potiphar and then Pharaoh; Shebna = foreigner who has weaseled out for himself a position of prominence; had a lot of wealth; digging a big tomb; you think you are so big; didn't come to submit to the Lord; when Manasseh was taken into Assyria is probably when Shebna was hurled into vast country; official conveyance (chariot) to mark his importance;

all those marks of honor will be reversed; you have relied on your money; the city relied on its military defenses; the faithful servant replaces the faithless servant; a throne upon which glory sits; pegs are used to hang valuable things on; the people place their trust in Eliakim rather than in the Lord; no matter how much wisdom or integrity the leader has; we live in a country that values self-reliance (the pioneer spirit);

TEXT: Isaiah 23:1-18

TITLE: JUDGMENT ON TYRE – THE PRIDE OF EARTHLY AFFLUENCE

BIG IDEA:

GREEDY CAPITALISM WITH ITS ROOT MOTIVATION OF PRIDEFUL SELF-SUFFICIENCY WILL BE JUDGED BY GOD AS PROSTITUTION – YET A REMNANT WILL BE RESTORED AND SANCTIFIED

INTRODUCTION:

We come to the conclusion this morning of Isaiah’s section of Ten Oracles of Judgments against various nations – chapters 13-23. The theme has been constant: You cannot trust in the nations around you or in the arm of the flesh ... you must trust completely and exclusively in the Lord Himself.

Most times the context has been one of political and military tension. Here as the spotlight focuses on Tyre, the context is more that of the world of **commerce** and **economics**. This is a message directed against Wall Street where “*The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.*” Who is more driven by the love of money than the heroes of capitalism that work the trading desks of Wall Street. Apart from submission to God, their motivation is distinctly greedy and selfish – How can I leverage the funds at my disposal to make the most money possible. They long to be applauded as successful and smart and perceptive. They want the mutual fund that they manage to be given rave reviews.

We participate in the activities of Wall Street as we open up the Wall Street Journal every morning to track the progress of our stock portfolio; to see how our 401K plan is performing. We live in a culture that stands at the pinnacle for all time as the most prideful in terms of earthly affluence. Look at us! Look at what we have accomplished! Look at what we possess! We need to be very careful to listen to God’s words of judgment to this hub of commerce of the ancient world.

GREEDY CAPITALISM WITH ITS ROOT MOTIVATION OF PRIDEFUL SELF-SUFFICIENCY WILL BE JUDGED BY GOD AS PROSTITUTION – YET A REMNANT WILL BE RESTORED AND SANCTIFIED

Definition of Capitalism: An economic system based on a free market, open competition, profit motive and private ownership of the means of production. In such a system, individuals and firms have the right to own and use wealth to earn income and to sell and purchase labor for wages with little or no government control. The function of regulating the economy is then achieved mainly through the operation of market forces where prices and profit dictate where and how resources are used and allocated.

I am not condemning Capitalism here and lobbying for some other economic system like socialism. I am saying that God is opposed to **Greedy Capitalism** where the materialistic mindset is prominent with a motivation of prideful self-sufficiency – where wealth is pursued from a motivation that does not give God the preeminence. [cf. **vs. 18** where wealth is “*stored up and hoarded*” as one’s security and source of boasting and excuse for an indulgent lifestyle]

Prostitution as a Metaphor for Business Trading: [References in the passage] Prostitution involves selling your body (that which should have value and dignity) vs Greedy Capitalism which involves selling your soul; **Parable of the Rich Man (Luke 12)** who kept building larger barns “*Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions . . . This very night your soul is required of you*” – Be rich in the spiritual realm

(:1a) HEADING

“*The oracle concerning Tyre.*”

Oswalt: With this pronouncement Isaiah concludes his judgments upon the nations. It is a fitting conclusion. As Babylon, the great city at the eastern edge of the world, opened the section, so Tyre, the great city at the western edge, closes it. Just as Babylon was described in general, universalistic terms, so is Tyre. . . All these factors lead to the conclusion that Tyre here, like Babylon at the beginning, is being used in a representative way. . . the central focus is on **mercantile wealth**. . . Babylon’s greatness lay in her glory, the list of her achievements and accomplishments, her sophistication and culture. Tyre did not have all of these, but she did have her wealth and her vast maritime contacts. So between the two of them, Babylon and Tyre summed up from east to west all that the world of that day – and this – thought was significant. Isaiah’s response was: “Do not trust the nations of this world. They are not preeminent. They do not hold your destiny in their hands. They, like you, are under the judgment of God – your God.”

Van Parunak: 10 oracles of judgment – 2 sections of 5 each; this is #10 so it corresponds to #5 which was against Egypt; A Gentile power coming under judgment that eventually serves the Lord; anticipates the nation returning to serve the Lord; Tarshish is in the western Mediterranean – either Carthage or Spain; Tyre was a double city. It was a city on the mainland of Lebanon, and associated with it an island more than a kilometer off the coast that served as its harbor and citadel. It was 20 miles south of Zidon (Sidon), another city on the mainland from which it was founded. Tyre and Sidon are often named together in the Bible, and Isaiah addresses both of them here. In time of war, the inhabitants would withdraw to the island, which had its own wells and was virtually impregnable. Alexander the Great built a causeway from the mainland to the island in order to bring his siege machines to bear against it, and over the centuries that causeway has accumulated silt and sand, so that now the former island is a peninsula.

I. (:1-14) Judgment

II. (:15-18) Restoration

Motyer: David and Solomon enjoyed warm relations with Tyre, marred only by Tyrian discontent over the cities Solomon ceded (1 Ki. 9:10ff). Hiram of Tyre “*always loved David*” (1 Ki. 5:1) and renewed his covenant with Solomon (1 Ki. 5:12), co-operating commercially over the temple (1 Ki. 5:6f.). But there was another side. Solomon took Phoenician wives and imported the cult of the Sidonian Ashtoreth (1 Ki. 11:1, 5). These high places remained (2 Ki. 23:13) and Isaiah would have grown up with an awareness of Tyre’s corruption of Israel’s most favoured king. Phoenician influence was an evil genius to the northern kingdom also, even to the extent of almost replacing Yahweh with the Baal of Sidon (1 Ki. 16, 18). In the Psalms, however, though we find Tyre in a hostile coalition against Israel (Ps. 83:7), yet the psalmist prays that the Gentile nations may come to know the name of the Lord (Ps. 83:18). In Psalm 45 the “*daughter of Tyre*” brings a gift to the royal wedding (verse 12, 13) and in Psalm 87 Tyre is accorded birthright honours in Zion (verse 4). Finally, in the prophets references are for the most

part hostile (Je. 47:4; Am. 1:9ff; Joel 3:4; 4:4; Zc. 9:2-4), and it is of Tyre alone that Ezekiel fails to say that they will yet “know the Lord” (Ezk. 25:7, 11; 30:26). Isaiah, however, looks forward to the dedication of Tyre’s wealth to the Lord and his people (23:18), and he is thus living within the traditions to which he was heir, and indeed reaching back to the normative times of David.

I. (:1b-7) THE FAR REACHING IMPACT OF THE DESTRUCTION OF TYRE – THE HUB OF WORLD COMMERCE

A. (:1b) Tarshish Stranded – Destination Destroyed (cf. vs. 14 – bookends around the judgment section)

*“Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for Tyre is destroyed, without house or harbor;
It is reported to them from the land of Cyprus.”*

Beall: In v. 1, the ships of Tarshish are told to howl or wail, because of the destruction of Tyre. Tarshish is probably to be identified with Tartessus in southwest Spain (see also Jon 1:3–Tarshish is where Jonah fled from the Lord), on the westernmost tip of the Mediterranean (see, however, Young [2:145]–it could be northern Africa [Carthage - 1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chron 9:21; 1 Kings 22:49]). Ships of Tarshish were strong, seaworthy vessels, used in commerce (for which Tyre was famous). The ships apparently receive the word of the destruction of Tyre while making a stop at Cyprus (150 miles northwest of Tyre).

Ships capable of the longest voyages – going across the whole Mediterranean

Van Parunak: You have lost your major port of call

When the hub of commerce is destroyed – has far-reaching consequences; our economy is a world economy; our markets don’t exist in isolation; what happens in other parts of the world impacts us; certainly another Wall Street collapse would send shockwaves throughout the world

B. (:2-4) Sidon Silenced and Shamed – Revenue Stream Cut Off

1. (:2-3) Be Silent – No more trading activity

*“Be silent, you inhabitants of the coastland, You merchants of Sidon;
Your messengers crossed the sea and were on many waters.
The grain of the Nile, the harvest of the River was her revenue;
And she was the market of nations.”*

Sidon 20 miles north of Tyre; sort of mother city – people came from there to found Tyre; usually mentioned together

Motyer: both connotation of motionless and silent . . . contrasts with the following impression of a bustling international port.

Egypt important trade partner because land was fertile and source of grain; international commerce is in view

Cf. Port of Baltimore – its importance; all of the goods that are shipped through here; what would be the economic impact to the overall region if the Port were to be shut down for some reason; just had a strike for a couple of days and we could barely tolerate that

2. (:4) **Be Ashamed** – No more vitality

*“Be ashamed, O Sidon; For the sea speaks, the stronghold of the sea, saying,
‘I have neither travailed nor given birth,
I have neither brought up young men nor reared virgins.’”*

Tyre is seen here speaking as the fortress of the sea (seemingly impregnable island location) – bemoaning her **barrenness** – she has been reduced to a childless state; if that has happened to the greater of the twin cities, how much more will Sidon be put to shame; she will be barren as well

Motyer: expectation coming to nothing and becoming an object of derision;

Martin: The sea is personified as the mother of the Phoenicians, and nothing could be more appropriate. With the slaughter of so many Sidonians by Assyria, Sidon had been bereft of her children and was left as if she had never had them. The sadness of the sea is matched by that of Egypt (v. 5), whose trading links with Tyre and Sidon and, perhaps, her own danger from the same source gave her sympathy.

C. (:5) Egypt Distressed – Feeling the Financial Impact and Threat of Destruction

“When the report reaches Egypt, they will be in anguish at the report of Tyre.”

Motyer: reinforces the magnitude of the disaster

Back in those days it took a while for news reports to reach the next geographic region; no instant watching of CNN; no instant communications; you never knew if you had all of the details straight; always some degree of uncertainty leading to even greater anguish

D. (:6-7) Phoenicia Mocked – Reduced to Refugee Status

*“Pass over to Tarshish; Wail, O inhabitants of the coastland. Is this your jubilant city,
Whose origin is from antiquity, Whose feet used to carry her to colonize distant places?”*

Motyer: It was trade, not conquest, which drove Tyrians; not lordship, but money. The parallel Egypt oracle (19:1 – 20:6) represents the power of the world pressing on the people of God. Tyre represents the ways of the world exerting their influence.

Oswalt: Three aspects of Tyre’s existence made it hard to accept her destruction: her **vitality**, her **antiquity**, and her **colonizing energy**. . Tyre must have been an exciting and cosmopolitan city

II. (:8-9) THE ALL SOVEREIGN INSTIGATOR OF THE DESTRUCTION OF TYRE – THE PRIDE OF EARTHLY AFFLUENCE

A. (:8) Question Asked – Who Could Have Done This? Given Tyre’s Prominence

“Who has planned this against Tyre?”

Both the Planning and the Carrying out of the Destruction of Tyre

Everybody wanted to be like Tyre: the **Donald Trumps** of the ancient world

1. Successful Business Tycoons -- Creator of Empires – people making their fortunes off

the business trading

“the bestower of crowns,” – they did the hiring and the firing

2. Powerful Business Tycoons – lived like royalty

“Whose merchants were princes,”

3. Respected Business Tycoons – worldwide reputations

“whose traders were the honored of the earth?”

B. (:9) Question Answered – the Lord of Hosts – To Squelch Pride and Self-Sufficiency

“The LORD of hosts has planned it

to defile the pride of all beauty, To despise all the honored of the earth.”

Beall: V 8 asks the ultimate question, “who was responsible for the destruction of Tyre?” It was not accomplished by Assyria or Babylon alone, but in reality it was the Lord's doing, in order to punish Tyre's pride (see Isa 2:11, 17; 4:2; 5:15-16; 13:19; 14:12-20; 28:1-6; 60:15). The pride of Tyre is brought out further by Ezekiel (Ezek 27:3b; 28:12b). Note the symmetry between vv. 8 and 9 (who has purposed it? The Lord has purposed it; the honorable of the earth; the honorable of the earth).

What's wrong with beauty? What's wrong with being honored and respected throughout the earth? Usually we expect more explicit denunciation of sin – such as idolatry and exploitation; here the sins are those root evils that we put up with in a compromising fashion – the sin of pride and self-sufficiency

Van Parunak: Why did God destroy Tyre? Glorious and rich and honorable; everybody thought she was wonderful; **2:11-17** *proud and lofty and lifted up*; God is a jealous God; doesn't tolerate anything else being prestigious and lofty; Intolerant of any competition or opposition to His authority and glory

III. (:10-14) THE SURPRISINGLY SHOCKING IMAGES OF THE DESTRUCTION OF TYRE – THE STRONGHOLDS REDUCED TO RUBBLE

A. (:10-13) Images of Tyre's Destruction

1. (:10) Flooded Nile River – No More Shipyard for Commerce

*“Overflow your land like the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish,
There is no more restraint.”*

Brian Borgman: Alternative translation: *“traverse your land like the Nile ... there is no more shipyard.”* The merchant fleets which were all drawn to Tyre like a magnet now have no place to go so they wander aimlessly like the waters of the Nile; God has destroyed the shipyard in Tyre; took decisive action;

2. (:11) Tumultuous Waves / Demolished Strongholds

*“He has stretched His hand out over the sea, He has made the kingdoms tremble;
The LORD has given a command concerning Canaan to demolish its strongholds.”*

Ex. 14 – describing the parting of the Red Sea – reference to Moses stretching out his hand at the direction of the Lord

3. (:12) Crushed Virgins / Homeless Wanderers

“And He has said, ‘You shall exult no more, O crushed virgin daughter of Sidon. Arise, pass over to Cyprus; even there you will find no rest.’”

Motyer: 4 Consequences:

- **loss of joy** (the joy of *reveling*),
- **loss of peace** (*crushed* – “to oppress, wrong, extort” and experience violation as of a virgin raped)
- **loss of tenure** (they will be exiled and have to *cross over to Cyprus*).
- **loss of rest** (the unending experience of a displaced person who can *find no rest*).

4. (:13) Desert Places / Ruined Palaces

“Behold, the land of the Chaldeans-- this is the people which was not; Assyria appointed it for desert creatures-- they erected their siege towers, they stripped its palaces, they made it a ruin.”

B. (:14) Lament Over Tyre’s Destruction

“Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for your stronghold is destroyed.”

Van Parunak: This echo of v. 1 closes the description of Tyre's fall. “*Your strength*” summarizes briefly the value of the city as port and market that was detailed in v. 1. The noun often refers to an isolated refuge, which Island Tyre was.

IV. (:15-18) THE FINAL ESCHATOLOGICAL INCOME FROM THE RESTORATION OF TYRE – THE BENEFITS TO THE REDEEMED

Beall: Vv 15-18, written in prose, contain a prophecy of 70 years in which Tyre will be forgotten (one king's reign?), and at its end, Tyre would again engage in her prostituting trade, yet somehow the Lord would receive the gain. Some refer these verses to the time of Judah's captivity by Babylon, after which materials from Tyre were used to construct the temple complex. Perhaps they refer to the end time, when even Tyre's commerce will be used to the glory of God's people.

Martin: quoting **Erlandsson** – If one is looking for an interval of seventy years during which Tyre’s trade was crippled, the period which immediately comes to mind is that between the years 700 and 630 when Assyria did not permit Tyre to engage in any business activity. When Assyria’s hold over Palestine came to an end around 630, most of the western states were enabled to flourish again, especially Judah and Tyre.

A. (:15a) The 70 Year Rejection of Tyre

“Now it will come about in that day that Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years like the days of one king.”

Sounds similar to the 70 year prophecy in the Book of Daniel

Motyer: plainly intended to make the seventy years a precise rather than a symbolic time, like the earlier qualifying phrase, “*according to the years of a hired worker*” in 16:14; 21:16.

- Assyria under Sargon and Sennacherib?? 700-630
- Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians??
- Alexander the Great??
- End Times scenario??

B. (:15b-16) The Song of the Harlot – Seeking New Clients

*At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot:
Take your harp, walk about the city, O forgotten harlot; Pluck the strings skillfully, sing many songs, That you may be remembered.”*

Van Parunak: Metaphor of prostitution used for city’s activity of commerce and trading;[cf. sales mgrs characterizing their sales reps as whores] – pure capitalism is based on selfishness – trying to get as much wealth for myself; 70 year old washed up prostitute mocked here; no possibility of getting back clients

C. (:17) The Restoration of Tyre to Its Prominence in Worldly Commerce

“And it will come about at the end of seventy years that the LORD will visit Tyre. Then she will go back to her harlot’s wages, and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.”

It takes the action of the Lord to restore Tyre to successful commerce --
She seems to be pursuing her old ways here – same metaphor of prostitution; specific word used for the wages of a harlot; widespread business activity
Verse 18 is the key – we see she is transformed and sanctified

D. (:18) The Transformation of Tyre to Dedicate Her Income to the Lord

“And her gain and her harlot’s wages will be set apart to the LORD; it will not be stored up or hoarded, but her gain will become sufficient food and choice attire for those who dwell in the presence of the LORD.”

Not only restored, but sanctified in some sense – at some time yet in the future; she will one day turn to the Lord and seek to serve Him

Motyer: The new Tyre would be there to supply materials for the temple at the time of the return from Babylon (Ezr. 3:7) but, like the return itself, this was only a token of the fulfillment yet to come (Rev. 21:24-26; cf. Is. 60:5).

CONCLUSION:

Luke 12 – Parable of the Rich Man

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some examples of greedy capitalism in our country recently?
- 2) How would you develop further the metaphor of prostitution as it relates to the business activities of buying and selling?
- 3) Are we guilty of a materialistic mindset of storing up and hoarding resources to provide for our own security?
- 4) What are some surprising ways in which God keeps His promise to provide food and clothing for His redeemed?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: We likely have another example here of prophetic foreshortening, which places two disasters side by side. An earlier example is the twofold fall of Babylon (13:9-16; 17-22). There, as here, the prophecy that comes first is the more encompassing one, looking further into the future, while the second one is more immediate historically. . .

As throughout the burdens, there is both an historical and an eschatological perspective. The historical reference of the fall of Tyre is not entirely clear. We do know that it fell to Alexander the Great in 332 BC, but v. 13 appears to ascribe the destruction to the Chaldeans. Ezekiel prophesies that Nebuchadnezzar will conquer Tyre (Ezek 26:7-11), but notes that he was not enriched by the conquest (Ezek 29:18). Secular history records that Nebuchadnezzar's siege lasted 13 years (586-572), but does not record the fall of the city. However, the king of Tyre died the year the siege ended, Tyre did become subject to Babylon, and two of her kings were held captive there (Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, 1.158). Hengstenberg⁵ argues in detail that Tyre did in fact fall to Nebuchadnezzar.

Isaiah clearly has in view the fall of the island citadel. But Tyre was a double city, with buildings both on the island and on the adjacent mainland. Nothing in Ezekiel's prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's conquest requires that he conquer the island. In fact, Ezek 26:3 anticipates that "many nations" will be required to conquer Tyre. Then Nebuchadnezzar's conquest is described with 3s pronouns referring to the Babylonian king (7-11), followed by plural pronouns describing the ultimate end of the city (12-14). Perhaps (as Fleming suggests in his *The History of Tyre*, Columbia Univ. Press, 1915), Nebuchadnezzar's conquest was of the mainland city, and accounts for Isaiah's references to the Chaldeans, while other aspects of the conquest mentioned in Isaiah are due to Alexander.

This division aligns with the distinction between Isa 23:2-7, 8-13. The first section mentions the isle explicitly, but doesn't say anything about the Chaldeans, while the second section, which identifies the Chaldeans as the cause, refers to Tyre by name and not as an isle. The foreshortening that is so common in prophecy may be at work here; the second paragraph has in

mind the most immediate humbling of the city, under Nebuchadnezzar, while the first looks beyond it to the more serious conquest by Alexander. The 70 years then refers to the period after Nebuchadnezzar's conquest.

Applications:

- a Gentile nation turns to the Lord; mercy of God
- embodies the pride of all glory; honorable in all the earth; God promises the meek shall inherit the earth – not the proud and haughty

Brian Borgman: The Oracle Against Tyre

The last oracle of doom – of judgment in this section; Chap. 24 begins universal judgment against all the earth at the end of the age; Chaps. 25-26 are songs of praise for God's salvation; Chap. 27 ends the second major section; Chap. 28 – focusing on the Lord as sovereign over all of history

Recipient of oracle = **Tyre**; part of Phoenicia; very ancient city; goes back before the time of Abraham; Tyre and Sidon 25 miles apart; you have the region on the coastland and then this rock island right off the coast; very friendly to Israel during days of David and Solomon; King Hiram supplied wood for temple; did not acknowledge the true God; known for their cedars and for their own gods; Solomon marries one of the Phoenician women and imports her gods; Queen Jezebel had origins in Tyre; most significant port in ancient world; large shipyard where they build ships; as a result they were very wealthy; city became very arrogant because of its affluence; didn't want to destroy Israel but rather corrupt them from within; look at today – importing materialism and lust for wealth; world corrupting influence

Ships of Tarshish – ended up making a huge merchant fleet; all long distance merchant/merchandise ships became known as this designation whether they were from Tarshish or not; no sense coming because there is nothing left there; tells the merchants to stand in silent awe; they looked at Tyre as center of international commerce – place where they themselves could strike it rich; they had been lusting after wealth; like the leveling of Wall Street today; all you who are so eager to get the Wall Street Journal and check the stock prices ...

Vs. 4 – notoriously difficult; telling the other port city that they need to be ashamed because of what has just happened to the greatest port city; what will happen then to you who are in second place? Reference to Tyre as rock island that was supposed to be impregnable; remember pride of people of Jericho in their walls; thought they were invincible; had a pretty defensible location; idiom of absolute destruction; they are childless; barrenness was a sign of being cursed;

Vs. 5 – Have you ever thought of how slow news would have travelled back then; today we watch things as they happen; we thought the Pony Express was good; it might be weeks before you might hear of a neighboring nation that had been conquered; Tyre is just a heap of rubble and now the news travels all the way down to Egypt; they go into panic mode for 2 reasons:
1) If Tyre fell, guess who is next?
2) That which stood for their wealth and their financial security was gone – cf. reaction of people to Great Depression – people jumping out of windows – center of trade and commerce that had brought them so much wealth was gone

Vs. 6-7 – Prophet begins to mock – telling all of Phoenicia – you better take off and become refugees; you better hide in Tarshish – you people who thought you were so invincible; location

debated; Is this the great old city that had so much culture? Is this where everybody wanted to move to in order to make their fortune? Is this the great city of joy you used to go to? It has all fallen down and there is nothing left; God has no feelings of nostalgia for Tyre; God's values are not the same as our values; important commercial city and trade route; their downfall will be an example by God to everybody; If there is any stumbling block facing Christians in America today it is our affluence; look at all we have in comparison to other parts of the world; We have everything so relatively easy; Tyre stood for ease and wealth and materialism; God promises to knock it down – wealth and self-sufficiency breeds the most heinous sin of pride; cf. church of Smyrna – you think you are rich but you are poor – stands in the tradition of Tyre; Spirit of Tyre still with us; Ezek 26-28 – lives during the destruction of Tyre and devotes 3 chapters to it; Chap. 26 -- going to be judged by Babylon as Isaiah says here; Chap. 27 is a funeral dirge for Tyre; chap. 28 – judgment speech against king of Tyre; no way to disconnect their pride and self sufficiency and its source = their materialistic spirit; hard for a rich man to get into the kingdom; talking about a wooden needle made for thread to go through it; wealth is not inherently evil but leads to all kinds of evil; love of money is root of all kinds of evil; 1 Tim. 6

Vs. 8-9 – Pointed question; who would even dare to plan such destruction against the beloved city that did so much for world's commerce; guys walking around in suits on Wall Street are all princes – respected the world over; Who could cause Wall Street to collapse? **Is. 14:24,27** uses this word in 2 places – sovereign planning of the Lord; sovereign immutable purpose – it will come to pass; His sovereign will plans; His sovereign power executes; God advises people but people do not advise God; a human plan may fail but God's plan will surely be accomplished; history is the execution of God's plan and manifests itself in both judgment and blessing; God's purpose is exhaustive and comprehensive – nothing outside of His sovereign purpose; destruction included death and atrocities of war and financial collapse impacting the entire area; we tend to think that God would never act in this way today – not true; **Is. 45:5** *causing peace and evil*; “calamity” is an easier word for us to swallow when we relate it to what God does; Amos 3:6; Lam. 3:37; our God is the sovereign God who rules and reigns over all the nations; does not tolerate the self sufficient but topples them over; *He will defile the pride of all beauty* and pollute it and destroy it; Ezek. 28:7; despise = treat with contempt, dishonor; those whom the world holds in pride and esteem and respect and admiration because of their great wealth will be dishonored by God; Structure: A1 B1 A2 B2

Vs. 10-12 – God's acts of judgment; upset the economies of the kingdoms; they shook; we inherit an unshakeable kingdom; Canaan is land of Phoenicia where Tyre and Sidon were; when God brings judgment on the wicked there is no place where they could rest; no rest for the wicked; Our God is not to be trifled with; He does not tolerate self-sufficiency and pride and the abuse of wealth;

Vs. 15-18 – ambiguous, cryptic language; a long rule for one king would have been 51 years; 70 years could be symbolic of the fullness of times; Tyre will be completely forgotten; destroyed by the Babylonians; Alexander the Great really does them in; at the time of Jesus Tyre and Sidon are insignificant Roman provinces; there will a day when people won't even remember Wall Street; but there will be a restoration; comparing Tyre to a washed-up prostitute; completely forgotten and nobody remembering her name; but her memory will be restored; this happened after the Babylonian Captivity; God restores Tyre to her old trade and she starts to make her money again; Ezra 3:7; Tyre supplying material to rebuild the second temple; the Persians pay for it; Restores Tyre and transforms and sanctifies Tyre for the use of God; generosity instead of self-sufficiency and pride and mercenary spirit; **Ps. 87:4** – Tyre will one day be on the roll of

Zion – the dwelling place of God where His presence is made known; nation slated for judgment still object of God’s redemption and mercy; Ps. 45 – Messianic marriage psalm – daughter of Tyre there as marriage attendant; Lord Jesus went up into the region of Tyre – Syro-Phoenecian woman’s daughter healed of demon possession; Acts 12 – many disciples in city of Tyre; Acts 21 – Paul strengthened in Tyre; Lebanon is modern day Tyre; a Muslim country; 40% of population either Catholic or Protestant

Oswalt: If the main city fell, the inhabitants merely withdrew to the citadel and outwaited the besieging army. Alexander succeeded by dismantling the onshore city and using its materials to build a causeway over which his siege machines could be drawn to break through the citadel wall. The inhabitants paid dearly for trying the great conqueror’s patience. It is said that he crucified two thousand of the leaders and sold thirty thousand into slavery.

TEXT: Isaiah 24:1-23

TITLE: *JUDGMENT ON THE EARTH –DESTRUCTION LIES AHEAD*

BIG IDEA:

THE WHOLE EARTH IS HEADED FOR CATASTROPHIC DEVASTATION AND ONLY THE REMNANT REMAINS TO PRAISE GOD

INTRODUCTION:

Where is this earth headed?

- The evolutionists have their answer: They have bought into Charles Darwin's theory that via natural selection, mutations over time continually bring about small increments of improvement – so things are getting better and better. Do you think?
- -The environmentalists have their answer: **Mother Earth** has existed for millions and millions of years (maybe it is billions now – the time estimate keeps getting longer with every analysis) – but recently man has arrived to bring pollution and degradation so that the planet as we know it is gradually degrading; we need to invest all our efforts in trying to stave off the eventual collapse – So they vote for slow degradation as opposed to gradual progress
- The nihilists have their answer -- Life is without objective meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value – therefore they reject the validity of all morals and religious values – Basically their answer is that the world is not headed anywhere and who cares
- The existentialists have a slightly different twist -- A philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe, regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one's acts. Your **personal experience** is the only thing that really matters.
- The hedonists run with that philosophy in the direction of therefore, let's eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.

But the Creator of this earth has His own plans for its destiny. Just as Isaiah the prophet demonstrated in chapters 13-23 that God is sovereign over the affairs of all nations and will bring judgment against self-reliance and pride, so God has His sovereign plan for this earth. God is in the business of establishing His kingdom. The final chapter has already been written. He will reign victorious over all.

You know those highway warning signs: “**Danger ahead.**” That is certainly the case for the end times scenario for this earth. The earth is passing away. Or how about those highway signs that would warn that the bridge ahead is out? You wouldn't just blindly continue on and drive off the precipice into the oblivion below. Yet despite God's warning signs, most people continue on down the road with no thought to where this earth is headed.

THE WHOLE EARTH IS HEADED FOR CATASTROPHIC DEVASTATION AND ONLY THE REMNANT REMAINS TO PRAISE GOD

We are beginning a short new section this morning – chapters 24-27 which hang together as a unit. We had been looking at the judgments on individual nations. Now the prophet speaks of **universal judgment** -- all the individual streams flow into an ocean of catastrophe. A contrast is going to be painted between the City of Man (called in chap. 24 the city of chaos) and the City of

God – much like Augustine’s famous treatise. Motyer’s [MawTEAR’s] analysis breaks down the chiasmic structure of these 4 chapters with the central point of emphasis being **25:6-12** regarding Mt. Zion – the repeated use of the phrase “*on this mountain*”.

Delitzsch states, these chapters “form the finale to chaps. 13-23, and that in a strictly musical sense. What the finale should do in a piece of music—namely, gather up the scattered changes into a grand impressive whole—is done here by this closing cycle. . . . The whole of this finale is a grand hallelujah to chaps. 13-23, hymnic in its character, and musical in form, and that to such a degree, that, like chap. 25:6, the prophecy is, as it were, both text and divisions at the same time. There was no other than Isaiah who was so incomparable a master of language

Constable: Many commentators refer to this section as "Isaiah's Apocalypse" because it reveals the culmination of history, though strictly speaking the language used is not apocalyptic but eschatological. These are prophecies regarding the eschatological day of the Lord. Later scriptural revelation enables us to locate these judgments more specifically in the Tribulation, at the return of Christ, in the Millennium, and at the very end of human history on this earth. . .

This passage contains many connections with the **Flood narrative** (Gen. 6—9). Essentially, what God did in Noah's day—i.e., the preservation of the righteous—He will do in the future Tribulation (cf. Mark 13).

[Also references Gen. 1-3 and the Tower of Babel judgment]

Van Parunak: two major sections of judgment (24:1-12; 16b-22) alternate with a distant echo of songs of praise (13-16a, cf. 23). This section is marked by frequent mention of the “*earth*” –

used 17 times in the chapter – not just some local judgment affecting only the land of Judah

I. (:1-12) CATASTROPHIC DEVASTATION AND GLOOM ON THE ENTIRE GUILTY WORLD IN THE DAY OF THE LORD

A. (:1-3) The Extent of the Devastation -- Guaranteed to be Complete and Total by God

1. (:1) Catastrophic Devastation (inclusion with vs. 3)

“Behold, the LORD lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface, and scatters its inhabitants.”

Beall: The use of *hnehi* plus the participle indicates a sense of immediacy:– “*Behold, the Lord is about to*”

Van Parunak: This emphasis [multiple uses of word “*earth*”] suggests that the disaster described here is not particular to Israel, but (like the burdens) encompasses all the earth, Jew and Gentile alike. . .

The statement of the coming judgment is chiasmic, with descriptions of the judgment on the earth on the outside and the people at the center. The judgment here is depicted as due to an outside agent, whether the Lord (v. 1) or a military enemy (v.3).

a. *lays the earth waste* – to empty or lay waste
like taking a cup and turning it upside down and pouring out its contents

b. *devastates it*

These first 2 Hebrew participles sound alike – *boqeq . . . bolqah* – makes a very striking sound – use of assonance in this chapter – Isaiah is very skillful in his word plays – lost in our English translations (like my alliteration of my outline points is lost when you translate into another language)

Nah. 2:10 only other usage

c. *distorts its surface* – bend, twist – so it becomes unrecognizable

make it into a mangled mess – imagery of **Noah's Flood** – upheaval from the foundations below – changing the contours of the earth dramatically

d. *scatters its inhabitants*

Gen. 11:9 – imagery of the judgment on the **Tower of Babel** – all the people were scattered

2. (:2) Class Distinctions Meaningless – 6 Relationships in Society:

*“And the people will be like the priest,
the servant like his master,
the maid like her mistress,
the buyer like the seller,
the lender like the borrower,
the creditor like the debtor.”*

All people stand on level ground at the foot of the cross – *“for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”*

The problem is the same for all men – that is the message of **Romans 1-3**

Does not matter how much light you might have; does not matter if you are the heathen in Africa who have never heard the Word of God – **Rom. 1:18-19**

2:11 *“there is no partiality with God”*

3:19 all the world stands accountable and guilty before God

Cf. **1 Sam. 16:7** – no favoritism with God as there is with man – *“for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”*

You cannot buy your way out of this judgment

3. (:3) Catastrophic Devastation

*“The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled,
for the LORD has spoken this word.”*

“emptied there will be emptied the earth, and spoiled it will be spoiled” – Hebrew infinitive absolute construction for emphasis – repeating the same root of the word to give emphasis – we add the adjective *“completely”* in English to convey the meaning

Constable: The prophet predicted that the Lord would lay the earth (land) waste, the sum total of all the nations, including those representative ones condemned in the oracles. Isaiah always used *“behold”* to introduce something future (cf. 3:1; 17:1; 19:1; 30:27; et al.). He would do the reverse of what He did in the Creation, when He brought order out of chaos (cf. Gen. 1:2). He would devastate the earth, making it desolate. He would distort the surface of the earth, as when the Flood changed the topography of this planet. And He would scatter the earth's inhabitants, as

He did at Babel (Gen. 11:9). . .

The repetition of the revelation of this judgment (cf. v. 1), with the assurance that the Lord announced it, confirms its certainty (cf. 2 Pet. 3:5- 7; Rev. 6; 8—9; 15—16; 21:1). The *fact* of the earth's destruction, rather than the precise methods and instruments He will use, were the focus of this prophet's revelation.

B. (:4-6) The Explanation for the Devastation -- God's Curse Against Guilty Sinners

1. Impact on the Earth and Its Inhabitants

*“The earth mourns and withers,
the world fades and withers,
the exalted of the people of the earth fade away.”*

Rom. 8:20ff – “*creation was subjected to futility*” . . . it “*groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now*”

Motyer: The problem is not the external factor of drought but the internal factor of blight

Both the earth and its inhabitants – even the most influential and important – feel the impact of God's judgment

2. Root Problem: Sin and Pollution

*“The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants,
for they transgressed laws,
violated statutes,
broke the everlasting covenant.”*

Motyer: (On the idea of polluting the earth see Nu. 35:33; Ps. 106:38; Je. 3:1-2, 9.)

Charges:

- 1) Transgression of revealed truth – refused to hold to and live by divine revelation
- 2) Changing what was intended for perpetuity = introducing an innovative morality
- 3) Annuling, nullifying or setting aside the whole concept of covenant relationship and life

Environmentalists are concerned with the pollution of the earth . . . but they ignore the root cause of that pollution which is the sin of man.

Van Parunak: Isaiah describes this moral breakdown with three expressions.

• **transgressed the laws** --This is a standard way of describing disobedience. The laws are viewed as a barrier, which the sinner crosses. The plural is unusual (appearing 15x out of 233), and suggests that we are concerned not only with Israel's law (usually referred to in the singular), but with the law of God written in the heart of the Gentiles. Paul describes this phenomenon:

Rom 2:14-15 *For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;*

Having a knowledge of the law, whether written or natural, does not guarantee obedience to that

law. The nations can break the law of God in their hearts just as readily as Israel can break the law of Sinai.

• **changed the ordinance** --An “ordinance” is literally something engraved on stone, and therefore intended to be permanent. The verb rendered “changed” is usually intransitive, but a homograph (coming from a different protosemitic guttural, cf. the Arabic) means to pierce through. It describes what Jael did to Sisera with the tent peg. The imagery is graphic: they have dared to lift up their own chisel to God's unalterable ordinance, and shattered it.

• **broken the everlasting covenant** —A number of “everlasting covenants” are described in the Bible, including that with Abraham (Gen 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chr 16:17 = Ps 105:10), the Sabbath (Exod 31:16), the showbread (Lev 24:8; cf. Num 18:19; 25:13), David (2 Sam 23:5; Isa 55:3; 2 Chr 13:5), and a future covenant (Isa 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26). The past ones all have to do with Israel, and the future covenant will be unbreakable (cf. Jer 31:32). There is one “everlasting covenant” in the past that bears on Gentiles, and that is God's covenant with Noah.

2. Divine Response: Accountability and Judgment

*Therefore, a curse devours the earth,
and those who live in it are held guilty.”*

1. Impact on the Earth and Its Inhabitants

*“Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned,
and few men are left.”*

Grogan: These verses are characterized by a strong moral tone. The true and living God carries out his judgments on moral principles, not as the expression of an arbitrary will. If human kings experience his righteous wrath, it is because their actions and their way of life are contrary to his will.

C. (:7-12) The Emotion Accompanying this Devastation -- Replacing Shallow Joy (Gaiety) with Deep Gloom (another chiasmic arrangement)

1. (:7a) Good Times Gone – Source of Joy Removed

*“The new wine mourns,
the vine decays,”*

2. (:7b-9) Gaiety Replaced by Gloom

*“all the merry-hearted sigh.
The gaiety of tambourines ceases,
the noise of revelers stops,
the gaiety of the harp ceases.
They do not drink wine with song;
Strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.”*

3. (:10) Gutted and Boarded Up (vs. built up and fortified)

*“The city of chaos is broken down;
Every house is shut up so that none may enter.”*

No specific city in view here – not speaking of Jerusalem – because the judgment is universal – this is more like Vanity Fair – more like the symbolic city of Babylon in book of Revelation which stands for the entire anti-God world system; the City of Man

Tremendous fear leading to isolation rather than hospitality – let’s cower in our own homes and lock ourselves down and see if we can ride out this devastation ...
Won’t do you any good to build a nuclear bomb shelter ...

2. (:11) Gaiety Replaced by Gloom

*“There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine;
All joy turns to gloom.
The gaiety of the earth is banished.”*

Oswalt: Where there was an abundance of wine, there is now none and those who have developed a dependency are in desperate trouble.

1. (:12) Ghost Town Left -- Destroyed and Defenseless

*“Desolation is left in the city,
and the gate is battered to ruins.”*

Motyer: vvs.7-12

A1 The source of joy gone (7a, 2 lines)

B1 Joy stilled, satisfaction gone (7b-9, 6 lines)

C The city broken and empty (10, 2 lines)

B2 Satisfaction lost, joy banished (11, 3 lines)

A2 The source of security gone (12, 2 lines) -- destruction coupled with defencelessness

The line enumeration is based on setting out the Hebrew text in fifteen lines, mostly of three words each. The “feeling” is as of a series of hammer blows, as if we were watching the city being brought to ruins. The subtle use of assonance cannot be reflected in translation but proclaims Isaiah’s authorship in every division of the poem, if not in every line.

Constable: Wine, which people use to escape feeling the effects of sin, ultimately proves ineffective. Its source, the grapevine, decays (as a result of drought? cf. Rev. 6:5-6), and even the constitutionally lighthearted cannot escape groaning. Music, likewise, cannot keep people's spirits up continually. . . Modern existentialist writers have done a good job of articulating the meaninglessness of life without God that Isaiah also described here.
[cf. message of Ecclesiastes]

Beall: V 8 continues with the imagery of the cessation of joyful music. This is the opposite of what is described in **Jer 33:10-11**

“Thus says the LORD: 'Again there shall be heard in this place – of which you say, “It is desolate, without man and without beast” -- in the cities of Judah, in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without beast, I I 'the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: “Praise the LORD of hosts, For the LORD is good, For His mercy endures forever” -- and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause the captives of the land to return as

at the first, ' says the LORD”.

Van Parunak: This paragraph is the first time he mentions the “city,” an important motif throughout this section. The reference is not to any one specific city, but to the notion of city life in general. The notion of a city often carries negative connotations. Cities require coordination and organization, and foster the growth of human government, with its usurpation of God's authority. . .

Throughout this section we will see the initial condemnation and destruction of the city of man's strength, but also the anticipation of the city of God, organized under his rule.

The city of confusion is broken down:-- “Confusion” is תהו “emptiness, formlessness” as in Gen 1:2. Here is a paradox: structure is the very essence of a city, but this one has become unstructured.

every house is shut up, that no man may come in.--Another paradox: houses exist so that people can enter and leave them and find shelter, but these houses have become impenetrable.

II. (:13-16a) WORLDWIDE SONGS OF PRAISE FROM THE MEAGER REMNANT GLORIFYING THE LORD

A. (:13) Meager Gleanings After Harvest

*“For thus it will be in the midst of the earth among the peoples,
as the shaking of an olive tree, as the gleanings when the grape harvest is over.”*

Only a small remnant escapes the devastation of the Tribulation Period and enters into the millennial kingdom to offer praises to the Lord

Cf. **Is. 17:6** – Isaiah had used this same imagery earlier to speak of the judgment of Ephraim in league with Damascus – now he expands the reference to include the remnant from all the world there will be Philistines, Assyrians, ones from Moab and Syria ... but only a few

B. (:14-16a) Majestic Songs of Praise From the Ends of the Earth

“They raise their voices, they shout for joy. They cry out from the west concerning the majesty of the LORD. Therefore glorify the LORD in the east, the name of the LORD, the God of Israel in the coastlands of the sea. From the ends of the earth we hear songs, ‘Glory to the Righteous One, ”

1. Intensity of the Praise

- raise their voices
- shout for joy
- cry out

2. Worldwide Scope of the Praise

- from the west
- in the east
- in the coastlands of the sea
- from the ends of the earth

3. Focus of the Praise – 4 Perspectives on the Lord of Hosts

- *the majesty of the Lord*
- *the name of the Lord*
- *the God of Israel*
- *the Righteous One*

cf. Matt. 25:21, 23

CONCLUSION: (Part 1)

Remember the book by Francis Schaeffer: How Should We Then Live? – The Bible has the answer for us:

1 John 2:15-17 *“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”*

- Let’s examine our passions. *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself.”*
- Let’s examine our priorities. *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”*
- Let’s examine our pursuits. *“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*

Don’t try to hold on to this world and the things that pertain to it.
Make no mistake – God has spoken – *“The world is passing away.”*

* * * * *

Second Cycle of Judgment and Praise

Cf. the images of devastation from the Philippines over the past week – just awful scenes; cf. images from earthquakes, etc.

Complexity of end time events; We know there are multiple judgments involved; we turn to last chapters of book of Rev. for a **chronology**; here we have the closest parallel in the OT in terms of some type of ordering of events; do not look to see anything here about the rapture of the church – not in view here; so this passage says nothing about validity of pre-trib rapture, vs. post-trib; but it has a lot to say about the validity of the pre-mill position

III. (:16b-22) CATASTROPHIC DEVASTATION OF ESCHATOLOGICAL JUDGMENT

A. (:16b) Perspective of the Prophet – Still Living in the Present

*“But I say, ‘Woe to me! Woe to me! Alas for me!
The treacherous deal treacherously, and the treacherous deal very treacherously.’”*

Returning to the here and now – after seeing into the future

- Persistence of sin – causes us hardship right now
- There must be some future accountability – righteousness of God yet to be seen

- Cannot put our trust in any of the leaders of the nations
- God is still on His throne

Do our political leaders deal treacherously today? Does this have consequences for us in the here and now?

“What a Friend we have in Jesus” = faithful and true; we know what it feels like when others deal treacherously with us – make it our goal within the church to be faithful friends; people you can count on

Motyer: Parallel to the world and its people withering under the blight of sin (4-6), another voice speaks of personal wasting away. Within chapters 13-27, this cry is parallel to 21:3-4, where Isaiah, even though he had wished the destruction of Babylon, went into shock at the horror he foresaw. So here, the implications of the fall of the world city – the curse falling on earth and people alike (4-6) and no escape possible (17-18) – are like a wasting disease within himself. Though he has heard and called for the song of the remnant (15-16), he cannot abandon himself to joy because he has also seen the reality of sin and the curse.

Isaiah returns now to the present affliction where the nation of Assyria under Sennacherib is making so many promises of potential peace that are nothing but blatant treachery. Just as he experienced personal “Woe” because of his sinfulness before the vision of holy God (Chap. 6), now the prophet experiences “Woe” because of the pressure of his immediate national crisis. Some final accounting by the Lord must take place in the future so that justice can be enacted and accounts can be squared.

B. (:17-20) Permanent Destruction of Polluted Earth in Catastrophic Final Upheaval **2 Pet. 3:7-13**

1. (:17-18a) Inescapable Dangers

*“Terror and pit and snare confront you, O inhabitant of the earth.
Then it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit,
and he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare;”*

The great leaders of the world like Sennacherib who act with such pride and arrogance in their rebellion, will be reduced to trying to escape the inevitability of the judgment of the Lord which will not make any class distinctions among the various inhabitants of the earth.

Language sounds like Tribulation Period – just before the return of Christ ... could also be at the end of the Millennial Kingdom

2. (:18b-19) Irrevocable Fracturing of the Earth

*“For the windows above are opened, and the foundations of the earth shake.
The earth is broken asunder,
The earth is split through,
The earth is shaken violently.”*

Earthquakes of severe nature

Humpty Dumpty can't be put back together again

Imagery brings us back to **Noah's Flood** – a worldwide phenomena; only place of safety was within the Ark provided by God for salvation; only 8 people saved out of maybe 1 billion on the

face of the earth

3. (:20a) Two Images of Instability – Where is the earth heading?

a. Reeling Drunkard

“The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard,”

b. Tottering Shack

“And it totters like a shack,”

Constable: vs. 20 -- The prophet compared the earth under divine judgment to a reeling drunkard about to collapse and to an old shack about to fall down. A drunkard falls because of internal weakness, and a shack gives way because of external pressures. What causes the destruction is the guilt of transgression that weighs heavily on the earth. This fall will be irrevocable.

4. (:20b) Ignominious End

a. Crushed by Guilt

“For its transgression is heavy upon it,”

b. Annihilated Forever

“And it will fall, never to rise again.”

Beall: The language used here is very similar to **Amos 5:2**, a passage which was probably written earlier (*“The virgin of Israel has fallen; she will rise no more”*).

C. (:21-22) Punishment of Satanic Hosts After 1000 Year Period of Confinement

“So it will happen in that day, that the LORD will punish the host of heaven, on high, and the kings of the earth, on earth. And they will be gathered together like prisoners in the dungeon, and will be confined in prison; and after many days they will be punished.

No escape

Motyer: This is what they chose: a world without the ordering hand of God and this in faithful divine justice, is what they got.

Van Parunak: The dualism of “the high ones” and “the kings” recalls the contrast between the king and prince of Tyre in Ezek 28, or the prince and kings of Persia in Dan 10:13, or the dual use of “*principalities and powers*” in the NT of earthly (**Titus 3:1**) and heavenly (**Eph 6:12**) political entities. God will judge both the human rulers of the nations and the spiritual powers who stand behind them.. .

There are other biblical references to this sequence of imprisonment followed by judgment.

- **Jude v. 6** records that the angels who sinned in Gen 6 are now imprisoned, awaiting “*the judgment of the great day.*”
- **Rev 20:1-3, 7-10** record that during the Millennium, Satan will be imprisoned, only to be judged at the end.

IV. (:23) SONGS OF ETERNAL TRIUMPH -- KINGDOM OF GOD EXALTED IN THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

A. Comparison to Imposter Gods Who Will be Ashamed

“Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed,”

Constable: The moon and sun, the most glorious rulers of human life, in the physical sense, will be ashamed by the appearance of an even more glorious ruler (cf. **Rev. 21:23**). The sun and the moon were important gods in the ancient Near East, but no god can stand beside Yahweh. Isaiah's is a poetic description of relative glory. Isaiah did not use the astronomical words for moon and sun here but poetic equivalents, the "white" and the "hot."

Motyer: They will be abashed and ashamed, hanging their heads in shame at being such poor things by comparison!

B. Coronation of the Lord of Hosts on Mount Zion

“For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,”

Hallelujah Chorus – “And He will reign forever and ever”

C. Celebration of His Eternal Glory

“And His glory will be before His elders.”

Van Parunak: Who will form the Lord's court in the future day of which Isaiah speaks? We have some clues in the NT.

Mat 19:28 *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Rev 20:4 *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: John's vision of the heavenly assembly includes both the “beasts” (cherubim) and the “elders”(representing the believers),*

Rev 4:4-6 *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. ... and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.*

Rev 19:4 *And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.*

Incredibly, the Lord associates us with him in his final glorious reign.

CONCLUSION:

2 Pet. 3:11-13 *“Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we impress on those around us the shallowness of their gaiety and revelry?
- 2) Do we always keep in mind the proportions between the many on the path to destruction and the few that will constitute the faithful remnant?
- 3) What comparisons can you draw between the redemption of the believer's body (given a glorified body like Christ's) and the redemption of the earth?
- 4) Why doesn't the OT make much distinction between the millennial kingdom and the eternal state?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: The structure of the passage (24-27) is chiasmic, centering on Mount Zion (25:6-12).

A The Lord's harvest from a destroyed world (24:1-13: destruction, 1-12; gleanings, 13)

B The song of the world remnant (24:14-16a)

C The sinful world overthrown (24:16b-20)

D The waiting world (24:21-23)

E The song of the ruined city (25:1-5)

F MOUNT ZION (25:6-12)

E' The song of the strong city (26:1-6)

D' The waiting people of God (26:7-21)

C' Spiritual forces of evil overthrown (27:1)

B' The song of the remnant of the people (27:2-6)

A' The Lord's harvest from a destroyed people (27:7-13: destruction, 7-11; gleanings, 12-13)²⁴

Structure of 24:1-20 is chiasmic as well:

A1 The earth devastated: divine action (1-3)

B1 The withering of the world: sin and the curse (4-6)

C1 The song stilled: the fall of the city (7-12)

C2 The song heard: world-wide gleanings (13-16b)

B2 Personal wasting away: grief over treachery and its outcome (16c-18d)

A2 The earth broken up: moral/spiritual causation (18e-20)

Beall: Chapters 24-27 provide a fitting conclusion to the prophecies against the nations in chaps. 13-23. It is often called Isaiah's "little apocalypse," as it details the judgments of the tribulation period and the kingdom blessings to follow. Among the connections of these chapters with chaps. 13-23 are 24:13 with 17:5-6, 24:16 with 21:2, 27:9 with 17:8, and 25:3 with 1:8; 23:18 (so Young, 2:146). Isaiah now lumps into one all the enemies of God's people he has dealt with previously on an individual basis. The judgment (and redemption) comes upon the whole earth. As we have seen, Isaiah delights in paronomasia, and this is especially so in these chapters.

Oswalt: The overriding theme of the segment is the triumph of God, not only *over* his enemies but *for* his people. In chs. 13-23 the nations came to the attention first; here it is God. The

prophet wants to make it plain that God is the sovereign actor on the stage of history. It is not he who reacts to the nations, but the nations who respond to him. Thus Israel's hope is not in the nations of humanity. They will wither away in a moment under God's blast. Rather, her hope is in the Lord, who is the master of the nations. This theme is developed by means of a recurrence of contrast. There is the contrast between the City of Man and the City of God. The one is cast down, forsaken, destroyed. The other is a place of security, abundance, and life. There is also a contrast in song. In the city of chaos the drunken revelry which was once there is now silent. In its place there comes from the ends of the earth the song of Judah, a song about a God who is strong enough to save the helpless and compassionate enough to redeem the sinful.

Dr. Whitcomb: Isaiah 24-25

Isaiah is microcosm of the whole Bible; presentation in advance of the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; told of our infinite need in light of our sin and His wrath and of His perfect provision of a Savior; contemporary with younger prophet = Micah; The Christmas Prophet;

Every level of society will be subject to total demolition; nobody can hide or escape; things are very ominous even for the USA; don't depend on the govt or your education or your job security – but on the Lord alone; Rev. 6-19 fills in the details of the horrors of the Tribulation Period for seven years; deals with the whole world – not just the land of Israel; not just locked into the breaking of the Mosaic Law; cf. whole world subject to law of capital punishment – not an option for nations that really plan to survive for awhile; Rom. 1-2 – our willful, consistent rejection of the demands of the Sovereign God of the universe; defiance of His nature and glory in embracing uniformitarianism; we have a conscience and moral sensitivity to what is right and wrong so that we are guilty for violating His standards; Who is responsible for all this pollution on the earth? You are responsible! Vast majority of people will die during end of Great Tribulation. City of Chaos represents the World City = ignoring God and now the object of His wrath. World reverts back to what it was in Gen. 1:2 as void. Gaiety of earth is banished. God pulls the plug on all entertainment. God's provision for poor people = leave a few after the rich harvest for the poor to come and glean; that is all that will be left. In the midst of this horror a note of hope for the remnant. Cry of Joy in the midst of global disaster; during the Genesis Flood about 1 billion people on the earth reduced to 8 human beings; God brings a remnant to every global catastrophe; look at how horrible was the current situation faced by Isaiah = "Woe to me." Treacherous treaties = broken peace agreements – cf. promises made by Sennacherib of Assyria; No escape – don't build a bomb shelter thinking that will protect you in the tribulation period; instead trust in the Lord! Gen. 7:11 same language from the Flood; Be sure you are in the Ark; the world system will be smashed from the toes to the head (Dan. 2). Rev. 12 – first phase of God's final confrontation with His enemies = removal from heaven of demonic angels; then there will be Battle of Armageddon; demands a premil concept of eschatology; when these demons are cast out of heaven and these kings are destroyed at Armageddon – where will they go? Won't be punished immediately (amill view); but many days elapse before their final judgment = 1000 years; Reign of Christ over this world

Brian Borgman: Universal Judgment on the Earth - vs. 1-6

Chaps. 24-27 form a unit that is held together; first 6 verses in prose; rest in poetic stanza; the divine activity of judgment; then a lament song (sadness and sorrow and grief) coming from a judged world; then a song from the remnant spared from judgment; vv. 16b-23 is song about the judgment; Chaps. 25-26 written like the Psalms; central theme: one city is destroyed and another is established; the city is the culmination of all the wicked nations (not a specific city); anti-god bent; represent the City of Man = the best that man can do; eschatological section occurring at

the end of the age; analogous to Rev. 18; biblical way of how prophet view Mt. Zion; Judgment language reminds us of three grand events: Gen. 1:2 – earth was formless and void (sign of chaos); the Flood (man’s corruption); the Tower of Babel – represents man’s pride and arrogance

vv. 1-3 Luther: God’s strange work = His activity of judgment; judgment is a divine necessity; if God is holy He must be just; If He is just there must be judgment; language is repetitive – a lot of overlap in these four terms;

- *lays waste* = empty the earth – take a cup and turn it upside down and empty it;
- *devastates it* = so nothing is left;
- means more than just to *distort* – idea is to twist and bend and make into a mangled mess – the face of the earth; ruin the face
- *scatter the inhabitants* – Gen. 11 same term

vs. 2 – all class distinctions obliterated; judgment has already come in full bloom; God has shown up; judgment embraces everybody with no distinction whatsoever; both judged by the same standard; everybody stands naked before judgment of God; Rev. 20 – both great and small appear at Great White Throne Judgment; our justice system shows favoritism;

vs. 3 – repetition; matches vs. 1; infinitive absolute construction – meant to be very emphatic; “*to be emptied it shall be emptied*” – a complete devastation; “*to be plundered it shall be plundered*”;

vv. 4-6 – the result of judgment on the earth and its people; interesting word plays; assonance – the words sound the same; but mean different things; the earth here refers to the physical world itself; mourns and withers; Rom. 8; then all the important people of the earth mourn as well; 1 John 2:15 – this world is passing away;

vs. 5 – the earth is polluted by its inhabitants; human beings in sin are always the supreme environmental threat; God is concerned about pollution; **Num. 35**; abortion (shedding of innocent blood) pollutes the earth; We are in big trouble; **Ps. 106:37-38**; In God’s created order, God has established that one man should marry one woman forever and there should be the fruit of their love; **Jer. 3:1-2**; adultery and divorce is another pollutant = act of idolatry; violate the very core reason for which we have been created; most precious covenantal bond; God has exclusive rights to our love and devotion; apply this concept of pollution to homosexuality and other forms of sexuality that depart from God’s purposes; when God created the earth He handed it over to His vice-regents Adam and Eve; we have totally failed in our stewardship;

3 aspects of sin looked at universally: two sides = those who had God’s specific laws and revelation and those who did not have such light – but the same conclusion applies to all

- *transgressed laws* – plural – those standards which they knew came from God; what about the heathen who never heard the law of God? **Rom. 1:18-21** – depraved humanity suppresses the truth because they love their sin; they are without excuse; they became empty and wasted; vs. 32 – although they know the ordinance of God; natural or general revelation; we want other people to join in our corruption; preacher Lee: “Pay Day Some Day”
- *violated statutes* – two meanings -- NASV – *swept over*; or *alter, change*; We don’t like God’s laws so we just change them and make our own; the Bible is an old book – didn’t understand psychology or sociology or technology or the issues we deal with today so we will just make up our own contemporary standards; pick and choose what to believe; submit to the authority of the book
- *broke the everlasting covenant* – everybody guilty of this; the covenant of creation; God created everybody; Hos. 6:7 – Israel violated the covenant just as Adam did; most foundational covenant; God is Creator and we are His creation so we are bound

to worship Him; Cain and Abel bringing sacrifices on the Sabbath; marriage is part of this original covenant as well as the sanctity of life;
What are we hanging on to? Better be just hanging on to the Lord; everything else will be gone. Abraham learned that lesson – nothing possessed him

A Lament Song from a Judged Earth – vv. 6-16

Mighty acts of God in judgment against the City of Man and mighty acts of God in redemption in establishing Mt. Zion; the Flood is the ultimate type of God's judgment on humanity; Gen. 28 – heaven opens up and staircase comes down vs Tower of Babel; God said it – that settles it; certainty that these events will happen; if you believe that it will impact how you live; all mankind is guilty no matter how much light he has

Vs. 6 – the therefores of the polluted earth; mother of all curse = Gen. 3; but you have specific covenantal curses for unfaithfulness directed against the nation of Israel; the Fall introduces law of death and decay; this world is being devoured by the curse; our technology is more advanced but more bloodshed and pollution as well; mankind is not getting better and better; downward spiral of depravity; **Dan. 9:11** *“the curse has been poured out on us”*; Zech 5:1ff; *“this is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land”*; Israel's covenant infidelity has impacted more than Israel – affected the entire world; whole earth consumed by this curse; Rom. 3 – everybody will stand guilty before God; *“burned”* – doctrine of hell; suffer the eternal punishment of Almighty God; little tiny ray of hope: *“few men are left”*; broad gate vs. narrow gate; not everybody talking about heaven going there;

Vs. 7-12 – lament song from a judged earth; song of the city of man; a tear jerker; the anesthetics no longer anesthetize; Isaiah did not have movies and videos so you escaped reality via wine; ways to shut off reality; drugs, alcohol, illicit relationships – numbing myself to the reality that this world is fading away; vegetating in front of TV; you don't need to think about reality and relationships; wine is no longer getting the job done;

Vs. 8 – the music is no longer playing; American Pie in Isaiah's day – the levy is dry; music is something else people use to tune out reality; help you forget your troubles; no more merriment;
Vs. 9 – the wine loses its pleasure; their way of life ceases to give them any satisfaction; their beer has gone flat; the pleasures I sought and the goals I established are nothing; nothing matters at all

Vs. 10 – *tohu* – **Gen. 1:2** meaningless, chaotic, nothingness; city of man finally breaks; how much longer can our culture go on in this confusion and chaos and emptiness? Anarchy and shut down of society; barricade yourself in your house;

Vs. 11 – more wine even though it doesn't bring us any joy any more; gaiety – not true happiness or real joy; superficial happiness that people outside of God are always looking for; no more parties; We need to be sober minded and vigilant – seeking first His kingdom; priorities and values and pursuits are important; one day this life will be over – are you alright with that? You better have your hope anchored in the Lord

Vs. 13 Different tone – not quite total destruction; olive tree after it has been shaken real good; just a few left on the tree; just a few grapes on the vine; expanding on vs. 6 – *“few men are left”*; 17:4-6 – used this imager for the remnant of Israel; this is now a global, universal remnant

Vs. 14 – remnant shouts for joy; intensity and volume of the cry; Theme = the majesty of Jehovah; the excellence of God; Ex. 15; remnant not mourning over those taken away in judgment;

Vs. 15 – Ps. 67; you will judge the peoples with righteousness; all of the nations would bow the knee before the living God; the judgment of God elicits praise from the remnant; [cf. people saying: “If I end up in heaven without my loved one, I couldn’t possibly enjoy it” – wrong]; end up praising the righteous one; presence of God among His people is what makes heaven heaven

A Personal Lament from the Prophet – vv. 16-23

A prophetic look at the judgments that will take place at the end of the age; you see patterns = God working in a certain way repetitively – like the Flood and Babel and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; demonstration of the righteousness of God – brings us both judgment and salvation; vv. 13-16a like a few people standing after the dust of judgment settles and they engage in song of praise; when God acts in judgment, His people respond in praise – cf. Israelites viewing Egyptians drowning in the Red Sea – sign a song of praise that exalts God;

We also agonize for those experiencing God’s judgment; cf. anguish of Jesus over destruction of Jerusalem; Matt. 23; Ezek. 18 – “*I do not take pleasure in the death of the wicked; therefore repent and live.*” Does not cancel out God’s decree regarding the elect and the non elect; Isaiah’s response to what he sees; still living in the present – “*Wasting, wasting to me*” as he saw the future judgment of all the earth; “*Alas to me*” = “*Woe to me*” from chap. 6; I have just seen God in His holiness and I am disintegrating, unraveling like pulling on a thread from a sweater; Rom. 9 – Paul filled with anguish over the wrath upon his countrymen; If it were possible I would be cut off from Christ; for betrayers betray with betrayal betrayer betray; reference to the leaders of the nations; those in power are the ones who deceive and betray; setting traps for the destruction of the inhabitants of the world; no matter where you go you are doomed;

Vs. 19 – earth sometimes means the physical planet and sometimes means the inhabitants; the firmest thing we know is this earth; we stand on it all the time with trust and certainty; but it will burst into pieces; Rev. 16:17-21; great eschatological earthquake at the end of the age; God using other measures than universal Flood of Noah’s day;

Vs. 20 – bears the weight of human transgression; distinction between hell (Gehenna) as the prison holding area and the eternal lake of fire (after sentence has been passed)

TEXT: Isaiah 25:1-12

TITLE: SONGS OF PRAISE

BIG IDEA:

THE REDEEMED NEED TO EXPRESS THEIR PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS GREATNESS AND HIS SALVATION CULMINATING IN SWALLOWING UP DEATH FOR ALL TIME

INTRODUCTION:

I have commented before how providentially when we are studying through a book of the Bible we will come to a passage that is particularly appropriate for the given holiday season. So we don't even have to pause in our studies in order to give that holiday its special focus. Such was the case here in our study of Isaiah. Last week was Thanksgiving weekend and our subject matter would have been Isaiah 25 if we had met. So consider today an extension of our Thanksgiving holiday weekend as well as the transition into the blessings of Christmas with the coming of the Messiah.

Short passage; relatively simple passage

TWO SONGS OF PRAISE -- THE REDEEMED NEED TO EXPRESS THEIR PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS GREATNESS AND HIS SALVATION CULMINATING IN SWALLOWING UP DEATH FOR ALL TIME

I. (:1-5) SONG OF PRAISE OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH – EXALTING GOD FOR HIS GREATNESS

Van Parunak: The song alternates between statements of praise and the reasons for praise. First Isaiah himself praises the Lord, giving as reason the Lord's sovereign judgments. Then he states that those who were Israel's oppressors will glorify and fear the Lord. This time the reason is the Lord's protection of his people.

A. (:1-2) Greatness of God Seen in His Sovereign and Powerful Judgments

1. Expression of Praise – By Isaiah Himself

“O Lord, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will give thanks to Thy name;”

Yahweh = covenant God of Israel

- based in a personal relationship
 - Make our boast in the Lord
- focused on exalting God
 - Lifting God up for His greatness
 - Support of monotheism and rejection of all forms of idolatry
- attitude of thanksgiving for Who God is and What he has done

Illustration of the 10 lepers who were healed; who comes back to actually express their thanksgiving – the others were happy as well but did not give thanks to the Lord personally **Luke 17:11-19** – it's one thing to feel thankful; another to express it privately to God in your worship and publicly before God's people in the fellowship of the saints

2. Explanation of Praise – The Lord’s Miraculous, Sovereign, Effective Judgments

a. (:1b) Nature of Those Judgments = Miraculous and Sovereign

*“For Thou hast worked wonders,
plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.”*

Similar to the miracles associated with deliverance from Egypt –

Exodus 15:11 *“Who is like Thee among the gods, O LORD? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?”*

Psalm 78:12 *“He wrought wonders before their fathers, In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.”*

Is. 9:6 – *“Wonderful Counselor”* --

- Aaron’s rod changed into a serpent – devoured the serpents of the Pharaoh’s wise men
- #1 - plague of water of the Nile (lifeblood of the region) turned into blood – *“by this you shall know that I am the Lord”*
- #2 - plague of frogs come up out of the Nile and cover the land – swarming into your house and into your bedroom
- #3 - plague of insects; dust became gnats;
- #4 - plague of swarms of flies
- #5 - plague on the livestock of the Egyptians – but sparing the livestock of Israel
- #6 - plague of boils – hitting home more painfully
- #7 - plague of thunder and hail – every man or beast left out in the field will die
- #8 - plague of locusts – devour everything in the land (you thought cicadas were bad)
- #9 - plague of darkness over the land – for three days
- #10 - plague of killing the firstborn
- miracle of the parting of the Red Sea and swallowing up Pharaoh’s army in the waters

He carries out His plans (made from long ago) with perfect faithfulness – He is reliable

Deuteronomy 32:4 *“The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.”*

Not just some knee jerk reaction to the surprises of the moment – but part of God’s overall eternal decree and purpose

Motyer: *Perfect faithfulness* has two related nouns in apposition ... the use of two distinct forms is an idiom of totality and/or perfection, i.e. every imaginable faithfulness or perfect or quintessential faithfulness.

b. (:2) Impact of Those Judgments = Effectiveness and Severity

*“For Thou hast made a city into a heap, a fortified city into a ruin;
a palace of strangers is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt.”*

Young: A city is a place of organization and order, but God has changed it to a heap.

Constable: **Vs. 2** -- What did God do? He destroyed the city of man, the world of city-state culture (cf. 24:10), as He said He would. The city, since the time of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), was a **biblical figure of self-salvation**. In the Tribulation, God will humble the pride of man who seeks to save himself.

Men are so proud of their great cities – look at cities competing to host the Olympics – want to

show off the greatness of their culture and their accomplishments – invest vast sums of money to get the exposure and the notoriety; God reduces the glory of man to a heap of worthless rubble

MacArthur: The prophet did not stipulate which city, but a prophecy of Babylon’s final destruction is in keeping with the context (21:9; cf. Jer 51:37; Rev 18).

B. (:3-5) Greatness of God Seen in His Protection of the Vulnerable and Domination of the Ruthless

1. (:3) Expression of Praise – By Judah’s Oppressors
*“Therefore a strong people will glorify Thee;
Cities of ruthless nations will revere Thee.”*

Constable: Vs. 3 -- Strong people and groups of ruthless individuals will fear God and respect Him for what He has done. They will not necessarily become believers in Him, but they will acknowledge that He has done great things (cf. Rev. 9:20-21).

Young: We must not overlook the profound theological teaching that if the Gentiles are to worship God their own united power must first be destroyed. As long as the Gentile nations, represented in Isaiah’s day by the Assyrians and Babylonians, sought to control the world and to incorporate the theocracy within their own kingdom, there could be no hope for their salvation. Babylon and all that it represented must first be destroyed.

God needs to bring into submission the perceived strength of man; man must acknowledge that he is not in control (devotional from Jenny’s ladies tea yesterday at Capitol Hill Baptist); we are not in control; God is in control; we need to respond in fear of God and glorify Him

2. (:4-5) Explanation of Praise – The Lord’s Protection of His People and Domination of the Ruthless

- a. Refuge for the Vulnerable From Extreme Oppression
 - 1) Refuge for the Vulnerable – the Helpless / the Needy
*“For Thou hast been a defense for the helpless,
A defense for the needy in his distress,”*

Cf. 11:4

This is why many of us support ministries like Compassion where we adopt a specific child who is helpless and needs support; this is why we support the orphanage in India under the ministry of Abraham Thomas – giving refuge and hope to young boys and discipling them to be soldiers of Jesus Christ; this is why our heart should respond in compassion to those who have severe physical needs and are in especially vulnerable situations

- 2) From Extreme Oppression: **Image of Relief from Storm and Heat**
*“A refuge from the storm,
a shade from the heat;”*

Oswalt: Isaiah uses two extremes of weather typical of the Near East to symbolize the difficulties from which God desires to defend us. They are the thunderstorm and the unremitting heat. In either the sudden intensity of the cloudburst or the steady, enervating heat, life is threatened. Unless one has a stronghold against the flood or a shade from the heat, there is no hope.

Beall: The Lord has also been their refuge from the storm, their shade in the scorching sun (for the theme of **God as a refuge**, see Ps 14:6; 27:1; 28:8; 31:4; 37:39; 43:2; 46:1, 7, 11; 48:3; 52:7; 57:1; 62:7-8; 71:7; 91:2, 9; 94:22; 142:4-5; Isa 4:6; 17:7; 27:5; Jer 16:19).

Ps. 37:39-40 *“But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in Him.”*

Is. 4:6 *“There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.”*

b. Relentless and Ruthless Nature of the Attacks – **Image of Intensity of Storm & Heat**

“For the breath of the ruthless is like a rain storm against a wall – like heat in drought”

Beall: The reason the poor need protection is that the wicked are causing destructive storms (v 4c) and heat in an already dry place (v 5). The Lord, however, will intervene, and protect His people with a cloud which blocks the heat of the enemies; and the song of the ruthless will be silenced.

Young: A storm beating against a wall does not accomplish its purpose.

c. Resolution by the Dominant Power of the Almighty – **Image of Storm & Heat**

1) Subduing All Enemies

“Thou dost subdue the uproar of aliens – Like heat by the shadow of a cloud,”

A cloud does not seem very powerful – but look at how it is able to provide relief from the heat

2) Silencing the Ruthless

“the song of the ruthless is silenced.”

Van Parunak: *the branch [song] of the terrible ones shall be brought low.--* Before, they sang in victory over their conquests. Now that song is ended, and they sing a new one, of submission to the Lord.

II. (:6-12) SONG OF PRAISE OF THE REDEEMED NATIONS – EXALTING GOD FOR HIS SALVATION

A. (:6) Victory Feast

“And the LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine.”

Not just a Jewish salvation; blessing comes to all the nations

Beall: Vv 6-8 speak of a victory feast in which God announces His victory over all foes, even death. This feast was customary after the coronation of a new king (see 1 Sam 11:15; 1 Kings 1:9, 19, 25) or after a wedding (Judg 14:10). Here, both may be in view, as the Lord speaks of

the “*marriage supper of the Lamb*” in Rev 19:9 to celebrate his victory over God's enemies after Armageddon, and the marriage of God with His people. The celebrants come from all over the world to the mountain of God, i.e., Zion (see 2:2-4; 4:5; 11:9; 24:23; 65:25).

MacArthur's note on Rev. 19:7, 9 – making a distinction between the bride = the church and all those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb – Isaiah is not making any distinctions here; speaking more in generalities – celebration of Victory for Deliverance and Salvation – entering into the blessings of the millennial kingdom

Difficult to imagine how people can claim that God demands that believers abstain from all alcohol – here God is serving up the finest wine – command is always to avoid drunkenness – assumes the possibility of over indulgence of a good thing

Some friends had their Christmas dinner for work last night at Ruth's Chris Steak House – this will be a pretty good cut of beef that the Lord serves up in that great feast; it will be a lavish banquet – “a feast of fat things”

Oswalt: To a people who did not have to worry about cholesterol, the fat portions of the meat were the best (Ps. 36:8; 63:5). Thus it is not surprising that these were the portions of the sacrifices reserved for God (Lev. 3:3; 4:8, 9). But here God is giving the rich food to his people, as the host (Ps. 24:6).

B. (:7-8) Victory Details = Total Salvation Described

1. Salvation from Death

“And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time,”

MacArthur – remove the death shrouds

Young: swallow the face of the covering – language is evidently taken from the custom of wearing a veil in mourning or sorrow (cf. 2 Sam. 15:30; 19:5; Jer. 14:3ff). It is a veil that covers the peoples, and when this veil is removed, the cause of sorrow is also removed.

2. Salvation from Sorrow / Suffering – cf. **Rev. 21:4**

“And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces,”

3. Salvation from Reproach / Shame

“And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth;”

MacArthur: Israel will be the head of the nations and no longer the tail (**Dt 28:13**). [the leader rather than the one in submission]

Security of this Total Salvation:

“For the LORD has spoken.”

C. (:9) Victory Refrain = Deliverance was Worth the Wait

“And it will be said in that day,

*'Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.'*”

Constable: Vs. 9 -- The redeemed will rejoice that they are finally in the presence of the God, whose rule and care they had longed to be delivered to for so long (cf. Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-12). Finally, hope will have given way to sight, and Old Testament saints will rejoice because they are finally with their Savior (cf. Rom. 11:25-26; 1 Cor. 13:9-10, 12).

Oswalt: It is the kind of confident expectation that is willing to put the times in God's hands and to believe in spite of a long interval. This kind of trust has forsaken that manipulation which seeks instant gratification, and it has demonstrated the reality of its commitment to God by refusing to make him vindicate himself according to a human timetable. When such confident expectation is satisfied, the result is, as here, jubilation, for the one who waits has proven the sovereignty of God. That jubilation springs from the certainty that God can save. What a relief and a delight that is, for without a sovereign deliverer, we are merely pawns of a cruel chance.

D. (:10-12) Victory Dominion – Over All the Nations

1. Condemnation of the City of Man -- Contrast Between Blessing and Cursing – City of God vs. City of Man

*“For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain,
and Moab will be trodden down in his place as straw is trodden down in the water
of a manure pile.”*

Constable: Vs. 10 -- The reason for their rejoicing is that God's hand of blessing that will rest on Zion then. In contrast, Moab, representing the godless nations antagonistic to Israel in the parallel oracle (chs. 15—16), will suffer judgment and humiliation under His foot. The mountains of Moab are visible to the east from the mountains surrounding Jerusalem.

2. Condemnation of Self Reliance

*“And he will spread out his hands in the middle of it as a swimmer spreads out
his hands to swim,”*

Constable: Vv. 11-12 -- Moab would try to swim out of his predicament, as he had relied on himself and tried to save himself in the past, but the Lord will punish his clever pride. None of Moab's defenses against divine judgment will work. The Lord will bring them all down.

3. Condemnation of Pride

*“but the Lord will lay low his pride together with the trickery of his hands.
And the unassailable fortifications of your walls He will bring down, lay low, and
cast to the ground, even to the dust.”*

Motyer: The same pride which held Moab back from seeking security in the divine promises in an earthly crisis (cf. 16:6) will exclude Moab from partaking of the heavenly promises. This is the ultimate tyranny of false choices.

CONCLUSION:

As we move into the Christmas season, let's take with us this attitude of **thanksgiving** and make every effort to give expression to our praise to God for His greatness, His mighty works – including His works of judgment – and His great salvation – which extends to the elimination of death and the wiping away of all of our tears. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What images today convey to you the sense of the City of Man?
- 2) How can I be more purposeful in my expression of praise to God?
- 3) What comes to your mind when you try to imagine that type of lavish banquet that the Lord will serve up to the redeemed nations in the end times?
- 4) How low will God ultimately bring man's pride?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Constable: The world rejoicing in Messiah's reign --

Vs. 6 -- All who enter the Millennium—everyone who does will be a believer — will stream to Mount Zion (24:23) where Yahweh will provide a joyful banquet for them. Amillennialists typically take Zion as a figurative representation of the church. According to Young, the banquet signifies "the spiritual blessings that God brings to mankind through His kingdom." **Inaugural banquets** were fairly customary when ancient Near Eastern kings were crowned (cf. 1 Sam 11:15; 2 Sam. 6:18; 1 Kings 1:9, 19, 25; 8:62-65). The new king often bestowed favors on such occasions.

Vv. 7-8 -- The Lord will also remove the curse of death that has hung over humankind since the Fall (cf. 26:19; Gen. 2:17; Job 19:26; Dan. 12:2; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:54; Heb. 2:15; Rev. 7:17; 21:4; 22:3). This will occur at the end of the Millennium, after the final rebellion and God's creation of new heavens and a new earth. Isaiah's vision of the future followed the course of events that later revelation clarified, but he did not present the eschatological future as consisting of consecutive watertight compartments for two reasons. First, he did not see the future as clearly as later prophets did (1 Pet. 1:10-12), and second, he described the future here as a poet rather than as a historian. Isaiah here **telescoped the millennial and eternal reigns of God**—both aspects constitute His future kingdom—as He did the first and second advents of Christ (65:17-25).

Sovereign Yahweh will wipe the tears from each face (Rev. 7:17; 21:4), as a loving mother, and will remove the disgrace to His people from living in slavery to sin (cf. Josh. 5:9; Ezek. 5:13-17; Rom. 11:11-27). This is a promise from the Lord. It was customary for an ancient Near Eastern king at his banquet to demonstrate his power by performing some heroic act.

Beall: Praise to the Lord for the fall of God's enemies --

The coming judgment will indeed be severe. Why is Moab singled out in these verses? The reasoning is probably that over the years neighboring Moab had been proud and exalted, while Israel was lowly and persecuted. Even in the Tribulation period Moab will apparently be spared by the Antichrist, while Palestine is devastated (Dan 11:41 [*"He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon."*]). As **Oswalt** notes, it was especially the neighboring lands of Moab and Edom (singled out in Mal 1:2-5) "which had taunted Judah for her apparently ineffectual trust in Yahweh" (p. 466). Now, however, Moab's pride will come to naught (compare Isa 16:6-12). Moab will be severely trodden under foot (note the stark imagery used here by Isaiah in v. 10!), and even attempt to save herself (v 11—the subject is probably Moab, not the Lord [NKJV wrongly capitalizes "*He*"]; NASB is better: "*And he will spread out his hands in the middle of it As a swimmer spreads out his hands to swim, But the Lord will lay low his pride together with the trickery of his hands.*"), but instead she sinks further in the muck: God will "*bring down their pride*" (v 11). Even the fortified cities of Moab will be brought low (v 12).

Beall: quoting **John Donne**, "*Death Be Not Proud*" (Holy Sonnet 10 published after his death [1631] in 1633, but probably written ca. 1610):

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

TEXT: Isaiah 26:1-21

TITLE: ROCK OF AGES CLEFT FOR ME – LET ME HIDE MYSELF IN THEE

BIG IDEA:

FAITH IN THE ROCK OF AGES IS FORTIFIED BY VALUABLE LESSONS FROM GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION: A Mighty Fortress is our God

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

(:1A) PRELUDE:

"In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:"

"The hills are alive with the sound of music" – God's people should be in a **singing mood**
[Carrie Underwood special this week]

Young: The song of praise agrees with **25:9** and goes back to 24:23. At the same time it forms a contrast to what was said about Moab and its destruction in what immediately preceded.

I. (:1-6) CELEBRATION OF FAITH – BLESSINGS AND MOTIVATIONS

A. (:1-3) Blessings of Faith

1. (:1b) Faith Brings Strength and Protection and Security

*"We have a strong city;
He sets up walls and ramparts for security."*

City of God contrasted with city of Man

Cf. Christian armor of **Ephesians 6**

We need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might

2. (:2) Faith Brings Victory and Access

*"Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter,
The one that remains faithful."*

After all we have learned about Israel's sinfulness and unfaithfulness ... how can these words be of any comfort? The Lord's righteousness is imputed by grace to those who trust in Him.

Without faith it is impossible to please God – faith works itself out in obedience to His commands

Psalm 15 – who is worthy to enter in? Who are the citizens of this great city?

3. (:3) Faith Brings Peace and Assurance

*"The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace,
Because he trusts in Thee."*

“Like a river glorious is God’s perfect peace”

1. Like a river glorious is God’s perfect peace,
Over all victorious, in its bright increase;
Perfect, yet it floweth fuller every day,
Perfect, yet it groweth deeper all the way.
 - o Refrain:
Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest
Finding, as He promised, perfect peace and rest.
2. Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,
Never foe can follow, never traitor stand;
Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry touch the spirit there.
3. Every joy or trial falleth from above,
Traced upon our dial by the Sun of Love;
We may trust Him fully all for us to do;
They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.

Contrast **James 1:5-8** who talks about the double-minded man who is unstable and lacks wisdom and is full of envy and jealousy and strife instead of peace (or Jesus warning against serving two masters – **Matt. 6:24**)

Young: the human heart by nature is not stable. It is a mind that wavers and changes with every shifting wind of doctrine, for it has no firm foundation upon which to rest. When it reposes upon the Lord, however, it abides firm and constant, preserved in His perfect peace, for it rests, not upon the changing sands of human opinion, but upon God, the rock eternal and unchangeable. . . All the storms and vicissitudes of time cannot change Him, for He stands sure and eternal.

Constable: The Lord keeps in true peace the mind-set that consistently trusts in Him (cf. Matt. 6:24; Phil. 4:7; James 1:6-8). Here believers are viewed corporately, but the same truth applies individually (cf. Ps. 112:7-8).

Motyer: Lit. “*peace, peace,*” [idiom of duplication]. Here it is true peace, as compared with pseudo-peace, and total, as excluding every disturbing element.

B. (:4A) Key Command

"Trust in the LORD forever,"

Not a one-moment-in-time decision to trust the Lord but an eternity of a life characterized by

trusting in the Lord

Constable: Isaiah urged everyone to trust in the Lord as a way of life, not just in a saving act of faith, because Yahweh, even Yahweh, is the very essence of what an everlasting rock should be (cf. 17:10; 30:29; 44:8; Exod. 33:21; Deut. 32:4; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 22:2, 32; Ps. 18:2; 19:14; 61:2; 1 Cor. 10:4). His presence is an unmoving place of refuge and protection from the elements and from all enemies.

C. (:4b-6) Motivations for Faith – Two Contrasting Outcomes

1. (:4b) Everlasting Security – for those who Trust in the Lord

“For in God the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock.”

This is where we get the expression “*Rock of Ages*”

Interesting association: life with rock – nothing more inanimate than a rock
Build your life on the solid foundation of the Rock who is Jesus Christ

Parunak: The **first motive** for our trust is that the Lord protects those who do so trust in him. He is the strong city; cf. **Pro 18:10**. . . *“The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe.”*

The second motive for our trust is that he will humble those who do not trust in him. We are back to the fundamental promise of **2:11-12** . . . [proud will be abased]

2. (:5) Evaporating Security – for those who Trust in the Flesh

“For He has brought low those who dwell on high, the unassailable city; He lays it low, He lays it low to the ground, He casts it to the dust.”

The proud and haughty brought low

Motyer: victory is solely the Lord’s work (5) and his people’s part is to enter upon what he has accomplished. Here they do not fight but simply trample the dust left by the divine overthrow.

3. (:6) Reversal of Fortunes -- Faith Transforms the Oppressed to the Conqueror

“The foot will trample it, The feet of the afflicted, the steps of the helpless.”

How humiliating

II. (:7-19) INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS – VIA GOD’S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS – IMPACT ON THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

A. (:7-9, 12) **Impact on the Righteous**

1. (:7) Pathway of Righteousness = Smooth, Straight, Level – No Obstructions

“The way of the righteous is smooth; O Upright One, make the path of the righteous level.”

Present Tense

Young: *“straight is the path of the righteous.”* The emphasis falls not upon the path but upon “straight,” for Isaiah does not wish to place attention upon the path on which the righteous must

travel but rather upon the blessedness that comes to the righteous who travel this path.

Quoting **Calvin**: But for this, they would easily fall or give way through exhaustion, and would hardly ever make way amidst so many thorns and briars, steep roads, intricate windings, and rough places, did not the Lord lead out and deliver them.

Oswalt: in a land where roadways went up and down with grueling regularity, the most delightful thought was of a road which was level and straight. It was that way because of the character of the One who formed it (Isa 40:3-5).

Parunak: God smooths out our path, removing stumbling blocks, so that we can conduct ourselves in righteousness. He does what we request in the prayer our Lord taught us (**Matt 6:13**), “*Lead us not into temptation.*”

2. (:8-9a) Pursuit of the Upright One

*“Indeed, while following the way of Thy judgments, O LORD,
We have waited for Thee eagerly;
Thy name, even Thy memory, is the desire of our souls.
At night my soul longs for Thee,
Indeed, my spirit within me seeks Thee diligently;”*

Pursuit of Holiness -- Tozer

Very active activity – yet involves waiting patiently in humility and faith for the Lord to act

Oswalt: Waiting is very difficult for most people, for it is an admission that there is nothing we can do at the moment to achieve our ends. Yet that admission is the first requirement for spiritual blessing. Until we have admitted that we cannot save ourselves, God cannot save us.

3. (:9b) Pedagogical (Educational) Tool = Righteous Judgments of God

*“For when the earth experiences Thy judgments,
The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.”*

Young: When His judgments are withheld and men seem to prosper, they tend to forget God. On the other hand, when times of adversity come and the judgments of God are felt, at that time men do learn God’s righteousness. Thus, the punishing hand of god may serve a beneficent purpose, in that it leads a sinner to repentance.

Beall: V9b seems to indicate that the prophet's specific yearning here is for the Lord's presence in judgment, because it is only when the Lord's judgments (same word as in v. 8a) are seen in the earth that the world's inhabitants may ultimately learn righteousness (the hard way—through judgment). v. 10 makes plain that the wicked (parallel to the “inhabitants of the world” in v. 9b) will not learn righteousness if grace is shown to them (and indeed, this seems to have been the case throughout Israel's history—note especially the period of the judges); even in a land of uprightness they will do evil, and will not see the Lord's majesty. This was true in the time of the Exodus from Egypt when the multitude murmured against Moses and the Lord; it was undoubtedly true of many in Isaiah's own day; it was true in Christ's time as many saw the Lord's majesty and did not believe; it is true in our time, as many who have seen the Lord's graciousness in this land have refused to acknowledge Him; and it will be true in the end time as well.

Parunak: It is not just the Jews, but all the “*inhabitants of the world,*” who must learn righteousness in the school of suffering. We have numerous examples of this principle in Scripture:

Pharaoh: Exo 9:14 *For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.*[cf. 12:32, where after the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh sends them off to sacrifice, and says, “*bless me also*”].

The Philistines: 1Sa 5:6-7 *But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof. 7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.*

The Rich Man: Luk 16:23 *And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

4. (:12) Final Destiny = Peace by God’s Grace
“*LORD, Thou wilt establish peace for us,
Since Thou hast also performed for us all our works.*”

Switch to **future tense**

God makes us will and do of His good pleasure

Rom. 5:1 “*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*”

B. (:10-11) Impact on the Wicked

1. (:10a) Spurning God’s Grace
“*Though the wicked is shown favor, He does not learn righteousness;*”

Common grace is shown to the wicked in abundance – no failure on God’s part to reveal His righteousness and His harvest law
Deficiency is on the part of the student – fails to learn

Pro 30:7-9 “*Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*”

2. (:10b) Mistreating God’s People
“*He deals unjustly in the land of uprightness,*”

Connection between doctrine and practice

3. (:10c) Ignoring God’s Glory
“*And does not perceive the majesty of the LORD.*”

Root problem is blindness regarding the majesty of the Lord – the wicked thinks that they are high and lifted up and in control of things

4. (:11) Final Destiny: Receiving God's Wrath

*“O LORD, Thy hand is lifted up yet they do not see it.
They see Thy zeal for the people and are put to shame;
Indeed, fire will devour Thine enemies.”*

Ps. 89:13; Deut. 32:27

Young: God's zeal for His people is His determination to carry out His purposes of salvation and to procure for Himself a redeemed people. That this may be accomplished, however, the wicked must be punished; and this punishment or judgment itself is an evidence of God's zeal on behalf of His own.

Constable: Even though the unrighteous do not recognize God's messages to them now, they will one day understand, when He brings these enemies of His into judgment.

C. (:13-19) 3 Illustrations of God's Righteous Judgment Elevating Israel

Parunak: Now Isaiah gives three examples of how the Lord's judgments have actually led to their deliverance. The first and last concern Israel, while the central one concerns the Gentiles. Thus this section unfolds the Jew-Gentile sequence from vv. 8-11.

1. (:13-14) Imagery of Subjugation -- Israel Delivered from Oppressive Rulers

“O LORD our God, other masters besides Thee have ruled us; But through Thee alone we confess Thy name. The dead will not live, the departed spirits will not rise; Therefore Thou hast punished and destroyed them, And Thou hast wiped out all remembrance of them.”

Third verse in a row beginning with name of God

Not teaching doctrine of annihilation – there will still be judgment; but they will never rise up again to put Israel under bondage (nations of Egypt and Assyria and Babylonia)

No legacy for them, despite how much they longed to be immortalized – cf. the Pyramids

Young: There is a contrast between the making mention of God's name, in verse 13, and the obliteration of all remembrance of the name of the enemies.

2. (:15-16) Imagery of Expansion -- Israel Expanded by Grafting in of the Gentiles

“Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, Thou hast increased the nation, Thou art glorified; Thou hast extended all the borders of the land. O LORD, they sought Thee in distress; They could only whisper a prayer, Thy chastening was upon them.”

Past Tense – prophetic certitude by describing future events as if they are already past;

Rom. 11 – all Israel will be saved; Israel will become an enormous nation; repeated over and over in Isaiah

Young: This outpouring, however, had taken place only in whispers. When Hannah prayed, her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. It was, therefore, a scarcely audible prayer, merely a whisper. Those who thus prayed were characterized by great fervency of spirit. The intensity of

their being was so great that they truly spoke to God from the heart, with the result that their prayer appeared to be only a whisper.

Constable: Rather than Israel dying out as a nation, the Lord had increased her, as He promised Abraham (Gen. 15:5). This was not Israel's doing; the Lord had increased her borders and so gained great glory for Himself. During the reigns of David and Solomon the Israelites experienced numerical growth and geographical expansion. God would do the same for them in the future.

Grogan: It is worth remembering that the land promised to Israel in Exodus 23:31 was never fully occupied, even in the days of David and Solomon, but that the bounds of the messianic kingdom are to be wider still (cf. Ps 72:8).

3.(:17-19) Imagery of Suffering in Child Birth and Resurrection –

Israel Delivered from Self Reliance – Doctrine of Resurrection of the Body

“As the pregnant woman approaches the time to give birth, She writhes and cries out in her labor pains, Thus were we before Thee, O LORD. We were pregnant, we writhed in labor, We gave birth, as it were, only to wind. We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth. Nor were inhabitants of the world born. Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.”

All of the sufferings experienced by Jews down through the ages have not accomplished the deliverance of the world

Young: chiasmic arrangement of the words:

*there will live (A)
thy dead ones (B)
and my corpse (B1)
they will arise (A1)*

Parunak: First the people confess the painful futility of their own efforts. He compares their condition with an expectant woman:

- The increase that should come through them is like the blessed expectation of a baby.
- But, like childbirth, it is accompanied with great pain and suffering.
- And for too long, it appears to be a false pregnancy, yielding only wind.

Isaiah is not talking about literal childbearing. The nation's fruitless labor is a metaphor for the suffering she has endured by relying on her own strength, yet achieving no results.

As so often in Isaiah, the interpretation follows the metaphor. God expected two results from Israel with regard to the Gentiles. Both are set forth in **Deut 20:10-14**. She has failed in both regards.

Beall: Since the word “corpse” is specifically used, and the next verb speaks of awaking, it seems clear that a physical, bodily resurrection of God's saints is meant by the prophet. This is in line with the teaching of **Dan 12:2**, and there is no reason to ascribe this concept (as the liberals do) to a latter, Maccabean time. Indeed, one chapter earlier in Isaiah, the prophet spoke of the Lord swallowing up death forever (25:8), thus paving the way for the teaching of this verse. The

Lord revealed the truth of the bodily resurrection to Isaiah, just as He did later to Daniel, though fuller expression of the doctrine comes only in the NT.

Job 19:25-26 – My Redeemer lives and I will see Him

(:20-21) APPLICATION: ESCAPING THE DAY OF THE LORD'S WRATH

A. Refuge from Wrath

*“Come, my people, enter into your rooms, And close your doors behind you;
Hide for a little while, Until indignation runs its course.”*

Motyer: The call to “*open the gates*” with which the poem began (2) is matched here by *shut the doors*. Security in peace (1-4) is matched by security from wrath. The wording *Go . . . shut* recalls **Genesis 7:1, 16** and the safety of the Noahic community in the flood. The picture of going indoors recalls **Exodus 12:22-23** and the safety of the Passover community while judgment was in process. *Passed by* is the Passover verb, *abar* (Ex. 12:12, 23).

The ultimate Armageddon is coming; only believers who hide will escape; God will protect them from AntiChrist and from Satan

B. Retribution of Wrath

*“For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;”*

A whole bunch of themes in this one verse that modern preachers like to gloss over – afraid of offending people with the harsh side of God’s justice and judgment

C. Revelation of Wrath

*“And the earth will reveal her bloodshed,
And will no longer cover her slain.”*

God will show where all the bloodshed took place and who was killed – cf. all the martyrs in this generation in China and Sudan, etc.

Young: Turning from contemplation of the complete deliverance and resurrection to come upon the people of God, the prophet in a practical manner addresses that people. The period of oppression and suffering has not yet ended; the future glory which he has just described is not yet actually a reality. It is not to be brought about, however, by means of human might and power, but only through quiet waiting and expectation as God works out His wondrous purposes of redemption.

Micah 1:3

Constable: Before the restoration of Israel, however, God's people would experience hard times (in the Tribulation, cf. Rev. 12). Before God opened the gates of the new city to the redeemed (v. 2), they would need to shut their doors against their foes (cf. Gen. 7:1, 16; Exod. 12:22-23). Shutting the doors suggests both safety from danger and separation from others, in this case, pagans.

Yahweh would come out of His heavenly place of quiet to punish earthdwellers during the Tribulation for their secret sins. The earth itself, with the forces of nature, would assist the Lord, metaphorically, by exposing sins that lay hidden (cf. v. 12).

CONCLUSION: Rock of Ages, Cleft for me

1. Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
 let me hide myself in thee;
 let the water and the blood,
 from thy wounded side which flowed,
 be of sin the double cure;
 save from wrath and make me pure.

2. Not the labors of my hands
 can fulfill thy law's commands;
 could my zeal no respite know,
 could my tears forever flow,
 all for sin could not atone;
 thou must save, and thou alone.

3. Nothing in my hand I bring,
 simply to the cross I cling;
 naked, come to thee for dress;
 helpless, look to thee for grace;
 foul, I to the fountain fly;
 wash me, Savior, or I die.

4. While I draw this fleeting breath,
 when mine eyes shall close in death,
 when I soar to worlds unknown,
 see thee on thy judgment throne,
 Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
 let me hide myself in thee.

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What parallels do you see between the Christian's armor described in Ephesians 6 and the type of fortifications that the Lord provides here to those who trust Him?

- 2) How can the same trials be beneficial to the righteous and yet confirm the ungodly in their blindness and unbelief?

- 3) How do you explain the tension between actively pursuing the Lord and patiently waiting for Him?

- 4) What does the OT have to say on the subject of the resurrection of the body?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: The structure of this chapter depends crucially on the pronouns.

- Through v. 19, sections addressing the people as 2pl (vv. 1-2, 4-6, 19b) alternate with those addressing God as 2s (3, 7-19a, 19c). So we can distinguish exhortation (horizontal, among the believers) from prayer (vertical, to God). Each of the 2pl sections contains a command.
- The sections in which the people address one another use 2pl entirely. This difference marks off 26:20-27:1, which uses 2s, as a separate section. As in ch. 25, it is an expectation that follows the song.
- The first person pronouns 1 in 7-19 alternate with 3pl pronouns. Here the contrast appears to be between Israel and the Gentile nations.

Oswalt: The chapter moves from contemplation of the glorious future and the kind of steadfast trust necessary to participate in that future (vv. 1-6) to a sober view of the present in which the people are not delivered (vv. 7-19). Nevertheless, in this sober view there is the repeated affirmation that God can and will keep his word. This train of thought is then met by the promise that God will punish the sinful earth and triumph over it for his people's sake (26:20 – 27:1). This movement from future to present to future has the function of assuring the reader that the promises are not merely rosy daydreams which ignore the contradictory present. In fact, these promises are made more convincing because they are made in the full light of the present.

Dr. John Whitcomb: Chaps. 26-27

Many parallels to Noah's Flood as the Son of Man returns in cataclysmic judgment; only the righteous remnant survive to enter the kingdom; Are you waiting on the Lord alone for your hope of eternal salvation? Do I personally know the Lord as my Savior? In the coming great day of the Lord when His kingdom will be unveiled, this song will be sung; contrast with city of Moab with their great fortresses that were supposedly unassailable; cf. people building houses on shoreline (like up in NJ); Where's your hope and security? Fixed disposition of trust in the Lord that does not depend on the changing circumstances of the day; "*Who may dwell on Thy holy hill?*" **Psalm 15** -- Only Jesus Christ fulfilled all the requirements of the law; Only the King of Glory can enter into those gates on His own merits; There is no peace to the wicked; Who is your Rock? That is theme of whole section of chaps. 7-39; Don't look to the Lord as the last resort but the first one; the great city of man with all of its pride and pretensions will be destroyed by God; blasphemies and perversions surround us in the U.S. and we are no longer even shocked; portends coming judgment; Is God the first one you think of when you wake up at night time? Are we truly seeking Him? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? His righteous judgments should be educational to us; Psalm 78 = the only language that the people could understand was God's hand of discipline in the wilderness;

Brian Borgman: Song of Praise for Salvation and Peace in Zion --

City of God (Zion) Contrasted with City of Man (:1-6)

"Glorious things of Thee are spoken"

"May the mind of Christ my Savior dwell in me"

Vs. 1 – **the Security of Zion** – already not yet timeframe for this song; city of man thinks they are unassailable; that they will last forever; but the City of God really is the strong city; talking about God's community of faith, His elect; Zech. 2:1-5 – God is wall of fire around His people to protect them; a high tower, a rock, a fortress for His people

Vs. 2 – **the Citizens of Zion** – Ps. 15:1; 24:3; Who may dwell in the tent of the Lord? Who really belongs here? The Hasidic Jews are righteous for keeping every jot and tittle of the Law; here person who has been made right with God by God Himself; Issue is not us accepting Christ but God accepting us because we are the ones with the problem; nation of God’s elect – both Jews and Gentiles; “*those who keep faithfulneses*” (plural in the Hebrew); those who have been made right with God are those who keep faithfulnes with God, walking in holiness before Him

Vs. 3 – **the Peace of Trusting Yahweh** – “*whose mind is stayed on Thee*” – Like a River Glorious hymn; mind fixed on God Himself; opposite of this is double-minded man of James 1; Ps. 86 – *Unite my heart to fear Thy name* – wants a heart and mind that is single in intent and purpose; this is where the battle is day in and day out; we are bombarded every day to have our minds distracted; connection between faith and obedience; Jer. 2:13; we should want our mind fixed on living water instead of broken cisterns; His greatness, majesty, all sufficiency should be our focus; fix your minds on things above where Christ is; Result: “*God will keep Him in shalom shalom;*” repeat words to give adjectival sense; complete and full peace; full orb'd well being; soundness through and through; lack of inner conflict; cf. expense and weekly appointments with psychiatrist; life becoming more hectic; need sense of inner calm; people become consumed with circumstances that are weighing them down; fixing our mind on God is not the means to an end, but is the end; reading your Bible once a week won't get it done or by simply reading Daily Bread; must have your minds immersed in His holy word;

Vs. 4 – **the Command** – I don't have Shalom, Shalom – What should I do? He is worthy of your trust and faith; for in Yahweh we have the Rock of Ages – ages of ages; rocks are strong and durable; used as a fortress and refuge; **Ex. 17** – the rock in the wilderness that was struck in judgment in the place of the people who deserved to be struck and gave life-giving water; **1 Cor. 10:4** – Christ was that Rock; struck in our place and gave provisions in the wilderness; Messiah struck only once – Moses ruined the typology when he struck the rock twice; just speak to the smitten rock now and it will pour forth blessing;

Vv. 5-6 – **the Contrast** – the **Humiliation** that will come if a person trusts himself; those who think they are higher than they are; downward spiral of humiliation; **James 4:6** “*God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble;*”

TEXT: Isaiah 27:1-13

TITLE: *THE GUARDED VINEYARD YIELDS ABUNDANT FRUIT*

BIG IDEA:

REGATHERED ISRAEL FLOURISHES IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM AS GOD DEALS DECISIVELY WITH HER ENEMIES

INTRODUCTION:

Today we are completing another major section in the prophecy of Isaiah – **chapters 24-27** – the **Mini Apocalypse** that prepares God’s people for worship in the Millennial Kingdom. [unveiling of God’s plan for the future] Ultimately, what God desires from us is not just that we are people of discernment who know Him and understand the times and the outworking of His program in history. He desires a people who love and worship Him in united harmony in accordance with His truth. This section is similar to the Hallelujah Chorus – emphasis on songs of Praise to God.

C. (24:1 – 27:13) Songs of Praise for the Blessings of Faith Enjoyed in Millennial Triumph After the Catastrophic Devastation of the Guilty World – City of Man Reduced to Rubble While the City of God Worships and Sings Praises

1. (24:1-23) Judgment on the Earth – The Whole Earth is Headed for Catastrophic Devastation and Only the Remnant Remains to Praise God
 - a. (:1-12) Catastrophic devastation and gloom on the entire guilty world in the day of the Lord
 - b. (:13-16a) Worldwide songs of praise from the meager remnant glorifying the Lord
 - c. (:16b-22) Catastrophic devastation of eschatological judgment
 - d. (:23) Songs of eternal triumph – Kingdom of God exalted in the new heavens and new earth
2. (25:1-12) Songs of Praise for God’s Greatness and His Salvation – The Redeemed Need to Express Their Praise to God for His Greatness and His Salvation Culminating in Swallowing Up Death for All Time
 - a. (:1-5) Song of praise of the prophet Isaiah – exalting God for His greatness
 - b. (:6-12) Song of praise of the redeemed nations – exalting God for His salvation
3. (26:1-21) Songs of Praise for the Blessings of Faith – Faith in the Rock of Ages is Fortified by Valuable Lessons From God’s Righteous Judgments
 - a. (:1-6) Celebration of faith – blessings and motivations
 - b. (:7-19) Instruction in righteousness – via God’s righteous judgments – impact on the righteous and the wicked
 - c. (:20-21) Application: Escaping the day of the Lord’s wrath

Oswalt: These verses provide a fitting climax to chs. 24–27 with their emphasis upon God’s sovereignty over the nations and his intention to restore his people from the nations. In this respect this is the second of three such passages. The others are **11:12–16** and **35:1–10**. Each of these occurs at the end of a major segment. This fact suggests something about the structure of the book. As pointed out in the comments on ch. 11, chs. 7–12 make the point that if you trust in the nations, the nations will destroy you. Nonetheless, God will not leave his people in destruction; he intends to deliver them from the nations. But this raises the immediate question: Can he deliver them from the nations? Chs. 13–27 answer that question with a resounding affirmative. They do so first in a particularizing way, showing that all nations, including Israel, are under God’s judgment (chs. 13–23). Then chs. 24–27 make the same point in a more generalized way, asserting that God is the main actor in the drama of human history. These things being so, God can deliver his people, and the promise is reaffirmed in these two closing verses.

Our narcissistic society wants to divert our attention from the exposition of God's truth to a shallow focus on man's individual needs and desires.

Quote by **Al Mohler**: The fixation on our own sense of need and interest looms as the most significant factor in this marginalization and silencing of the Word. Individually, each human being in the room is an amalgam of wants, needs, intuitions, interests, and distractions. Corporately, the congregation is a mass of expectations, desperate hopes, consuming fears, and impatient urges. All of this adds up, unless countered by the authentic reading and preaching of the Word of God, to a form of group therapy, entertainment, and wasted time—if not worse.

But God calls us back to be a transformed people, forgiven of our sins by the reconciliation He has accomplished through the sending of His Son to die for us; a people equipped by the indwelling Holy Spirit to worship God in Spirit and in truth; to fulfill the purpose for which God created man.

Constable: The recurrence of the phrase "*in that day*" in verses 1, 2, 12, and 13 ties this chapter to what has preceded. Here is more information about the future, specifically the Millennium.

REGATHERED ISRAEL FLOURISHES IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM AS GOD DEALS DECISIVELY WITH HER ENEMIES

(:1) TRANSITION VERSE – DESTRUCTION OF POWERFUL ENEMIES IN PREPARATION FOR BLESSING

A. End Times Prophecy of Destruction

“In that day the Lord will punish”

Why do I care?? People complain all the time: Why does the Lord permit sin to go unchecked? Why doesn't He rise up and deal decisively with Satan? He will! But be glad for the patience of God; for the heads of the unsaved would be chopped off by the guillotine of God's wrath as well; a day of accounting lies ahead – wickedness will not go unchecked

B. Threefold Description of Powerful Wicked Enemies – couched in mythical terms

1. *“Leviathan the fleeing serpent”* – enemies in the air
2. *“even Leviathan the twisted serpent”* – enemies on the ground
3. *“and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea”* – enemies in the sea

Reminds me of movie Jaws – if you took the tour at Universal Studios out in Hollywood – that beast rises out of the water to try to terrify you – great dinosaur living in the sea

Are there 2 (Leviathan and the dragon) or 3 adversaries mentioned here?? Identification??

Fleeing (gliding through the skies – dangerous because it can cover territory quickly) and **Coiling** (ready to strike)

Satan symbolized as mighty Leviathan; the dragon is the Anti-Christ on the earth who represents Satan and will be targeted for destruction; **Rev. 20:1-3**

Motyer: The picture of the power of the air, the coiling serpent on the ground and the dragon which is in the sea shows the whole creation infested with alien powers which will be sought and destroyed wherever they are.

Constable: Leviathan was a symbol of the immense power arrayed against the Lord's people. It was also a figure in Canaanite mythology. Isaiah's reference to it does not mean he believed in the Canaanite myth. He simply used a term used in mythology to illustrate.

Grogan: [after **Delitzsch**] -- the swift serpent is an allusion to the fairly straight Tigris River, the coiling serpent to the more twisting Euphrates River, and the dragon by the sea to Egypt (the Nile River). Thus Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt are in view.

Oswalt: This verse is saying the same thing then as **24:21-23**, although in different words. God is the sole sovereign of the universe, and while evil and destruction now seem to threaten the principles of justice upon which his order is founded, they will not prevail. God will triumph and those who have kept faith with him through dark days will triumph with him. But the true monster which must be destroyed, the one before which God's people find themselves helpless, is not some primordial chaos; it is the monster of moral evil. That, too, God will destroy, and his people may await that day with joy.

C. Threefold Description of Powerful Divine Weapon – Wielded by the Lord Himself

1. “with His fierce sword”
2. “great sword”
3. “mighty sword”

No defense against such a powerful instrument of destruction

Deut. 32:41, 42 Moses had spoken of this same sword; **Is. 34:5, 6; 66:16**

Rev. 19:15 “From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations”

Motyer:

Fierce – harsh, severe, unsparing
Great – enough for any task
Powerful – enough for any foe

Young: The sword is said to be *hard*, which would suggest that it cannot easily be broken; it endures while it smites the foe; it does not become dull or lose its sharpness. Possibly also it is to be thought of as relentless. The sword is described as *great*, for it is mighty and powerful and sufficient to slay all the enemies of the Lord. Lastly, it is a *strong* sword; not one that will fail, but one which will be fit to be wielded by the arm of the Lord. The punishment which the Lord metes out will be sure and unailing. The power of destruction resides not in the sword itself, but in the Lord who wields it

I. (:2-6) CONTRASTING SONG (PARABLE) OF THE VINEYARD (cf. 5:1-7) – THE PROTECTION AND CULTIVATION OF THE VINE KEEPER PRODUCES GOOD FRUIT THAT IMPACTS THE WORLD IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

A. Contrast in Timeframe – Eschatological Focus

- **Chap. 5 – “now”** – sad current condition of the vineyard

- Chap. 27 - *“In that day”*

The vineyard is identified as Israel ... not the church – How could you have a church of redeemed believers portrayed in such a state as the rejected vineyard of Chap.5? But positive spiritual times lie ahead for Israel in the day of the Lord.

B. Contrast in Productivity -- Between Lack of Fruitfulness = Failure (despite fertile soil) vs Fruitfulness

- Chap. 5 – *“And hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones. . .”*
“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?”
- Chap. 27 - *“A vineyard of wine”* – produced what was expected of it

God’s expectation is always that spiritual life produces spiritual fruit – the two are inseparable; you cannot claim to be united to the life of Christ if there is no evidence of spiritual fruit

C. Contrast in Tone – Lament vs Rejoicing

- Chap. 5 - *“Let me sing”*
- Chap. 27 - *“sing of it!”* – this vineyard brings delight to mind

Connection between wine and joy in Scripture – Judges 9:13; Ps. 104:15 *“wine which makes man’s heart glad”*

D. Continuity of Identity and Ownership

- Chap. 5 – *“for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.”*
- Chap. 27 - *“I, the LORD, am its keeper;”*

E. Same Care and Protection But Different Intent = Punishing vs. Protection

- Chap. 5 – *“And He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it,”*
- Chap. 27 - *“I water it every moment. Lest anyone damage it, I guard it night and day. I have no wrath.”*

Van Parunak: vs. 3 -- The order in Hebrew is slightly different, to establish a chiasm: *“I the LORD do keep it; every moment I will water it: lest any hurt it, night and day I will keep it.”*

- The outer layer answers “who”: It is the Lord himself who is guarding the vineyard.
- The next layer answers “when”, emphasizing the constancy of his care (every moment, day and night)
- The central two items tell us “how,” focusing on **two threats** to the vineyard: natural causes (drought), and predators (“lest any hurt it”).

Look at the activity of Satan in trying to harm believers:

- **John 10:10** *“the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy”*
- **1 Pet. 5:8-9** *“Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking*

someone to devour”

Illustration of God’s Providential Protection – Brian Bell:

The British express train raced through the night, its powerful headlamp spearing the black darkness ahead. The train was carrying Queen Victoria. Suddenly the engineer saw a startling sight. Revealed in the beam of the engine's headlights was a weird figure in a black cloak, standing in the middle of the tracks and waving its arms. The engineer grabbed for the brakes and brought the train to a grinding halt. He and his fellow trainmen climbed out to see what had stopped them. They could find no trace of the strange figure. On a hunch, the engineer walked a few yards farther up the tracks. Suddenly he stopped and stared into the fog in horror. A bridge had been washed out and had fallen into a swollen stream. If he had not heeded the ghostly figure, the train would have plunged into the stream. While the bridge and tracks were being repaired, the crew made a more intensive search for the strange flagman. But not until they got to London did they solve the mystery. At the base of the engine's headlamp was a huge moth. The engineer looked at it for a moment, then on impulse wet its wings and pasted it to the glass of the lamp. Climbing back into his cab, he switched on the lamp and saw the "phantom flagman" in the beam. He knew what had happened: the moth had flown into the beam, seconds before the train reached the washed-out bridge. In the fog, it appeared to be a phantom figure waving its arms. When Queen Victoria was told of the strange happening she said, "I'm sure it was no accident. It was God's way of protecting us."

F. Contrast in Role Played by Enemy Nations – Instrument of Discipline vs. Destruction

- Chap. 5 - *"So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground."*
- Chap. 27 - *Should someone give Me briars and thorns in battle, Then I would step on them, I would burn them completely.*

(:5) Destruction Mitigated by Offer of Reconciliation and Peace

- Chap. 27 - *“Or let him rely on My protection, Let him make peace with Me, Let him make peace with Me.”*

Van Parunak: The natural destiny of a weed is to be pulled out and burned. But here is a gracious invitation. The weed can become a true plant, the brier can turn into a fruitful vine, by fleeing to the very one who threatens to remove him, the Divine Gardener. . . The noun “strength” refers to an isolated stronghold, a place of refuge. Isaiah uses it of the fortress cities of Damascus and Samaria, and twice of Island Tyre (23: 4, 14), seemingly secure in its offshore location. But the only true refuge is God (25:4, where the word is twice translated “strength,” but in parallel with “refuge” and “shadow”). There alone can one find refuge from divine judgment, and in the grace of God, refuge is offered there.

Constable: In the Hebrew text the emphasis is on *"with Me"* in the first *"Let him make peace with Me"* and on *"peace"* in the second.

Pat Damiani: the only way that we can make peace with God is to lay hold of His protection. In other words, it is God alone who provides salvation and the only way that we are made right with Him is to take hold of that salvation on His terms.

G. Desolation vs. Growth and Fruitfulness that Impacts the Whole World

- Chap. 5 – *“And I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.”*
- Chap. 27 - *“In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout; And they will fill the whole world with fruit.”*

II. (:7-11) TWO DIVINE ACTIONS AND TWO CONTRASTING RESULTS: THE MODERATED DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD AND THE UNMITIGATED DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY CITY LEADS TO PEOPLE BEING EITHER FORGIVEN OR FORSAKEN (ATONED FOR OR ABANDONED)

A. (:7-8) First Divine Action: Moderated Discipline of Judah

“Like the striking of Him who has struck them, has He struck them? Or like the slaughter of His slain, have they been slain? Thou didst contend with them by banishing them, by driving them away. With His fierce wind He has expelled them on the day of the east wind.”

Motyer: The Lord has never been as harsh with Israel as he has been with its foes. . . Always there was a divine restraint (cf. Je. 4:27; 5:10, 18).

Van Parunak: God's treatment of his people is always in measure, modulated to their ability to profit from it. Compare Jeremiah's frequent statement:

Jer 10:24 *O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*

Jer 30:11 *For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.*

Jer 46:28 *Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.*

Martin: He will judge her by warfare and exile (cf. Deut. 28:64-68). The east wind, strong in the Middle East, may refer figuratively to Babylon, east of Israel, which took Judah into captivity. The Exile would help purify Judah so that she would not worship foreign gods and goddesses.

Young: The punishment extended to Judah was for the purpose of purification, in order that a remnant might be preserved. . . God uses chastisement as a means of bringing His own people to their senses.

Heb. 12 – God uses discipline to get the attention of His people and lead them to true discernment

B. (:9) Result: Forgiveness and Repentance of Judah

“Therefore through this Jacob's iniquity will be forgiven; And this will be the full price of the pardoning of his sin: When he makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalk stones; When Asherim and incense altars will not stand.”

Martin: Evidence of that atonement would be her pulverizing her altar stones dedicated to idolatrous gods, and removing the Asherah poles, wooden symbols of the Canaanite pagan goddess of fertility.

C. (:10-11a) Second Divine Action: Destruction and Desolation

“For the fortified city is isolated, A homestead forlorn and forsaken like the desert; There the calf will graze, And there it will lie down and feed on its branches. When its limbs are dry, they are broken off; Women come and make a fire with them.”

Van Parunak: Throughout the Cantata the “city” (24:10, 12; 25:2, 3; 26:5) represents human efforts at self-sufficiency.⁴ It becomes a wilderness. In spite of its fortifications, it is now vulnerable to the weakest adversaries.

Constable: The prophet pictured the deserted condition of that city: calves grazing there and stripping the vegetation without human restraint, and women gathering dry wood for fires. Normally these activities took place outside cities. Dry limbs reflect a desolate condition since normally trees in cities were alive. The reason for the destruction of this city is that its inhabitants did not have discernment. They did not see their need to humble themselves and submit to God, even though He took great care to form them as His creatures.

D. (:11b) Result: Abandonment – Removal of Divine Compassion and Favor

“For they are not a people of discernment, Therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them. And their Creator will not be gracious to them.”

Motyer: The relation of Creator to creature is like that of mother to child, but the divine love has been alienated by people’s determination to trust their own discernment. Thirdly, the tragic consequence is that they have put themselves even beyond the reach of favour, the outreaching of unmerited, saving grace to sinners.

Van Parunak: Jacob's understanding led him to put away his idolatry. In 44:9-20, Isaiah mocks the idolater who carves an idol from the very tree that he himself has cut down and whose branches he burns for fuel. The idolater's error is at root a lack of understanding:

Isa 44:18-20 *They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?*

III. (:12-13) TWO IMAGES OF THE DIVINE REGATHERING OF SAVED ISRAEL

A. (:12) Imagery of Threshing to Regather Saved Israel

*“And it will come about **in that day**, that the LORD will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel.”*

Oswalt: the direction from which the returnees will be gathered—across the Euphrates from Assyria and across the Wadi el-Arish from Egypt.

J. Vernon McGee: This section reveals that God definitely intends to restore the nation Israel to the Promised Land. They will be returned personally and individually, nothing could be clearer than this. Assyria, Egypt, Israel and Jerusalem are all literal and language means what it says. The logical conclusion is that God will regather Israel. This has never been fulfilled in the past. It is yet future.

Oswalt: The term seems to fit better with harvesting of olives, where sticks are used to shake the ripe olives from the trees (Deut. 24:20; cf. also Isa. 17:6). The mention of gathering one by one could refer to the people as only a few scattered heads of grain (thus explaining the flailing), but again it seems to accord better with picking up olives. The sequence of beating first, then gathering also suggests olives. In any case, the picture of God gathering each of the scattered ones individually is a very tender one (cf. 49:14-16).

B. (:13) Imagery of Trumpet Call to Regather Saved Israel for Worship

“It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown; and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.”

Van Parunak: This trumpet is a *shophar*, a ram's horn, not the silver trumpets that Moses made (Num 10:2). . . It is first mentioned in Exod 19:16, 19; 20:18 to describe the sound that the people heard from Mt. Sinai, and represents the Lord's kingship over his people. The prophets often mention it in connection with the day of the Lord, because that is the point at which the Lord's kingdom comes on earth, as it is in heaven.

Beall: Jubilees, Feast of Trumpets—see Matt 24:29-31: *“He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*

“(Cf. Exod. 19:16, 19; 2 Sam. 6:15; Ps. 47:6 (Eng. 5); 81:4 (Eng. 3); Isa. 18:3; Joel 2:15; Zech. 9:14. Cf. also Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 10:7; 11:15)” (**Oswalt**, 501).

Vine, “Just as in the year of jubilee, the trumpet sounded on the evening of the Day of Atonement, and every man returned to his own possession (Lev. 25), so will scattered Israel return to worship at Jerusalem when the Lord gives His signal among the nations (v. 13; cp. 11:12).”

Gary Smith: “The role of the great trumpet in v. 13 is not clearly explained. In other passages it was sounded to signal or call people (a) to battle (Judg 6:34); (b) to the temple for worship (Lev 25:9; Joel 2:1,15); (c) to announce the beginning of a feast or new moon celebration (Lev 23:23–25; 25:9); (d) to announce the coronation of a new king (1 Kgs 1:39; 2 Kgs 9:13); or (e) to signal the beginning of God’s final battle against evil (Zech 9:14). In each example, the trumpet announces the beginning of some special event. Like the banner or trumpet blast in 11:11–12 and 18:3, this great trumpet in 27:13 will be employed to signal the beginning of a unique new opportunity to worship God at Jerusalem. The holy mountain where the glory of God dwells will

be the center where people will gather. Nothing is said about the specific nature of this worship experience but certainly it will be a time of praise to God. (Isaiah 1-39, 465).”

Rich Cathers: Many trumpets in Scripture – don’t get confused and think they are all the same. . . there is a trumpet that blows when Jesus returns and the nation of Israel is gathered together after the end of the Tribulation:

(Mat 24:30-31 KJV) And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. {31} And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

I believe this is the same trumpet that we see here in Isaiah 27:13. The point is that when Jesus returns, the Jews will have been greatly scattered during the Tribulation due to the intense persecution. A trumpet will blow and gather them once again back in their land.

CONCLUSION:

This world in which we live today is so chaotic – with the forces of Satan operating with such strength and venom. But that will not always be the case. The Day of the Lord is coming when God will deal decisively with even the most powerful enemies of His kingdom. He will cause regathered Israel to prosper and will transform this world of chaos into one of peace where the worship of God will dominate.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would you answer people who charge God with passivity and disinterest in not immediately curtailing the wicked activities of Satan?
- 2) What type of good grapes is God producing right now in your life?
- 3) What distinctions do you see between God’s process of disciplining His children (pruning the fruitful branches) and His process of punished the wicked (burning the unfruitful branches)?
- 4) What application can you make from the fact that the Lord’s process of regathering the believing Jews to prepare them for entrance into the kingdom is a personal “one-by-one” process?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Van Parunak: Vv. 6-13 -- This section is chiastic, ABBA. The outer members describe Israel's return and prosperity. The next level describes two kinds of judgment: the disciplinary judgment of Israel, and the destructive judgment of the nations. Each judgment sections concludes with a description of the response of those under the judgment. The whole section amplifies **26:7-9**, the instructional value of judgment. . .

We can summarize the entire Cantata thus: judgment is coming on all the earth. But the effect of this judgment will be to turn both Jew and Gentile to him, and to purge the earth of all opposition. The king will be enthroned, and all the earth will joyfully submit to his rule.

Harry Ironside: ONCE again we have a song of the vineyard, but it depicts entirely different conditions from those set forth in the previous song recorded in chapter five. We saw the Lord looking for grapes and finding only wild grapes, for Israel after the flesh bore no fruit for God. Now all is changed, and we see vines loaded with luscious grapes, thus giving satisfaction to the heart of the Owner. In this way the Spirit of God tells us of the joy which the Lord will find in His people when Israel shall be restored to Himself and shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit.

Pat Damiani: Turning Chaos to Peace

Big Idea: The "Day of the Lord" will result in the chaos of this world system being turned into peace.

God was reminding Israel that they were going to go through a time of tribulation for the purpose of separating those who were truly God's children from those who weren't. This is quite similar to the process of separating the wheat and the tares that Jesus described in a parable . . .

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/turning-chaos-to-peace-pat-damiani-sermon-on-apocalypse-141019.asp?Page=1>

TEXT: Isaiah 28:1-29

TITLE: *WOE #1 – DISORIENTED DRUNKARDS AND SECURITY-SEEKING SCOFFERS OF ISRAEL INDICTED*

BIG IDEA:

THE ONLY SURE FOUNDATION = THE PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE = THE MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION:

Outward physical circumstances can be so deceiving. The wicked can have that Hollywood glitter attached to them. They look so successful and so beautiful. But inside they are no different than the white washed sepulchers like the Pharisees which Jesus lambasted. That is why we make a huge mistake when we try to wrestle with the age-old question: “Why do the Wicked Prosper?” If you were able to get inside the hearts and minds of the rich and famous who have rejected the rule of God and rely on their own abilities and wisdom – you would find nothing but rottenness and moral failure. That’s just the human condition apart from the righteousness which only the Lord Jesus can supply. God’s judgment will quickly sweep away all superficial aspects of false hope and security.

Is your life built on the **sure foundation** of the Lord Jesus Christ? As we head into this New Year, let’s examine our life’s foundation. Will your anchor hold in the tumultuous days that lie ahead in the year 2014?

THE ONLY SURE FOUNDATION IS THE PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE = THE MESSIAH

Chaps. 28-33 – New section of six woes -- (28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1) – mainly against Israel and particularly Jerusalem – last is against Assyria.

Parunak: They immediately follow the vineyard song of ch.27, just as the vineyard song of ch. 5 is followed by a series of **six woes** (5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22).

Oswalt: In the intervening years between Samaria’s fall (721 B.C.) and Sennacherib’s attack on Jerusalem (701 B.C.), it appears that Judah’s foreign-policy makers turned more and more toward alliance with Egypt (30:3; 31:1). To Isaiah, this alliance was just as stupid as the earlier one with Assyrian had been. Egypt might not someday seek to devour Judah, but any help she could give was distinctly unreliable.

I. (:1-13) WOE ON THE DISORIENTED DRUNKARDS OF EPHRAIM (NORTHERN KINGDOM)

A. (:1-4) Destruction Directed Against the Self-Reliant Proud and Beautiful Rulers

1. (:1) Causes of Destruction

a. Pronouncement of Woe

“*Woe*” = Watch Out Earthlings!

Constable: The prophet began by exposing the folly of the **leaders** of the Northern Kingdom. He condemned them for their proud scoffing. The “*woe*” appears at first to be against them alone,

but as the chapter unfolds it becomes clear that Isaiah was pronouncing woe on the leaders of the Southern Kingdom even more.

b. Two Moral Indictments of the Self-Reliant

1) Moral Indictment of the **Self-Reliant Proud**

“to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim,”

Van Parunak: Why would one call people a “*crown of pride*”? Compare two expressions in Proverbs, a book that Isaiah has already quoted extensively:

Pro 17:6 *Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.*

Pro 12:4 *A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband:*

People are called a “crown” when others treasure them, think highly of them, and are proud of them. The “*crown*” here is the leading citizens of Samaria. Compare the fate predicted in ch. 3 on the proud men and pampered ladies of Jerusalem. The rest of the citizens look up to them, lionize them, boast of them as a king boasts of his crown. But in reality they are drunken sots, like yesterday's flower withered and faded.

Ecc 10:16-17 *Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! 17 Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!*

Isaiah condemns those who enjoy this blessed site with a sense of entitlement and self-gratification. Cf. **Amos 4:1-2 . . .**

Ephraim and Israel = the ten Northern Tribes= Samaria.

2) Moral Indictment of the **Self-Reliant Beautiful**

“and to the fading flower of its glorious beauty,”

Culture in decline

c. Place of Distinction Compromised by **Indulgence**

*“which is at the head of the fertile valley
of those who are overcome with wine!”* cf. Ephes. 5:18

Jim Bomkamp: The Treasury Of Scripture Knowledge has the following entry concerning the city of Samaria and its beauty and desirableness, “The ancient Samaria being beautifully situated on the top of a round hill, and surrounded immediately with a rich valley, and then a circle of other hills around it, suggested the idea of a chaplet, or wreath of flowers.”

2. (:2-4) Three Images of Destruction

a. (:2) **Forces of Nature** – Powerful Storm Event

1) Strong Agent of Judgment = Assyrian Invasion

“Behold, the Lord has a strong and mighty agent;”

2) Sweeping Intensity of Destruction

“as a storm of hail,”

“a tempest of destruction,”

“like a storm of mighty overflowing waters,” tsunami imagery

3) Sovereign Hand of the Lord Administering the Destruction

“He has cast it down to the earth with His hand.”

Constable: Ephraim was in danger because the Lord had an irresistible agent who would humble her pride, as a storm overwhelms the unprepared. Assyria was that agent, but the prophet did not name it, perhaps because he wanted to emphasize the principles involved in the judgment.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel, in particular the city of Samaria, would be destroyed by Assyria in 722 BC.

b. (:3) **Feet of Invading Army** Trample the Unsuspecting Self-Inflated Drunkards

“The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim is trodden under foot.

Olympics coming up next month – many proud medals will be awarded – represents what you make your boast in; where do we get our sense of importance?

c. (:4) **Fruit Devoured Hastily**

and the fading flower of its glorious beauty,

which is at the head of the fertile valley,

will be like the first-ripe fig prior to summer;

which one sees, and as soon as it is in his hand, He swallows it.”

Constable: With prophetic perfect tenses, Isaiah predicted the overthrow of Ephraim and its leaders.

Brian Bell: It was a confident time in Israel but their prosperity would fade like:

[1] A fading flower(1,3,4)

[2] Be carried away in a storm & flood(2)

[3] Be swallowed swiftly like fresh fruit(4).

Rich Cathers: fig trees produce most of their ripe fruit around August, but a few pieces of fruit would ripen around June and were considered a delicacy. Quickly eaten. The beauty of the Northern Kingdom will soon be gone.

B. (:5-13) Justice and Rest Can Only Come from the Reign of the Lord – Who Alone is Beautiful and Glorious

1. (:5-6) Futuristic Insight Into the Lord’s Majestic Reign

*“In that day the LORD of hosts will become a beautiful crown
and a glorious diadem to the remnant of His people;*

a spirit of justice for him who sits in judgment,

a strength to those who repel the onslaught at the gate.”

- beautiful
- glorious
- administering justice
- providing strength and protection

Jer 9:23-24 *“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”*

Oswalt: In every age there is a remnant which is a part of that great final one. They are characterized by the ability to see through the tinsel of life, beyond the trappings of appearances, to those truths which are eternal, which will prevail.

2. (:7-8) Further Indictment of the Priests and Prophets

“And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; they reel while having visions, they totter when rendering judgment. For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a single clean place.”

- characterized by a drunken stupor
- disoriented and devoid of any self control
- incapable of performing their leadership tasks
 - delivering visions – messages from God
 - rendering judgments
- degraded by their own immoral filth – image of vomit is not a pretty picture

Beall: In vv. 7-13, many commentators think that the subject has switched from Samaria to Judah, but in all probability the switch is in v. 14. The accusations of vv. 1-4 are expanded: the priests and prophets are in just as sad shape as the rulers of Samaria—they too are inebriated and are staggering around (the repetition in language helps emphasize their staggering—turning this way and that), even in giving their visions (the prophets) and making judgments (the priests). The prophets in Ephraim were simply telling people the things they wanted to hear (see Isa 30:10). v. 8 continues the scene, showing the horror of the depths the drunkenness had gone—not a clean table in the place! All is vomit and filth, the natural result of their own sin.

Rich Cathers: A Japanese proverb says: "First the man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, and then the drink takes the man."

Oswalt: Now self-indulgence has fully shown its ultimate end in degradation. These who should lead the nation in commitment to God’s ways wallow in their own filth and think it amusing.

3. (:9-13) Futility of Instruction in Righteousness to Such Self-Deceived Simpletons (Sophisticated Intellectuals)

“To whom would He teach knowledge? And to whom would He interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just taken from the breast? For He

says, 'Order on order, order on order, Line on line, line on line, A little here, a little there.' Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, He who said to them, 'Here is rest, give rest to the weary,' And, 'Here is repose,' but they would not listen. So the word of the LORD to them will be, 'Order on order, order on order, Line on line, line on line, A little here, a little there,' That they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken captive.

They had an unteachable spirit

Mt.11:28-30 *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

Constable: These drunken leaders mocked Isaiah for the simplicity and repetition with which he presented the Lord's messages (cf. **Acts 17:18**) . . . They accused Isaiah of proclaiming elementary teaching and of speaking to them like small children (cf. **6:9-10**). What Isaiah advocated was trust in the Lord rather than reliance on foreign alliances for national security. Isaiah built his hearers' knowledge bit by bit, adding a little here and a little there. This is, of course, the best method of teaching, but it has never appealed to proud intellectuals who consider themselves beyond the simplicity of God's truth. Similarly, today, many modern university professors of religion ridicule those who believe we should take the Bible at face value. . . . Isaiah turned his critics' words back on themselves; what they had said about his words in mockery would overtake them. If God's people refused to listen to words spoken in simple intelligibility, He would give them unintelligibility as a judgment (cf. Matt. 23:37). Since they refused to learn from a prophet who appealed to them in their own language, He would teach them with plunderers whose language (Akkadian) they would not understand, but whose lances they would take in. They would learn to rest on Yahweh from their foreign foe's treatment of them if they refused to learn that lesson from Isaiah.

Sounds like gibberish

Van Parunak: On the whole, it's preferable to understand the line as gibberish, in imitation of a toddler's immature and often incomprehensible language. The Lord is working out the consequences of the question in v. 9. "Who is left to be taught? The toddlers? Then I will have to communicate with them in baby talk."

Lord's message should be designed to provide peace and rest and security; instead to these recalcitrant rejecters of truth, the Lord's message would harden their hearts and confirm them in their rebellion as they are led away in bondage – "*stumbling backward, broken, snared, and taken captive.*"

Jim Bomkamp: People today often don't want to become Christians because the gospel message seems to them to be too simplistic. Just trusting in the finished work of Jesus upon the cross for their sins doesn't seem like it would be enough to save them from their sins and get them to heaven.

Vine: Instead of being so superior in knowledge and attainment, as they imagined they were, in reality they were like tiny children, who must be taught the very elements of knowledge. Just as with children, precept must be upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.

II. (:14-29) WOE EXTENDED TO THE SECURITY-SEEKING SCOFFERS OF JERUSALEM (SOUTHERN KINGDOM)

A. (:14-22) Destruction Directed Against the Security-Seeking Scoffers

1. (:14) Take Heed to God's Message

“Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem,”

2. (:15) Fear the Scourge of God's Judgment -- Naïve Security Alliances Rooted in Falsehood and Deception

“Because you have said, ‘We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have made a pact. The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by, for we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception.’”

Constable: The rulers in Jerusalem scoffed at the Lord's Word, but Isaiah called on them to listen to it. "Scoffer" is the strongest negative term that the Old Testament writers used to describe the wicked (cf. Ps. 1:1-2; Prov. 1:22; 13:1; 14:9; 21:24; 29:8). A scoffer not only chooses the wrong way, but he or she also **mocks** the right way. He or she is not only misled, but he or she delights in misleading others. The rulers had made a covenant with some nation (probably Egypt) that involved deception and falsehood (probably against Assyria). Israel had already made a covenant with Yahweh that guaranteed her security (Exod. 19—Num. 10). Why did she need to make another? The rulers thought that as a result of their covenant, the scourge of their dreaded enemy (Assyria) would not touch them. But Isaiah sarcastically told them that their covenant was really with Death and Sheol; death would be the outcome of their pact. They were the naïve ones, not he (cf. vv. 9-10).

3. (:16-17a) Justice and Righteousness Can Only Come from the Rock Who is the Messiah – Who Alone is Proven, Precious and Positioned for Our Faith

“Therefore thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed. And I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the level;’”

Year Verse for Solid Rock Community Church for 2014

Beall: In the NT, both Paul and Peter combine this verse with 8:14 to refer to those who reject Christ: in **Rom 9:32-33**, Paul cites these verses to show that Israel stumbled over accepting Christ, while Peter (using these verses and Ps 118:22) writes that Christ is a precious stone to those who believe, but a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to those who are disobedient (**1 Pet 2:6-8**). The image of Christ as the sure stone, or the Rock, is frequent in the Scriptures: for example, in Isa 26:4, the song of the redeemed of Judah proclaims that Yah, Yahweh is the everlasting Rock (see also Isa 8:14; 12:3; 17:10; and 30:29 for similar imagery; also, 1 Cor 10:4: *“that Rock was Christ”*). What folly for the leaders of Judah to forsake Him.

Van Parunak: Our text gives three characteristics of this stone, and then tells us how we should respond to such a foundation.

a tried stone--The stone is tried, tested, proven. One does not use chalk or soft sandstone as the foundation of a building: it would crumble under the weight of the structure. Our Savior (Heb 4:15) *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*. He is tested and approved, and it is on this ground that the author to the Hebrews goes on to exhort us (4:16), *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*.

a precious corner stone--Something is precious because it is rare, and the word often has that connotation. The Messiah is not only proven, but also unique. Most stones have only one finished face. They can go anywhere in the wall, but they cannot serve as the cornerstone. Only the cornerstone has two finished faces. By God's grace, many of his saints have been tested and proven. Job could say, Job 23:10 *he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*. Tested saints are the "lively stones" to which Peter refers (1 Pet 2:5), built into the temple of God. But they cannot serve as the foundation. The corner stone is rare and unique, the one who is both God and man.

a sure foundation--Such a stone, proven and unique, is completely reliable. As a foundation for our faith, it will not let us down.

he that believeth shall not make haste--When we understand the firm foundation that the Lord has provided for us in the Messiah, we will no longer feel a need to run hither and yon in anxiety and confusion. We will not run down to Egypt to seek human alliances. God has promised us rest, and we will enjoy that rest.

4. (:17b-21) Fear the Scourge of God's Judgment

"Then hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the secret place. And your covenant with death shall be canceled, and your pact with Sheol shall not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through, then you become its trampling place. As often as it passes through, it will seize you. For morning after morning it will pass through, anytime during the day or night. And it will be sheer terror to understand what it means. The bed is too short on which to stretch out, and the blanket is too small to wrap oneself in. For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be stirred up as in the valley of Gibeon; to do His task, His unusual task, and to work His work, His extraordinary work."

Motyer: Vv. 18-19 -- point by point contradiction of their proud confidence. Their signed agreements will prove meaningless; their boast of immunity will be exposed as hollow, morning and night. They mocked a message of rest and by doing so embraced a message of terror. To the metaphor of flood and whip is added that of marauding beast.

Constable: Their signed agreements would prove meaningless. Their boast of immunity from catastrophe would prove hollow. They mocked a message leading to rest and chose to embrace a message resulting in terror. The scourge God would send would be like a marauding beast as well as a hailstorm and a flood.

S. Lewis Johnson: the bed is not long enough and the cover is not wide enough, and so is all policy that trusts in the flesh. That's what he means. Any covenant made with Egypt is like a bed that's too short. It's like covers that are not wide not enough to cover you. It's going to be a

great disappointment and so any trust in the arm of the flesh if you are a non-Christian in this audience tonight, any trust in your good works for salvation is a bed that's too short, covers that do not cover you.

Constable: Defeating the Israelites was strange work for the Lord because He customarily defended them. Judgment is His "*strange work*," especially judgment of His own people, a work foreign to what He usually does, namely: bless.

5. (:22) Take Heed to God's Message

"And now do not carry on as scoffers, lest your fetters be made stronger; for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts, of decisive destruction on all the earth."

B. (:23-29) Give Heed to the Wisdom of the Lord – Call for Repentance

1. (:23) Take Heed to God's Wisdom

"Give ear and hear my voice, listen and hear my words."

Van Parunak: The farmer needs discretion in two phases of the process, sowing (24-25) and threshing (27-28). In both cases this discretion comes from the Lord (26, 29).

Motyer: Jerusalem's lifestyle mirrors that of Samaria but will Jerusalem's history follow the same immediate path? Samaria paid for its pride by overthrow; is Jerusalem similarly to fall? . . . The harsh activity of ploughing, breaking, harrowing is not an end in itself; it is purposeful, aiming at sowing the carefully planned crop. This corresponds to verses 1-6, the harsh judgment on Samaria with the "fringe of hope" in view at the end. The second parable (27-29) is one of reaping. Each crop has to be gathered in a way appropriate to it; the wrong treatment would destroy the crop. . . what happened to Samaria is not necessarily what will happen to Jerusalem, for the farmer has learned his discriminating ways from God

2. (:24-28) Farming Parable Demonstrating God's Wisdom in Natural Realm

a. (:24-26) Sowing / Planting

"Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed? Does he continually turn and harrow the ground? Does he not level its surface, and sow dill and scatter cummin, and plant wheat in rows, barley in its place, and rye within its area? For his God instructs and teaches him properly."

b. (:27-28) Threshing / Reaping

"For dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is the cartwheel driven over cummin; but dill is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a club. Grain for bread is crushed, indeed, he does not continue to thresh it forever. Because the wheel of his cart and his horses eventually damage it, He does not thresh it longer."

Beall: Even an uneducated peasant knows better than to plow all year, or to thresh tiny cummin seeds with an oxcart. The key seems to be that in both examples, God teaches the uneducated

peasant (vv 26, 29), with good, productive counsel; by contrast, the “wise” rulers do not have nearly enough sense.

Jim Bomkamp: The Lord knows how to reach each individual person, for He knows everything about them, and thus knows how to speak each person’s language and to avoid offending or pushing away each person. This is a wonderful aspect of God and reveals how wise and powerful He really is. This truth is illustrated by the fact that the Lord gives the farmer wisdom about how to prepare the land, sow, and harvest each different type of crop. Isaiah tells us that farmers know that:

- With some crops the ground is not plowed, but rather leveled.
- Dill and cumin seed are scattered.
- Wheat is planted in rows.
- Barley is planted in its place.
- Rye is planted in a general area.
- Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge as is corn.
- A cartwheel is not driven over cumin.
- Dill is threshed by being beaten with a rod.
- Cummin is threshed by being beaten with a club.
- Grain for bread is crushed, and you can’t just keep trying to thresh grain to get all of the grain otherwise it will be destroyed.

3. (:29) Take Heed to God’s Wisdom

*“This also comes from the LORD of hosts,
Who has made His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great.”*

Constable: Likewise a farmer threshes dill, cummin, and grain in different ways. This is also wisdom that Yahweh of armies teaches. A simple farmer learns how to plow, plant, thresh, and grind from God, by studying nature, and as he applies what God teaches, there is blessing. How much more should the sophisticated leaders of Judah learn from Him to trust Him.

Oswalt: God is the true counselor and his counsel is simple, straight-forward, and productive (v. 12). What the leaders are proposing is as stupid as a farmer plowing all year, or trying to thresh tiny cumin seeds with an oxcart. Even an uneducated peasant, taught by God, knows better than that.

CONCLUSION:

Only those who have lost their ability to reason because of **drunkenness** or have stubbornly chosen to resist God’s counsel as **scoffers** would be foolish enough to put their trust in anyone but the Lord for their **sure foundation** in life. On Christ the Solid Rock we stand ... all other ground is sinking sand!

Matt. 7:26-27 *“Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell – and great was its fall.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What happens when a nation's leaders lose their ability to make proper judgments and mock the wise counsel of the Lord?
- 2) How are we demonstrating every day that the Lord Jesus is beautiful and precious to us as our Rock, our proven Cornerstone?
- 3) How have our efforts in the flesh in the past proven to be inadequate?
- 4) What excuses do people give to reject the reliable and proven wisdom of the Lord?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: V 1 contains the first of six “woes” in these chapters (only chap. 32 does not begin with “woe,” while chap. 29 contains two “woes”—one in v. 1, and one in v. 15). The setting is prior to the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. The imagery in v. 1 is dual: it speaks of a crown of flowers on the heads of drunkards (it was customary to wear such crowns at feasts) which would originally look good, but would soon lose their splendor as the night wore on; in addition, there is probably a topological reference to Samaria as situated on a beautiful hill in the midst of a fertile valley.

Van Parunak: Overall Structure of the Book of Woes

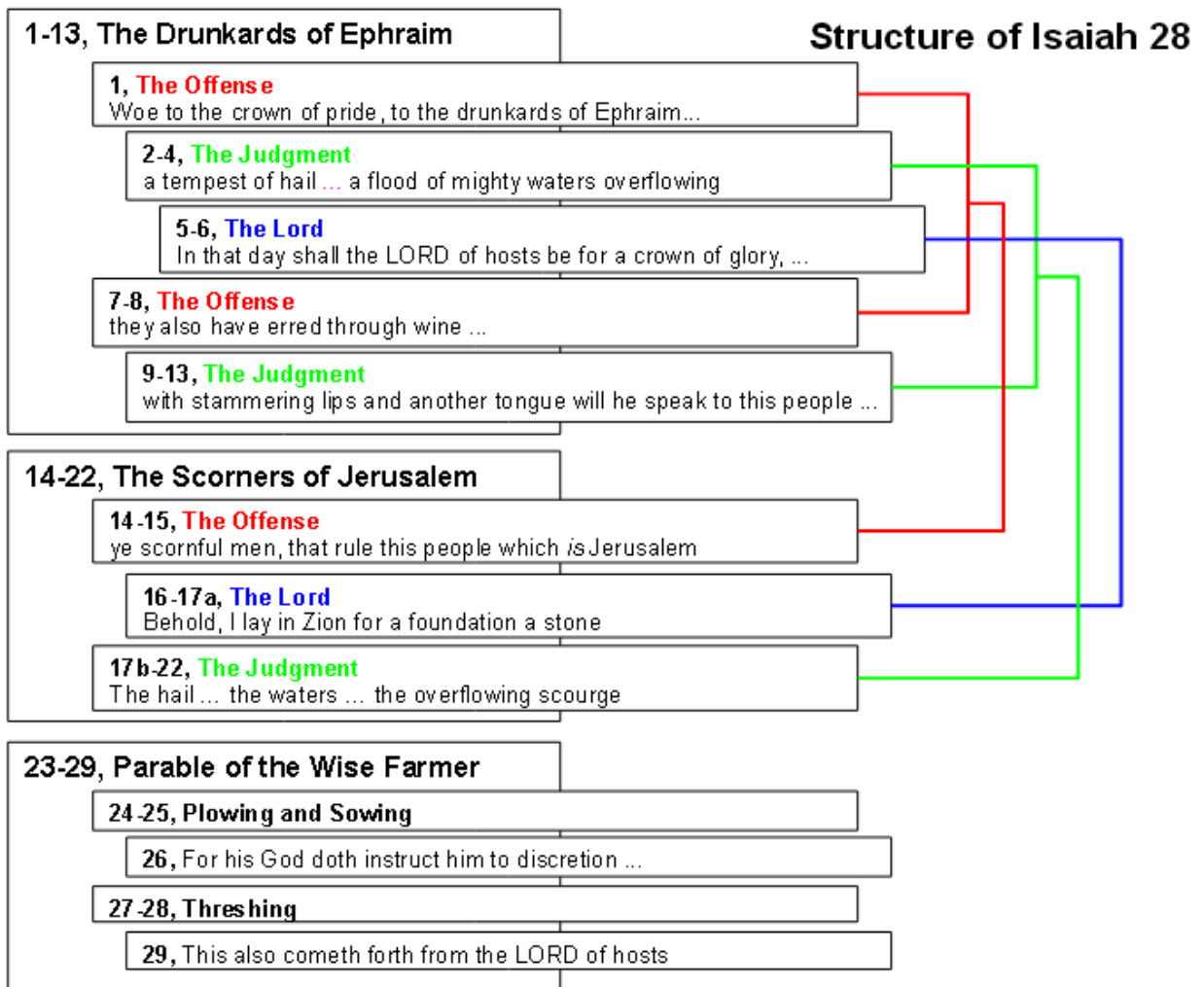
This chapter begins a new section of the book (28-35), punctuated by six instances of the phrase, “Woe to xxx” (28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1). These woes primarily concern Israel (both north and south). Ch. 33 is apparently addressed to Assyria, but it emphasizes the effect on Israel.

As proclamations of judgment, they balance the Burdens (ch. 13-23), which concerned all nations (including Ephraim, ch. 17, and Jerusalem, ch. 22). They immediately follow the vineyard song of ch.27, just as the vineyard song of ch. 5 is followed by a series of **six woes** (5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22).

Thus we should not discern a sharp break, but the end of an extended section beginning in ch. 13.

Quoting **Delitzsch** has excellent insight here:

- The book of woes extends through 33; 34-35 are an apocalyptic summary, just as 24-27 summarized the book of burdens (13-23).
- The last woe is against Assyria; the first five against Israel
- The theme here is the futility of trusting in Egypt for help against Assyria, compare 7-12, which warned against trusting in Assyria for help against Syria and Ephraim
- ch. 36-39 give the historical context that vindicates the emphasis of these messages, that people must trust in the Lord.



The first woe describes the coming fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria (vv. 1-13), and then warns Jerusalem that she cannot escape by her worldly wisdom (14-22), closing with a parable about the Lord's skill in chastisement (23-29). Each of the first two sections has paragraphs describing (though in different orders)

- the peoples' offense;
- the coming judgment;
- the Lord as the only source of deliverance.

In the first half, the order is chiastic: Offense, Judgment, Deliverance, Offense, Judgment. In the second, it is linear: Offense, Deliverance, Judgment.

S. Lewis Johnson: And so the problem that Judah has now is with Assyria. Instead of appealing to the Lord, Hezekiah in the early part of his reign was deeply influenced by a party within Judah who wanted them to turn to Egypt for help and this Egyptianizing policy if I may call it that, became the thing that Isaiah directed his prophecies against. So the same thing was going on that

had gone on during the reign of Ahaz. Instead of leaning on the Lord, they had turned to Assyria for help against Syria and Ephraim.

And now when Assyria is threatening them, instead of turning to the Lord God, they want to turn to Egypt. So these chapters beginning at chapter 28 and going on through chapter 33 which are the Book of Woes are written in the light of that Egyptianizing policy, and you are going to see as we go along that this influence of the group in Judah that wanted to make an alliance with Egypt grows and grows until finally an alliance is formed. Now Isaiah will prophesy against that, for he says it is vain to trust in horses and chariots and it's vain to go down to Egypt for help. . .

So in these verses he sets forth the picture of Samaria, a beautiful city, a beautiful city that was sitting on a mountain with valleys about, lovely city with all of its cultivated land about it. Assyria is going to come down and it's going to fall into the hands of the invader. . .

In other words, the sneers are directed here to the prophet, the intolerable preacher, for Isaiah undoubtedly day after day as he saw the wickedness of the priesthood and of the stool of the prophets and their line, pointed out over and over again how they were sinning against God and how they were bringing judgment upon Judah by their wicked activities, and so they began, as they thought of Isaiah the Prophet, and as they saw him come down the street, they would say of Isaiah here comes that preacher who is always saying the same old thing, and furthermore it's all that simple stuff, too. There is nothing great about it; there is nothing that requires any perception.

Van Parunak: People disagree over whether the Bible prohibits alcohol absolutely, or whether it only prohibits drunkenness. These discussions often overlook the question of who is partaking. For example, God forbade the priests to partake of intoxicants at all, when they were serving him:

Lev 10:8-11 *“And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, 9 Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: 10 And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; 11 And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.”*

This regulation requires, not temperate use, but complete abstinence. It also sets forth a purpose: priests had to be able to distinguish clean from unclean, and to teach the Lord's statutes. They must not indulge in anything that would compromise their ability to render objective judgment.

Similarly, **Prov 31:4** tells kings to avoid intoxicants, for the same reason:

Pro 31:4-5 *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes Strong drink: 5 Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.”*

I don't know of a parallel passage for prophets, but the principle established for two of the three anointed offices would seem applicable there as well.

Now Isaiah shows that the priesthood has abandoned this “*statute ... throughout your generations,*” and as a result, is unable to give clear judgment. He associates “*the prophet*” with them. Those who ought to be clear-minded in guiding the people have fallen into carnal pleasures that destroy their understanding.

Those who entertain the casual use of intoxicants should consider these texts very seriously. If our responsibility, at work or in the family, requires us to make judgments, to distinguish holy from unholy and clean from unclean, to remember, apply, and teach God's law, these texts offer an excellent biblical reason to abstain, and a strong caution against partaking, even in “moderation.” Alcohol may not be sinful. It certainly is unwise. [at least in the contexts where you are performing those specific responsibilities – not necessarily in other more leisure oriented contexts]

TEXT: Isaiah 28:1-29

TITLE: *WOE #1 – DISORIENTED DRUNKARDS AND SECURITY-SEEKING SCOFFERS OF ISRAEL INDICTED*

BIG IDEA:

THE ONLY SURE FOUNDATION = THE PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE = THE MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION:

Outward physical circumstances can be so deceiving. The wicked can have that Hollywood glitter attached to them. They look so successful and so beautiful. But inside they are no different than the white washed sepulchers like the Pharisees which Jesus lambasted. That is why we make a huge mistake when we try to wrestle with the age-old question: “Why do the Wicked Prosper?” If you were able to get inside the hearts and minds of the rich and famous who have rejected the rule of God and rely on their own abilities and wisdom – you would find nothing but rottenness and moral failure. That’s just the human condition apart from the righteousness which only the Lord Jesus can supply. God’s judgment will quickly sweep away all superficial aspects of false hope and security.

Is your life built on the **sure foundation** of the Lord Jesus Christ? As we head into this New Year, let’s examine our life’s foundation. Will your anchor hold in the tumultuous days that lie ahead in the year 2014?

THE ONLY SURE FOUNDATION IS THE PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE = THE MESSIAH

Chaps. 28-33 – New section of six woes -- (28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1) – mainly against Israel and particularly Jerusalem – last is against Assyria.

Parunak: They immediately follow the vineyard song of ch.27, just as the vineyard song of ch. 5 is followed by a series of **six woes** (5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22).

Oswalt: In the intervening years between Samaria’s fall (721 B.C.) and Sennacherib’s attack on Jerusalem (701 B.C.), it appears that Judah’s foreign-policy makers turned more and more toward alliance with Egypt (30:3; 31:1). To Isaiah, this alliance was just as stupid as the earlier one with Assyrian had been. Egypt might not someday seek to devour Judah, but any help she could give was distinctly unreliable.

I. (:1-13) WOE ON THE DISORIENTED DRUNKARDS OF EPHRAIM (NORTHERN KINGDOM)

A. (:1-4) Destruction Directed Against the Self-Reliant Proud and Beautiful Rulers

1. (:1) Causes of Destruction

a. Pronouncement of Woe

“*Woe*” = Watch Out Earthlings!

Constable: The prophet began by exposing the folly of the **leaders** of the Northern Kingdom. He condemned them for their proud scoffing. The “*woe*” appears at first to be against them alone,

but as the chapter unfolds it becomes clear that Isaiah was pronouncing woe on the leaders of the Southern Kingdom even more.

b. Two Moral Indictments of the Self-Reliant

1) Moral Indictment of the **Self-Reliant Proud**

“to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim,”

Van Parunak: Why would one call people a “*crown of pride*”? Compare two expressions in Proverbs, a book that Isaiah has already quoted extensively:

Pro 17:6 *Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.*

Pro 12:4 *A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband:*

People are called a “crown” when others treasure them, think highly of them, and are proud of them. The “*crown*” here is the leading citizens of Samaria. Compare the fate predicted in ch. 3 on the proud men and pampered ladies of Jerusalem. The rest of the citizens look up to them, lionize them, boast of them as a king boasts of his crown. But in reality they are drunken sots, like yesterday's flower withered and faded.

Ecc 10:16-17 *Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! 17 Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!*

Isaiah condemns those who enjoy this blessed site with a sense of entitlement and self-gratification. Cf. **Amos 4:1-2 . . .**

Ephraim and Israel = the ten Northern Tribes= Samaria.

2) Moral Indictment of the **Self-Reliant Beautiful**

“and to the fading flower of its glorious beauty,”

Culture in decline

c. Place of Distinction Compromised by **Indulgence**

*“which is at the head of the fertile valley
of those who are overcome with wine!”* cf. Ephes. 5:18

Jim Bomkamp: The Treasury Of Scripture Knowledge has the following entry concerning the city of Samaria and its beauty and desirableness, “The ancient Samaria being beautifully situated on the top of a round hill, and surrounded immediately with a rich valley, and then a circle of other hills around it, suggested the idea of a chaplet, or wreath of flowers.”

2. (:2-4) Three Images of Destruction

a. (:2) **Forces of Nature** – Powerful Storm Event

1) Strong Agent of Judgment = Assyrian Invasion

“Behold, the Lord has a strong and mighty agent;”

2) Sweeping Intensity of Destruction

“as a storm of hail,”

“a tempest of destruction,”

“like a storm of mighty overflowing waters,” tsunami imagery

3) Sovereign Hand of the Lord Administering the Destruction

“He has cast it down to the earth with His hand.”

Constable: Ephraim was in danger because the Lord had an irresistible agent who would humble her pride, as a storm overwhelms the unprepared. Assyria was that agent, but the prophet did not name it, perhaps because he wanted to emphasize the principles involved in the judgment.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel, in particular the city of Samaria, would be destroyed by Assyria in 722 BC.

b. (:3) **Feet of Invading Army** Trample the Unsuspecting Self-Inflated Drunkards

“The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim is trodden under foot.

Olympics coming up next month – many proud medals will be awarded – represents what you make your boast in; where do we get our sense of importance?

c. (:4) **Fruit Devoured Hastily**

and the fading flower of its glorious beauty,

which is at the head of the fertile valley,

will be like the first-ripe fig prior to summer;

which one sees, and as soon as it is in his hand, He swallows it.”

Constable: With prophetic perfect tenses, Isaiah predicted the overthrow of Ephraim and its leaders.

Brian Bell: It was a confident time in Israel but their prosperity would fade like:

[1] A fading flower(1,3,4)

[2] Be carried away in a storm & flood(2)

[3] Be swallowed swiftly like fresh fruit(4).

Rich Cathers: fig trees produce most of their ripe fruit around August, but a few pieces of fruit would ripen around June and were considered a delicacy. Quickly eaten. The beauty of the Northern Kingdom will soon be gone.

B. (:5-13) Justice and Rest Can Only Come from the Reign of the Lord – Who Alone is Beautiful and Glorious

1. (:5-6) Futuristic Insight Into the Lord’s Majestic Reign

*“In that day the LORD of hosts will become a beautiful crown
and a glorious diadem to the remnant of His people;*

a spirit of justice for him who sits in judgment,

a strength to those who repel the onslaught at the gate.”

- beautiful
- glorious
- administering justice
- providing strength and protection

Jer 9:23-24 *“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”*

Oswalt: In every age there is a remnant which is a part of that great final one. They are characterized by the ability to see through the tinsel of life, beyond the trappings of appearances, to those truths which are eternal, which will prevail.

2. (:7-8) Further Indictment of the Priests and Prophets

“And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; they reel while having visions, they totter when rendering judgment. For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a single clean place.”

- characterized by a drunken stupor
- disoriented and devoid of any self control
- incapable of performing their leadership tasks
 - delivering visions – messages from God
 - rendering judgments
- degraded by their own immoral filth – image of vomit is not a pretty picture

Beall: In vv. 7-13, many commentators think that the subject has switched from Samaria to Judah, but in all probability the switch is in v. 14. The accusations of vv. 1-4 are expanded: the priests and prophets are in just as sad shape as the rulers of Samaria—they too are inebriated and are staggering around (the repetition in language helps emphasize their staggering—turning this way and that), even in giving their visions (the prophets) and making judgments (the priests). The prophets in Ephraim were simply telling people the things they wanted to hear (see Isa 30:10). v. 8 continues the scene, showing the horror of the depths the drunkenness had gone—not a clean table in the place! All is vomit and filth, the natural result of their own sin.

Rich Cathers: A Japanese proverb says: "First the man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, and then the drink takes the man."

Oswalt: Now self-indulgence has fully shown its ultimate end in degradation. These who should lead the nation in commitment to God’s ways wallow in their own filth and think it amusing.

3. (:9-13) Futility of Instruction in Righteousness to Such Self-Deceived Simpletons (Sophisticated Intellectuals)

“To whom would He teach knowledge? And to whom would He interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just taken from the breast? For He

says, 'Order on order, order on order, Line on line, line on line, A little here, a little there.' Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, He who said to them, 'Here is rest, give rest to the weary,' And, 'Here is repose,' but they would not listen. So the word of the LORD to them will be, 'Order on order, order on order, Line on line, line on line, A little here, a little there,' That they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken captive.

They had an unteachable spirit

Mt.11:28-30 "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*"

Constable: These drunken leaders mocked Isaiah for the simplicity and repetition with which he presented the Lord's messages (cf. **Acts 17:18**) . . . They accused Isaiah of proclaiming elementary teaching and of speaking to them like small children (cf. **6:9-10**). What Isaiah advocated was trust in the Lord rather than reliance on foreign alliances for national security. Isaiah built his hearers' knowledge bit by bit, adding a little here and a little there. This is, of course, the best method of teaching, but it has never appealed to proud intellectuals who consider themselves beyond the simplicity of God's truth. Similarly, today, many modern university professors of religion ridicule those who believe we should take the Bible at face value. . . . Isaiah turned his critics' words back on themselves; what they had said about his words in mockery would overtake them. If God's people refused to listen to words spoken in simple intelligibility, He would give them unintelligibility as a judgment (cf. Matt. 23:37). Since they refused to learn from a prophet who appealed to them in their own language, He would teach them with plunderers whose language (Akkadian) they would not understand, but whose lances they would take in. They would learn to rest on Yahweh from their foreign foe's treatment of them if they refused to learn that lesson from Isaiah.

Sounds like gibberish

Van Parunak: On the whole, it's preferable to understand the line as gibberish, in imitation of a toddler's immature and often incomprehensible language. The Lord is working out the consequences of the question in v. 9. "Who is left to be taught? The toddlers? Then I will have to communicate with them in baby talk."

Lord's message should be designed to provide peace and rest and security; instead to these recalcitrant rejecters of truth, the Lord's message would harden their hearts and confirm them in their rebellion as they are led away in bondage – "*stumbling backward, broken, snared, and taken captive.*"

Jim Bomkamp: People today often don't want to become Christians because the gospel message seems to them to be too simplistic. Just trusting in the finished work of Jesus upon the cross for their sins doesn't seem like it would be enough to save them from their sins and get them to heaven.

Vine: Instead of being so superior in knowledge and attainment, as they imagined they were, in reality they were like tiny children, who must be taught the very elements of knowledge. Just as with children, precept must be upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.

II. (:14-29) WOE EXTENDED TO THE SECURITY-SEEKING SCOFFERS OF JERUSALEM (SOUTHERN KINGDOM)

A. (:14-22) Destruction Directed Against the Security-Seeking Scoffers

1. (:14) Take Heed to God's Message

“Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem,”

2. (:15) Fear the Scourge of God's Judgment -- Naïve Security Alliances Rooted in Falsehood and Deception

“Because you have said, ‘We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have made a pact. The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by, for we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception.’”

Constable: The rulers in Jerusalem scoffed at the Lord's Word, but Isaiah called on them to listen to it. "Scoffer" is the strongest negative term that the Old Testament writers used to describe the wicked (cf. Ps. 1:1-2; Prov. 1:22; 13:1; 14:9; 21:24; 29:8). A scoffer not only chooses the wrong way, but he or she also **mocks** the right way. He or she is not only misled, but he or she delights in misleading others. The rulers had made a covenant with some nation (probably Egypt) that involved deception and falsehood (probably against Assyria). Israel had already made a covenant with Yahweh that guaranteed her security (Exod. 19—Num. 10). Why did she need to make another? The rulers thought that as a result of their covenant, the scourge of their dreaded enemy (Assyria) would not touch them. But Isaiah sarcastically told them that their covenant was really with Death and Sheol; death would be the outcome of their pact. They were the naïve ones, not he (cf. vv. 9-10).

3. (:16-17a) Justice and Righteousness Can Only Come from the Rock Who is the Messiah – Who Alone is Proven, Precious and Positioned for Our Faith

“Therefore thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed. And I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the level;’”

* * * * *

Year Verse for Solid Rock Community Church for 2014:

Five Characteristics of This Solid Rock Who Alone Offers True Peace:

I. A Prominent Stone — *“Behold I am laying in Zion a stone”*

- Prominent because of the attention the Lord draws to it — *“Behold”*
- Prominent because of who is setting it in place
- Prominent because of its choice location in Zion
- Prominent because of its nature = solid, firm, impenetrable, trustworthy

II. A Proven Stone — *“a tested stone”*

- Proven holiness of character — perfect in all His attributes — “*One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin*” **Hebrews 4:15**

- Proven life of obedience to the Father — come to fully do His will

- Proven ministry of effective teaching and healing and discipling

III. A Precious Stone – “*a costly cornerstone*”

- Precious in terms of costly

- Precious in terms of unique and rare

- Precious in terms of function as the cornerstone

IV. A Purposeful Stone — “*for the foundation*”

V. A Positioned Stone – “*firmly placed*”

Application: “*He who believes in it will not be disturbed.*”

- Rest in Peace

- Do Not Be Disturbed

* * * * *

Beall: In the NT, both Paul and Peter combine this verse with 8:14 to refer to those who reject Christ: in **Rom 9:32-33**, Paul cites these verses to show that Israel stumbled over accepting Christ, while Peter (using these verses and Ps 118:22) writes that Christ is a precious stone to those who believe, but a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to those who are disobedient (**1 Pet 2:6-8**). The image of Christ as the sure stone, or the Rock, is frequent in the Scriptures: for example, in Isa 26:4, the song of the redeemed of Judah proclaims that Yah, Yahweh is the everlasting Rock (see also Isa 8:14; 12:3; 17:10; and 30:29 for similar imagery; also, 1 Cor 10:4: “*that Rock was Christ*”). What folly for the leaders of Judah to forsake Him.

Van Parunak: Our text gives three characteristics of this stone, and then tells us how we should respond to such a foundation.

a tried stone,--The stone is tried, tested, proven. One does not use chalk or soft sandstone as the foundation of a building: it would crumble under the weight of the structure. Our Savior (Heb 4:15) *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*. He is tested and approved, and it is on this ground that the author to the Hebrews goes on to exhort us (4:16), *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*.

a precious corner stone,--Something is precious because it is rare, and the word often has that connotation. The Messiah is not only proven, but also unique. Most stones have only one finished face. They can go anywhere in the wall, but they cannot serve as the cornerstone. Only the cornerstone has two finished faces. By God's grace, many of his saints have been tested and proven. Job could say, Job 23:10 *he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall*

come forth as gold. Tested saints are the “*lively stones*” to which Peter refers (1 Pet 2:5), built into the temple of God. But they cannot serve as the foundation. The corner stone is rare and unique, the one who is both God and man.

a sure foundation:--Such a stone, proven and unique, is completely reliable. As a foundation for our faith, it will not let us down.

he that believeth shall not make haste.--When we understand the firm foundation that the Lord has provided for us in the Messiah, we will no longer feel a need to run hither and yon in anxiety and confusion. We will not run down to Egypt to seek human alliances. God has promised us rest, and we will enjoy that rest.

4. (:17b-21) Fear the Scourge of God’s Judgment

“Then hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the secret place. And your covenant with death shall be canceled, and your pact with Sheol shall not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through, then you become its trampling place. As often as it passes through, it will seize you. For morning after morning it will pass through, anytime during the day or night. And it will be sheer terror to understand what it means. The bed is too short on which to stretch out, and the blanket is too small to wrap oneself in. For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be stirred up as in the valley of Gibeon; to do His task, His unusual task, and to work His work, His extraordinary work.”

Motyer: Vv. 18-19 -- point by point contradiction of their proud confidence. Their signed agreements will prove meaningless; their boast of immunity will be exposed as hollow, morning and night. They mocked a message of rest and by doing so embraced a message of terror. To the metaphor of flood and whip is added that of marauding beast.

Constable: Their signed agreements would prove meaningless. Their boast of immunity from catastrophe would prove hollow. They mocked a message leading to rest and chose to embrace a message resulting in terror. The scourge God would send would be like a marauding beast as well as a hailstorm and a flood.

S. Lewis Johnson: the bed is not long enough and the cover is not wide enough, and so is all policy that trusts in the flesh. That’s what he means. Any covenant made with Egypt is like a bed that’s too short. It’s like covers that are not wide not enough to cover you. It’s going to be a great disappointment and so any trust in the arm of the flesh if you are a non-Christian in this audience tonight, any trust in your good works for salvation is a bed that’s too short, covers that do not cover you.

Constable: Defeating the Israelites was strange work for the Lord because He customarily defended them. Judgment is His “*strange work*,” especially judgment of His own people, a work foreign to what He usually does, namely: bless.

Motyer: The Lord once masterminded the Davidic triumphs, which were a stepping-stone to national security and the foundation of Zion as the national capital (2 Sa. 6), but those who now reject the Davidic-Zion foundation of the divine promises will find that their portion is wrath on the same scale, a *strange* and *alien task* indeed!

5. (:22) Take Heed to God's Message

“And now do not carry on as scoffers, lest your fetters be made stronger; for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts, of decisive destruction on all the earth.”

B. (:23-29) Give Heed to the Wisdom of the Lord – Call for Repentance

1. (:23) Take Heed to God's Wisdom

“Give ear and hear my voice, listen and hear my words.”

Van Parunak: The farmer needs discretion in two phases of the process, sowing (24-25) and threshing (27-28). In both cases this discretion comes from the Lord (26, 29).

Motyer: Jerusalem's lifestyle mirrors that of Samaria but will Jerusalem's history follow the same immediate path? Samaria paid for its pride by overthrow; is Jerusalem similarly to fall? . . . The harsh activity of ploughing, breaking, harrowing is not an end in itself; it is purposeful, aiming at sowing the carefully planned crop. This corresponds to verses 1-6, the harsh judgment on Samaria with the “fringe of hope” in view at the end. The second parable (27-29) is one of reaping. Each crop has to be gathered in a way appropriate to it; the wrong treatment would destroy the crop. . . what happened to Samaria is not necessarily what will happen to Jerusalem, for the farmer has learned his discriminating ways from God

2. (:24-28) Farming Parable Demonstrating God's Wisdom in Natural Realm

a. (:24-26) Sowing / Planting

“Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed? Does he continually turn and harrow the ground? Does he not level its surface, and sow dill and scatter cummin, and plant wheat in rows, barley in its place, and rye within its area? For his God instructs and teaches him properly.

b. (:27-28) Threshing / Reaping

“For dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is the cartwheel driven over cummin; but dill is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a club. Grain for bread is crushed, indeed, he does not continue to thresh it forever. Because the wheel of his cart and his horses eventually damage it, He does not thresh it longer.”

Beall: Even an uneducated peasant knows better than to plow all year, or to thresh tiny cummin seeds with an oxcart. The key seems to be that in both examples, God teaches the uneducated peasant (vv 26, 29), with good, productive counsel; by contrast, the “wise” rulers do not have nearly enough sense.

Jim Bomkamp: The Lord knows how to reach each individual person, for He knows everything about them, and thus knows how to speak each person's language and to avoid offending or pushing away each person. This is a wonderful aspect of God and reveals how wise and powerful He really is. This truth is illustrated by the fact that the Lord gives the farmer wisdom

about how to prepare the land, sow, and harvest each different type of crop. Isaiah tells us that farmers know that:

- With some crops the ground is not plowed, but rather leveled.
- Dill and cumin seed are scattered.
- Wheat is planted in rows.
- Barley is planted in its place.
- Rye is planted in a general area.
- Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge as is corn.
- A cartwheel is not driven over cumin.
- Dill is threshed by being beaten with a rod.
- Cummin is threshed by being beaten with a club.
- Grain for bread is crushed, and you can't just keep trying to thresh grain to get all of the grain otherwise it will be destroyed.

3. (:29) Take Heed to God's Wisdom

*"This also comes from the LORD of hosts,
Who has made His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great."*

Constable: Likewise a farmer threshes dill, cummin, and grain in different ways. This is also wisdom that Yahweh of armies teaches. A simple farmer learns how to plow, plant, thresh, and grind from God, by studying nature, and as he applies what God teaches, there is blessing. How much more should the sophisticated leaders of Judah learn from Him to trust Him.

Oswalt: God is the true counselor and his counsel is simple, straight-forward, and productive (v. 12). What the leaders are proposing is as stupid as a farmer plowing all year, or trying to thresh tiny cumin seeds with an oxcart. Even an uneducated peasant, taught by God, knows better than that.

CONCLUSION:

Only those who have lost their ability to reason because of **drunkenness** or have stubbornly chosen to resist God's counsel as **scoffers** would be foolish enough to put their trust in anyone but the Lord for their **sure foundation** in life. On Christ the Solid Rock we stand ... all other ground is sinking sand!

Matt. 7:26-27 *"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell – and great was its fall."*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What happens when a nation's leaders lose their ability to make proper judgments and mock the wise counsel of the Lord?
- 2) How are we demonstrating every day that the Lord Jesus is beautiful and precious to us as our Rock, our proven Cornerstone?

3) How have our efforts in the flesh in the past proven to be inadequate?

4) What excuses do people give to reject the reliable and proven wisdom of the Lord?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: V 1 contains the first of six “woes” in these chapters (only chap. 32 does not begin with “woe,” while chap. 29 contains two “woes”—one in v. 1, and one in v. 15). The setting is prior to the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. The imagery in v. 1 is dual: it speaks of a crown of flowers on the heads of drunkards (it was customary to wear such crowns at feasts) which would originally look good, but would soon lose their splendor as the night wore on; in addition, there is probably a topological reference to Samaria as situated on a beautiful hill in the midst of a fertile valley.

Van Parunak: Overall Structure of the Book of Woes

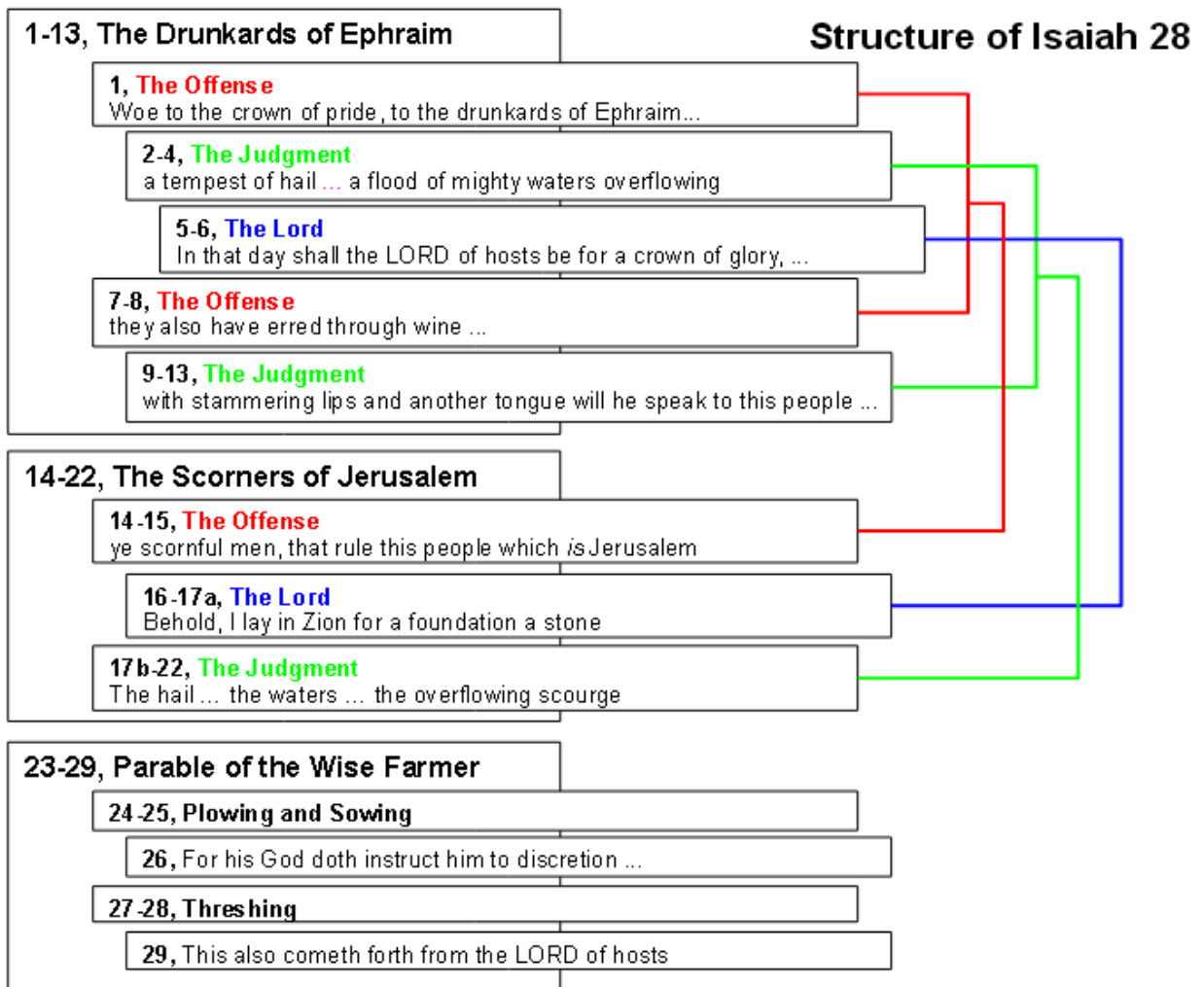
This chapter begins a new section of the book (28-35), punctuated by six instances of the phrase, “Woe to xxx” (28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1). These woes primarily concern Israel (both north and south). Ch. 33 is apparently addressed to Assyria, but it emphasizes the effect on Israel.

As proclamations of judgment, they balance the Burdens (ch. 13-23), which concerned all nations (including Ephraim, ch. 17, and Jerusalem, ch. 22). They immediately follow the vineyard song of ch.27, just as the vineyard song of ch. 5 is followed by a series of **six woes** (5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22).

Thus we should not discern a sharp break, but the end of an extended section beginning in ch. 13.

Quoting **Delitzsch** has excellent insight here:

- The book of woes extends through 33; 34-35 are an apocalyptic summary, just as 24-27 summarized the book of burdens (13-23).
- The last woe is against Assyria; the first five against Israel
- The theme here is the futility of trusting in Egypt for help against Assyria, compare 7-12, which warned against trusting in Assyria for help against Syria and Ephraim
- ch. 36-39 give the historical context that vindicates the emphasis of these messages, that people must trust in the Lord.



The first woe describes the coming fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria (vv. 1-13), and then warns Jerusalem that she cannot escape by her worldly wisdom (14-22), closing with a parable about the Lord's skill in chastisement (23-29). Each of the first two sections has paragraphs describing (though in different orders)

- the peoples' offense;
- the coming judgment;
- the Lord as the only source of deliverance.

In the first half, the order is chiastic: Offense, Judgment, Deliverance, Offense, Judgment. In the second, it is linear: Offense, Deliverance, Judgment.

S. Lewis Johnson: And so the problem that Judah has now is with Assyria. Instead of appealing to the Lord, Hezekiah in the early part of his reign was deeply influenced by a party within Judah who wanted them to turn to Egypt for help and this Egyptianizing policy if I may call it that, became the thing that Isaiah directed his prophecies against. So the same thing was going on that

had gone on during the reign of Ahaz. Instead of leaning on the Lord, they had turned to Assyria for help against Syria and Ephraim.

And now when Assyria is threatening them, instead of turning to the Lord God, they want to turn to Egypt. So these chapters beginning at chapter 28 and going on through chapter 33 which are the Book of Woes are written in the light of that Egyptianizing policy, and you are going to see as we go along that this influence of the group in Judah that wanted to make an alliance with Egypt grows and grows until finally an alliance is formed. Now Isaiah will prophesy against that, for he says it is vain to trust in horses and chariots and it's vain to go down to Egypt for help. . .

So in these verses he sets forth the picture of Samaria, a beautiful city, a beautiful city that was sitting on a mountain with valleys about, lovely city with all of its cultivated land about it. Assyria is going to come down and it's going to fall into the hands of the invader. . .

In other words, the sneers are directed here to the prophet, the intolerable preacher, for Isaiah undoubtedly day after day as he saw the wickedness of the priesthood and of the stool of the prophets and their line, pointed out over and over again how they were sinning against God and how they were bringing judgment upon Judah by their wicked activities, and so they began, as they thought of Isaiah the Prophet, and as they saw him come down the street, they would say of Isaiah here comes that preacher who is always saying the same old thing, and furthermore it's all that simple stuff, too. There is nothing great about it; there is nothing that requires any perception.

Van Parunak: People disagree over whether the Bible prohibits alcohol absolutely, or whether it only prohibits drunkenness. These discussions often overlook the question of who is partaking. For example, God forbade the priests to partake of intoxicants at all, when they were serving him:

Lev 10:8-11 *“And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, 9 Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: 10 And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; 11 And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.”*

This regulation requires, not temperate use, but complete abstinence. It also sets forth a purpose: priests had to be able to distinguish clean from unclean, and to teach the Lord's statutes. They must not indulge in anything that would compromise their ability to render objective judgment.

Similarly, **Prov 31:4** tells kings to avoid intoxicants, for the same reason:

Pro 31:4-5 *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes Strong drink: 5 Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.”*

I don't know of a parallel passage for prophets, but the principle established for two of the three anointed offices would seem applicable there as well.

Now Isaiah shows that the priesthood has abandoned this “*statute ... throughout your generations,*” and as a result, is unable to give clear judgment. He associates “*the prophet*” with them. Those who ought to be clear-minded in guiding the people have fallen into carnal pleasures that destroy their understanding.

Those who entertain the casual use of intoxicants should consider these texts very seriously. If our responsibility, at work or in the family, requires us to make judgments, to distinguish holy from unholy and clean from unclean, to remember, apply, and teach God's law, these texts offer an excellent biblical reason to abstain, and a strong caution against partaking, even in “moderation.” Alcohol may not be sinful. It certainly is unwise. [at least in the contexts where you are performing those specific responsibilities – not necessarily in other more leisure oriented contexts]

TEXT: Isaiah 29:1-14

TITLE: *WOE #2 – WOE AGAINST JERUSALEM FOR RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY*

BIG IDEA:
THE LORD JUDGES ROTE RELIGIOUS TRADITION WITH SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

INTRODUCTION:

It doesn't take very long for dead religious traditions to replace vibrant biblical convictions. It happens all the time.

- It happens in **families** as children attend the same worship services as their parents but never experience the internal transformation of being born again by the Spirit of God. They can't identify with the truth that is proclaimed because it doesn't resonate with their own experience of just going through the motions of religious activity. Their spiritual eyes are closed.

- It happens in **churches** as people fall away from the faith and end up perpetuating just a religious carcass of rote tradition. Look at the hypocrisy in the Roman Catholic Church and the parallels to the leaven of the Pharisees in the gospel times. Look at the deadness in the mainline Protestant churches. We drive by their magnificent structures every day and marvel at the apostasy of such churches. The truth is no longer being preached from those pulpits. Look at the void of spiritual life over in Europe where the Great Reformation took shape.

- It happens in **educational institutions** like universities (Princeton and Yale) and seminaries and **social ministry frameworks** like the YMCA. Here in Isaiah 29 we see it happening in the very City of God, **Jerusalem**.

God hates it when people draw near to Him with their lips but their hearts are far removed. That is why it is critical that biblical convictions fuel your spiritual activities. **Why** do you do what you do when it comes to worshiping and serving the Lord? It is possible to engage in a wide range of positive religious functions that end up having more of a **deadening effect** because you are just going through the motions in an external sense like the Pharisees of Jesus' day or the Jews back in the time of Isaiah.

THE LORD JUDGES ROTE RELIGIOUS TRADITION WITH SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

We ask of our educational system: "Why can't Johnny read?" Here we are going to have the answer to the spiritual question: "Why don't these seemingly religious people understand God's truth?"

Important verses – quoted by both Jesus and the Apostle Paul – we do well to pay attention

I. (:1-4) JERUSALEM REDUCED TO DUST

A. (:1-3) Jerusalem Besieged

1. (:1) Hypocritical Worship

*“Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city where David once camped!
Add year to year, observe your feasts on schedule.”*

WOE = Watch Out Earthlings

Cf. liturgical worship schedule adhered to by many traditional churches – empty worship characterized by a lack of spiritual discernment – no true understanding of the Word of God

Van Parunak: Jerusalem is God's altar, where the righteous offer sacrifices to please him, but where the wicked themselves are consumed by the fire of his wrath.

Constable: Isaiah addressed this oracle to Ariel (lit. *altar hearth*, cf. Ezek. 43:15-16). Another meaning, "*lion of God*" (cf. 31:4; Gen. 49:9; 2 Sam. 23:20; 1 Kings 10:19-20; 1 Chron. 11:22), was probably not intended here since Isaiah described Ariel as the place where Israel's religious festivals took place. Clearly Ariel refers to Jerusalem, the city where David set up his headquarters (cf. 2 Sam. 5:9), and Mount Zion (v. 8), the site of Judah's worship. . .

The city also boasted of its heritage in David, but the present residents did not share David's heart for God (cf. v. 13). The prophet directed the city to continue to observe its annual religious feasts regularly. This seems to be a sarcastic call to continue offering the sacrifices, which the people thought assured their blessing by God, even though they were doing so as an empty ritual (cf. v. 13). These meaningless acts of worship would not avert judgment to come (v. 2; cf. Hos. 8:11-14; Amos 4:4-5).

S. Lewis Johnson: Now that statement "*add year to year*" in the Hebrew text suggests that he is allowing them just a little over a year for their present activity and we know of course that Sennacherib's invasion came in 701 B.C. So the prophecy is probably written around 703 and there is not much time left for Ariel. . . .

Now the reason Jerusalem is called the hearth of God is because it was in Jerusalem that the brazen altar lay. It was in the temple area and it was there that the animals were sacrificed and they were placed upon the brazen altar where the animals were burned. And so this, the place of worship was the hearth of God, and Jerusalem is given its name by reason of the fact that it was there that the worship of God took place. True worship existed in Jerusalem.

Oswalt: Jerusalem prided herself on her pure worship as opposed to idolatrous Samaria, but in fact, pure cult does not replace a pure heart, and the very source of her pride contributed to her downfall.

Young: Ariel, you are the very city in which David once had made his dwelling, but you, Ariel, are in a precarious position. Woe unto you! You refuse to realize your true condition, but you will soon discover that your present security is no security at all. Go on therefore, as you have been doing. Add year to year, for you think that your present condition will continue indefinitely. Celebrate your feasts regularly, year by year as you have been doing. It will be of no avail.

2. (:2) Hysterical Mourning

*“And I will bring distress to Ariel,
And she shall be a city of lamenting and mourning;
And she shall be like an Ariel to me.”*

Cf. book of **Lamentations** – lots of wailing and lamenting and mourning

And God will bring distress to the City of God ...

The city itself, having rejected the true worship of God, will become in essence God's own sacrificial altar as He consumes it in judgment

3. (:3) Higher Power Opposition

*“And I will camp against you encircling you,
And I will set siegeworks against you,
And I will raise up battle towers against you.”*

Contrast: place where David once camped (signifying prestige) now place against which the Lord has camped; terrible thing to have the Lord against you instead of for you

S. Lewis Johnson: The four great sieges of Jerusalem, however, are the siege by Sennacherib in 701 B.C., the siege by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., then the siege by Vespasian and Titus in 70 A.D. and then the siege of the future described in the 14th chapter of the Book of Zachariah as well as in the Book of Revelation, a siege by the antichrist and his forces. These are the four great sieges of the city of Jerusalem, and the first one is being announced here, the siege by Sennacherib and God is going to encamp against the city.

Van Parunak: This is probably a reference to siege engines, wheeled towers that provided shelter to the operators of a battering ram on the lower level, along with an elevated platform for archers.

Grogan: David, in fact, besieged Jerusalem when it was a Jebusite stronghold. When he took it, it became his capital city. Through many a difficult century in its history it had never been taken again. The true poignancy of the “woe” here lies in the fact that the God who had enabled David to take it would now besiege this city himself, through its enemies (v. 5), and cause its destruction by fire just as if the whole city had become an extension of the altar hearth within its temple.

B. (:4) Jerusalem Brought Low – to Death

*“Then you shall be brought low;
From the earth you shall speak, And from the dust where you are prostrate, Your words shall come.
Your voice shall also be like that of a spirit from the ground, And your speech shall whisper from the dust.”*

Beall: v. 4 increases the tragic irony: instead of arrogant boasting, Jerusalem will be brought down to the underworld, and only a whisper from the dust will be heard.

Van Parunak: her speech is described as a “whisper.” Mediums often used ventriloquism to make their voice sound as though it were coming out of the ground, and the result was a thin, far-away sound. Compare again **8:19**, “wizards that peep and that mutter.” This dampened voice may anticipate the dream imagery that dominates vv. 7-14. In a nightmare, bodily actions are restrained. You try to run but your legs are leaden. You try to scream but you can only whisper. The Israelites are frozen in a nightmare.

Cf. Nebuchadnezzar being brought low; God knows how to humble the pride of man

II. (:5-8) JERUSALEM'S ENEMIES (GOD'S INSTRUMENTS OF DISCIPLINE) REDUCED TO FINE DUST

A. (:5) Sudden Destruction

*“But the multitude of your enemies shall become like fine dust,
And the multitude of the ruthless ones like the chaff which blows away;
And it shall happen instantly, suddenly.”*

Judgment not just against Babylon but against “*multitude*” of enemies = last days reference
Fine dust is very different from the Solid Rock which the Lord is laying in Zion (28:16)

No strength in numbers here

B. (:6) Cosmic Calamity

*“From the LORD of hosts you will be punished
with thunder and earthquake and loud noise,
With whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire.”*

Young: The picture is one of great grandeur, for even elements of nature are involved and move at the coming of the Lord. Tempest and storm are present as well as the flame of devouring fire. The visitation is a terrible one, inspiring awe in the beholder. At His coming the world of nature cannot be at ease for His coming is majestic, accompanied by the voice of thunder and the noise of the elements in agitated motion. Before Him nothing can stand, for a fiery flame, devouring all, is with Him. As once He came down upon Sinai's mount, so now Jerusalem will be visited with His presence.

C. (:7-8) Frustrating Futility – Nothing but Pipedreams

“And the multitude of all the nations who wage war against Ariel, Even all who wage war against her and her stronghold, and who distress her, Shall be like a dream, a vision of the night. And it will be as when a hungry man dreams-- And behold, he is eating; But when he awakens, his hunger is not satisfied, Or as when a thirsty man dreams-- And behold, he is drinking, But when he awakens, behold, he is faint, And his thirst is not quenched. Thus the multitude of all the nations shall be, Who wage war against Mount Zion.”

Pipedream = a hope, wish, or dream that is impossible to achieve or not practical.

Motyer: How certain the foe considered himself to be of accomplishment, how completely he was deceived!

The enemy nations want to devour the people of Israel; wipe them off the face of the map; make a feast of them and consume them utterly; but the Lord frustrates their purposes

III. (:9-14) JUDGMENT OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

A. (:9) Condition of Spiritual Blindness

1. Spiritually Blinded

*“Be delayed and wait.
Blind yourselves and be blind.”*

Sarcastic – go ahead and continue your delaying of getting right with God; it doesn’t get easier; you are doing this to yourselves – even though God is also active in judging you with blindness; You are only hurting yourself by this stubborn hypocrisy

2. Spiritually Disoriented

*“They become drunk, but not with wine;
They stagger, but not with strong drink.”*

Constable: Jerusalem's leaders would delay (actually, "be delayed," by their lack of perception) and wait to act in faith because they were spiritually blind and drunk (cf. 6:9-10). Isaiah was apparently speaking to them ironically again (cf. v. 1). If the people of Jerusalem failed to see the importance of trusting God in the face of enemy attack, and failed to trust Him, they would find it even more difficult to see His will and do it later. When people see the will of God and refuse to do it, they become incapable of seeing it and doing it further (cf. Acts 28:26-28; Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; **Heb. 4:1-11**). This is serious spiritual blindness and drunkenness.

B. (:10-12) Curse of Spiritual Blindness

1. (:10) Blinding of the Spiritual Prophets

*“For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep,
He has shut your eyes, the prophets;
And He has covered your heads, the seers.”*

Principle: you respond to divine light then you receive more light; you reject divine light and even the light you had been shown will be diminished

Remember Isaiah’s commission: **Is. 6:8-10** – should be no surprise . . . but still difficult to deal with

2. (:11-12) Concealing of Any Revelation

a. (:11) Educated Leaders are Spiritually Illiterate

*“And the entire vision shall be to you like the words of a sealed book,
which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, ‘Please read
this,’ he will say, ‘I cannot, for it is sealed.’”*

God’s revelation not an open book to religious hypocrites; book is sealed; cannot be understood; problem cannot be solved by academic degrees or sophistication of human wisdom; Imagery in Rev. of the Lord being the only one who can break the seals

b. (:12) Masses are Just Plain Illiterate

*“Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, ‘Please
read this.’ And he will say, ‘I cannot read.’”*

C. (:13-14) Cause of Spiritual Blindness

1. (:13) The Problem = Hypocrisy (cf. Matt. 15:8-9)

a. Feigned Devotion = Lip Service

*“Then the Lord said, ‘Because this people draw near with their words
And honor Me with their lip service,
But they remove their hearts far from Me,’”*

Ezek. 33:30-33 Jews in exile pretended to enjoy hearing the words of the prophet; but they would not take it to heart and obey; their heart pursues sinful lusts and greedy gain;

Matt. 15:1-11 Jesus takes this passage and applies it to the hypocritical Pharisees and religious leaders

John 9:38-41

2 Thess. 2:11-12 *“God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”*

How do we remove our hearts from God vs. how do we draw near to God in our hearts?

b. Rote Tradition = Going Through the Motions

“And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote,”

Bomkamp: Whenever God’s people turn away from Him, external religion replaces the internal, and external rites and observances pass as legitimate regardless of the state of the heart of the individual.

2. (:14) The Pronouncement of Judgment = Hiding of God’s Truth

a. Marvelous Nature of God’s Judgment

“Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people wondrously marvelous;”

same language used at end of **chap. 28:21** (has Messianic tinge to the language – Is. 9:6)

Is this speaking of grace with the emphasis on God saving a remnant by way of the purification process of judgment

Or is this more of a negative connotation of God judging His own people?? [my view]

b. Deadening of All Wisdom and Discernment

*“And the wisdom of their wise men shall perish,
And the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed.”*

Constable: Therefore He would again deal with them in a way that would cause others to marvel, as He had done in the past when they sank to this level. Their wise men would not be able to view life from God’s perspective, and their discerning men would not be able to see through things to the real issues (cf. 28:29). Inability to see would be their punishment for choosing not to see (cf. 5:21; 11:2; 26:7-10; 1 Cor. 1:19).

Verse quoted directly by Paul in **1 Cor. 1:18-25**

Don’t ever be impressed by human wisdom – it will only block you from understanding the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ

CONCLUSION:

If the Bible is an open book to you, then you need to give thanks. If the Lord continues to bless you with the spiritual discernment to understand His truth, you need to give thanks. But the only way to perpetuate that position of privilege is to continue to draw near to God with your heart. We must reverence Him by continuing to develop biblical convictions that guide our obedience in every area of life. We cannot fall into the snare of religious tradition.

If this message isn't hitting home to you, then you need to beware – WOE – Watch Out Earthlings! The Lord will judge rote religious tradition.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do you feel that the Lord is blessing you with wisdom and discernment or is God's revelation a hidden mystery to you?
- 2) Can we identify any religious practices we follow that are tradition oriented rather than based on biblical convictions?
- 3) How do we know whether the Lord is for us or against us?
- 4) How can we draw nearer to the Lord with our hearts?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: It is God who gives enabling grace, and if a people stubbornly misconstrue his words, then that enabling grace is withdrawn. There can be no more frightening motivation to listen to God than this, the thought that if you refuse to hear today, one day you might no longer be able to hear (Acts 28:26-28; Rom 1:24, 26, 28; Heb 4:1-11).

S. Lewis Johnson: I know in evangelical circles, we apply that to everybody else. We apply that to the denominational church as if we were independent. And if we are in the denomination, we apply to the Roman Catholics. But listen it is possible and it is not only possible, it is a fact that traditions grow up in every church; give it a few years. It won't be long before Believers Chapel will have its little set of traditions. I hope I don't live to see that day. We will have them: "this is the way we do it here." Why do you do it that way? Well it's just the way we do it. Guess it's the right way. We never bother to study the word of God. Maybe we are doing something we shouldn't do.

Motyer: We cannot read these verses without seeing Sennacherib, the assault of 701 and the dramatic, last-minute, divine deliverance (chapters 36-37). . . The Lord is sovereign in history and his will dominates. He has the last word, and it is a word of deliverance. His people are never left to destruction; although they be humbled by the foe, it is the foe who is ultimately humbled.

Van Parunak: These manifestations accompany the Lord's presence (see the columns in the Table on Mount Sinai, and John's vision of the heavenly throne room). They also anticipate the culminations of the three great cycles of judgment in the Revelation, which align with the Lord's return to earth. As v. 3 looked beyond Assyria to Babylon, so this verse looks beyond any of the historical sieges of Jerusalem to the coming Day of the Lord.

Isa 29:6	The Presence of the Lord				The Lord's Return to Earth, Revelation		
	Exo 19:16-18 Sinai	Heb 12:18-19 Sinai	1 Ki 19:11-12, Sinai	Rev 4:5, Heaven	8:5, end of seals	11:19, end of trumpets	16:18, end of vials
...with thunder , and with earthquake , and great noise [voice], with storm and tempest , and the flame of devouring fire .	16 ... there were thunders and lightnings , and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; ... 18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire : and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.	...the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire , nor unto blackness, and tempest , 19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words;	And, behold, the LORD passed by , and a great and strong wind rent the mountains,... and after the wind an earthquake ; ... 12 And after the earthquake a fire ; ... and after the fire a still small voice.	And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices :	there were voices , and thunderings , and lightnings , and an earthquake .	there were lightnings , and voices , and thunderings , and an earthquake , and great hail.	there were voices , and thunders , and lightnings ; and there was a great earthquake ,

Borgman: The Triumph of Grace Over Ariel and Cocky Clay

Prophecy against the people of God; commission of Isaiah the prophet has more negative overtones (“Woe”) – especially in chapters 1-39; knew how to preach doom and gloom; *lion of God* or *altar hearth* = that upon which the sacrifice is burned; should be understood here of lion of God all the way through this text – sense of irony; some pathos in this; people in southern kingdom had sense of arrogance because of their pedigree tied to David; continue your religious activities as usual – judgment is still coming; believing that God won’t touch us as long as we maintain our outward religious activities; God is not concerned with less than form but He is certainly concerned with more than form; going to make the bold, courageous lion weak and miserable; *she will be like an Ariel with respect to Me* – ultimately she will resist and prove to be a lion of God – brought out in vv. 7-8; the distress will not come to full fruition; it will not last; grace will triumph through her over her enemies; in the final analysis she will be like Jacob of old who wrestles with God and will not let go until God blesses;

Vs. 5 Enemy will come instantly and overwhelmingly; seems hopeless

People of God will know they are being chastened because everywhere they turn, things go against them; God using forces of nature;

The enemy will come down hungry and will leave hungry; this is what happened with the Assyrians;

God not only punishes His lion, but protects her;

One of the ways God chastises His people is to make His Word imperceptible to them; Amos 8 a famine of hearing the word of the Lord; no judgment more terrifying for the visible people of God; watch out for dead orthodoxy

Spurgeon: “Give me a warm-hearted Methodist over a full-headed Calvinist any day.”

Not advocating one against the other . . .

Tozer: “Your theology can be as straight as a gun barrel, but you can be as empty as well.”
Our danger is not to run off in the dangers of emotionalism; our danger is to be so academic and committed to sound doctrine that we forget that God demands our affections as well;
Problem with catechisms = all that you know about God is learned by rote; you can learn a form of godliness that is cultural and traditional and has nothing to do with the heart
Can you imagine being so close to the truth but really being so far away?

TEXT: Isaiah 29:15-24

TITLE: *WOE #3 – AGAINST THOSE WHO THINK THEY ARE SMARTER THAN GOD = DECEIVERS AND DEFRAUDERS*

BIG IDEA:

THOSE WHO THINK THEY ARE SMARTER THAN GOD WILL BE WIPED OFF THE FACE OF THIS EARTH SO THAT FULL REDEMPTION CAN BE ENJOYED BY GOD’S TRANSFORMED PEOPLE IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

INTRODUCTION:

We should not be surprised at the level of mocking and scoffing that Christians are subjected to today. It is the height of arrogance for the Creature to exalt himself and imagine that he is **smarter than his Creator** – but such is mindset of those in positions of power today – those in the media, in our universities, in our government. Mocking Christians and God and the Bible has reached new levels of abuse in our society.

– Some representative quotations: starting with a very recent quote from a week ago

Andrew M. Cuomo: [Gov. of NY state] -- “extreme conservatives . . . have no place in the state of New York,” Cuomo -- radio interview Jan. 17. Cuomo defined “extreme conservatism” as being “anti-gay” by opposing same-sex marriage rights, opposed to abortion rights and favoring legalization of assault weapons. [look at the biblical views which he mocks here].

God turns this mocking around and says that His redeemed earth will have no place for such arrogant scoffers who want to reject God’s standards and replace His truth with their own perversity

Frank Lloyd Wright: [famous American architect] -- I believe in God, only I spell it Nature. [sounds like Romans 1 doesn’t it? With the worship of creation substituted for the worship of the Creator]

Rex Murphy: To be a serious Christian in modern Western culture is to be the favoured easy target of every progressive thinker and every half-witted comedian. It is to have your sensibilities and your deepest beliefs on perpetual call for taunts, mockery and desecration. At a time when all progressives preach full volume for inclusivity and sensitivity, for the utmost care in speech when speaking of others with differing views or hues, Christians, as Christians, are under a **constant hail of abuse and disregard**. There is nothing too low or too vulgar.

S. E. Cupp “*Losing Our Religion: The Liberal Media's Attack on Christianity*, 2010, not even an evangelical believer herself but could still perceive the media’s bias

The media has a "covenant" with five tenets:

1. The Judeo-Christian values that form the basis of American democracy should be overthrown entirely—because a minuscule disgruntled minority finds them objectionable.
2. Religious tolerance is crucial to the success and health of any democracy—but not when it is applied to the vast majority.

3. A robust, fair, and objective press is better for freedom than a hostile, biased, and corrupted one—but not if being objective competes with the media's ideological impulses.
4. The spokespeople for our culture should commend good works, not mock them—unless those good works are being done by Christians.
5. Civility and decency are disposable commodities when the values of citizenry compete with secular values of the press.

It won't always be this way:

THOSE WHO MOCK GOD WILL BE WIPED OFF THE FACE OF THIS EARTH SO THAT FULL REDEMPTION CAN BE ENJOYED BY GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

Quick Review:

Woe #1 – Against Ephraim in the northern kingdom spilling over to the southern kingdom – The Only Sure Foundation is the Precious Cornerstone

Woe #2 – Against spiritual hypocrisy of leaders in Jerusalem – The Lord judges rote religious tradition with spiritual blindness

I. (:15-16) CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE THAT MOCK GOD = RUTHLESS DECEIVERS –

Those who imagine that they know better than God; Who make their independent plans in the perversity of their human wisdom without any regard for the will of God

A. (:15) Three Damning Declarations of the Supremacy of Man

1. Declare themselves to be Independent of the Lord's Governing
“Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD,”

Constable: "Woe" announces divine condemnation of another trait of the Jerusalemites: their habitual and determined decision to try to hide from God (cf. Gen. 3:8). The political strategists seem to be particularly in view. They tried to hide their plans from the Lord so they could be their own masters, as they thought, to live as they pleased rather than as He instructed them. Previously King Ahaz had tried to hide his appeal to Assyria for help (ch. 7).

Van Parunak: The specific case that Isaiah has in mind is the plan of the Jerusalem department of state to seek an alliance with Egypt (30:1-2; 31:1). But Isaiah begins with the general principle rather than the specific instance. The problem is not just the specific nature of Egypt, but the attitude of heart that tries to plan one's course of life without consulting the Lord.

This behavior is a manifestation of serving the Lord outwardly but removing one's heart from him (v. 13). The rulers of Jerusalem thought that they could worship God in the temple services while excluding him from their daily thoughts and plans. Such compartmentalization always brings God's solemn declaration, “Woe.”

They don't seek counsel from the Lord and they don't advise others to seek such counsel; they act on their own initiative; they rely on human wisdom; they make their own plans and try to carry them out as if they are sovereign – constitutes a complete denial of the sovereignty of God

This spirit of independence is characterized as arrogant and evil in **James 4:13-17**

Prov. 27:1 *“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.”*

Takes humility to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ; to make it your will to do His will

Oswalt: your plans are stupid and corrupt because you will not believe the simplicity of God’s promises.

How are you making your plans for this week’s activities? Are you a servant of Christ or a free agent? Are you open and transparent before the Lord or trying to hide your plans?

2. Declare themselves to be Lovers of Darkness rather than the light
“And whose deeds are done in a dark place,”

John 3:19-21

1 John 1:5-7

Internet can be a very dark place – cesspool of pornography – lures you in because you think that no one can see or know what you are doing – at the end of the day I will just delete the browsing history with a click of the button and no one will know where I have been

We need to live as **children of the light**

Col. 1:13-14 *“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

Are your deeds characterized by light or by darkness? Do you have some secret sins where you are still living on the dark side? Feeding your pride or your bitterness or your selfishness or your lusts

3. Declare themselves to be Free from Divine Accountability
“And they say, ‘Who sees us?’ or ‘Who knows us?’”

Psalm 139

B. (:16) Three Damning Denials of the Supremacy of God

1. Denying the Distinction Between the Creator and His Creation

“You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay,”

Beall: The first part of v. 16 is striking: it should be translated, *“Your perversity!”* . . . These leaders have turned things upside down. The clay is trying to disown the potter, or act as if He has no understanding! What foolishness!

Perversity of human wisdom -- involves a reversal; a turning things on their head
What an absurdity to so reverse this simple imagery of the potter and his clay

Remember how the prophets love to make fun of the lifeless, wooden idols – how can you worship that which you have carved from a tree?

Here the irony and sarcasm go even deeper – How can the creature consider himself equal to God the Creator?

2. Denying the Accountability that Derives from Creation by Denying Creation Itself

“That what is made should say to its maker, ‘He did not make me’;”

Going a step further and denying Creation itself – this is where the world is today – people placing their faith in the ridiculous so-called scientific theory of Evolution

Oswalt: It is the forgetting of God's right as Maker that leads to ethical relativism.

He didn't make me so He cannot tell me what to do; I am the master of my own life – an attack against God's sovereignty

3. Denying the Superiority of the Perspective and Wisdom of the Eternal One

“Or what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘He has no understanding’?”

Who knows what is best for man?

Constable: These politicians turned things upside down. They denied the Lord's distinctiveness, sovereignty, and wisdom—and attributed those characteristics to themselves (cf. v. 14; 45:9; 64:8; Gen. 2:7; Jer. 18:1-6; Rom. 1:25; 9:19-21). They told the Lord what to do rather than trying to discover what He wanted to do.

Supremacy of God has been replaced with the **Supremacy of Man --**

Examine current Christian trends in the church to see where this critical error is taking root

- In our preaching – We are bored with the deep truths of God's doctrines from His Word; we want simplistic, man-centered solutions to whatever is bugging us today
- We value entertainment over worship – over standing in awe of the God who made us
- In our counseling – God's Word can't handle the complexities of our modern behavior issues; we have come to rely on the human wisdom of psychologists

II. (:17-21) DELIVERANCE FROM THOSE WHO MOCK GOD (= DEFRAUDERS) IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

A. (:17-19) Restoration

1. (:17) Reversal of Roles and of Fortunes

*“Is it not yet just a little while before Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field,
And the fertile field will be considered as a forest?”*

Difficult verse –

“Lebanon” – heavily forested, mountainous area

“fertile field” – orchard, plantation, garden

MacArthur: In the future, a reversal of roles between the mighty and the weak will transpire, when God intervenes to bless Jerusalem. The moral change in the Jewish nation will be as great as if the usually forested Lebanon were turned into a field and vice versa.

Oswalt: a coming reversal in the positions of the noble and the common. In several places in the book the forest of Lebanon is used as a symbol for the mighty (2:13; 10:34; 33:9; 35:2; 60:13), and the cutting down of the forest a symbol of humiliation (2:13; 10:34; 37:24). Therefore, it seems likely that the same imagery is in force here: the forest will become a plowed field, whereas the fields will grow up in such a luxurious tangle as to be called a forest. So the mighty of Judah and of the world will fall, but God's common people will flourish. (*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, Matt. 5:5.*)

[The alternative interpretation would be that of the Renewal of the Physical Creation – **Is. 32:15**]

Van Parunak: The significance of the coming of the Messiah is the inauguration of the millennium, his physical dominion over all the earth, succeeding as the second Adam where the first Adam failed. The first advent foreshadowed the second, and prepared for it, by providing the redemptive work that allows sinful people to be citizens of the renewed earth. If the millennium is a movie, the first advent is the trailer. Like a trailer, it should excite our interest in what is yet to come. Our Lord's first coming should stimulate us to "love his [second] appearing," 2 Tim 4:8.

Isaiah's vision encompasses three aspects of God's counsel for this coming age: renewal of the creation, healing of human frailty, and punishment of evildoers. Our Lord's earthly ministry anticipates all three.

The three categories move from physical restoration, to a restoration that is both physical and spiritual, to a justice that is completely spiritual.

Van Parunak: This verse must be interpreted consistently with **32:15**,

Isa 32:15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

The two main interpretations are **contrast** and **climax**.

In the **contrast** interpretation, the two halves of the saying present a reversal. In the first, that which is wild and untameable (Lebanon, the wilderness) is turned into something good, while in the second half, that which is good (the garden) is turned back into something wild (the forest). This interpretation is often applied (e.g., Alexander in 29:17) to the replacement of Israel by the church. It's worth noting that Paul in Rom 11 uses the contrast of wild and cultivated plants in discussing this change.

In the **climax** interpretation, the first half anticipates the beneficial transformation of something wild (Lebanon, the wilderness) into a garden. The second half then says that in comparison with that coming garden, what you now consider a garden will be thought to be no more than a forest.

Most commentators apply the contrast to 29:17 but the climax to 32:15.

2. (:18) Reversal of Human Brokenness – resulting in Spiritual Discernment

“And on that day the deaf shall hear words of a book,

And out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.”

Constable: The Lord would demonstrate His distinctiveness, sovereignty, and wisdom soon by reversing the conditions of the proud and the humble, symbolized by the forest and the field (cf. 2:13; 10:34; 33:9; 35:2; 37:24; 60:13; Matt. 5:5). This change will be literal in the Millennium. Note the mention of "just a little while" and "on that day," phrases that often introduce eschatological conditions. The deaf would hear and the blind would see (cf. vv. 9-12; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:4). Isaiah's point was that only God could do these things, not man. The fact that Jesus Christ was able to do this shows that He was God.

Isa 9:2 *“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”*

2Co 4:4,6 *“... the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. ... 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

3. (:19) Restoration of Joyful Worship – resulting from Deliverance
*“The afflicted also shall increase their gladness in the LORD,
And the needy of mankind shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”*

B. (:20-21) Retribution

1. (:20) Description of Their Demise -- Threefold

a. Ruthless

“For the ruthless will come to an end,”

Oswalt: the oppressors who heartlessly squeeze the weak to extract what they can from them (13:11; 25:3, 4, 5; 29:5; 49:25).

Motyer: unsparing in their use of power

b. Scorned

“and the scorner will be finished,”

Oswalt: the scoffer is the one who mocks the normal standards of truth, honor, and decency and delights to serve himself at the cost of others (28:15; cf. also Prov. 1:22; 13:1; etc.).

Motyer: those who recognize no moral absolutes

c. Intent on doing evil

“Indeed all who are intent on doing evil will be cut off;”

Oswalt: all who watch to do evil are especially defined by v. 22 as those in political and judicial authority who are ever on the alert for ways to use their power to prey on the innocent (cf. esp. Jer. 5:6, where the verb is applied to the leopard watching its prey).

Motyer: those whose interests are served by the breakdown of law and order.

Van Parunak: Isaiah presents two pairs of offenses, each using the figure of speech known as a merism (representing a totality by naming its extremes. . .)

The first pair contrasts an irresponsible attitude toward the weak and lowly (being terrible) with an irresponsible attitude toward those in authority (scorning). Often the two go together: those who oppose the weak do so in flagrant disregard of the law.

The rest of v. 20 and v. 21 show two contrasting forms of this arrogant oppression: condemning the innocent, and justifying the wicked.

2. (:21) Denunciation of Their Deception -- Threefold

a. False Testimony

“Who cause a person to be indicted by a word,”

b. Corrupt Judging

“And ensnare him who adjudicates at the gate,”

c. Confusing Argumentation

“And defraud the one in the right with meaningless arguments.”

Van Parunak: The first clause of v. 21 is understood by most modern translations as parallel to the second and third, and thus to be understood as bearing false witness, “making a man an offender with a word.” However, the first clause is a ptc, parallel to the closing ptc in v. 20 and distinct from the finite verbs in the last two clauses. The resulting division gives a very nice contrast between two extremes of evil-doing: false accusation and false justification. With this division, it really doesn't matter whether we translate 21a “for a word” or “with a word,” since in both cases the point is accusing the innocent.

Constable: God will destroy the mighty as well as elevate the helpless (cf. v. 17). He will correct social ills. The samples of wicked behavior that Isaiah offered have been all too prevalent throughout history. The ruthless are unscrupulous in wielding their power (cf. v. 5; 13:11; 25:3-5). Scorners deny moral absolutes (cf. 28:14, 22). Those intent on doing evil bend law and order to achieve their ends. Specifically, those who abuse the legal system by committing perjury, tampering with witnesses, and withholding protection from the innocent will come to an end. The prophet pictured false witnesses, crooked lawyers, and corrupt judges (cf. Hos. 4:1-2; Amos 2:6-8; 5:10-11; Mic. 2:1-2).

Beall: Vv 20-21 explain that the reason for the rejoicing would be that the ruthless (lit., awe-inspiring—the same word is used in 13:11 [Babylon] and 29:5) one, the scorner (same word as in 28:14), and those with an eye for evil would be cut off. The ruthless one may well refer to outside persecutors, while the scornful one may refer to the evil leaders of Judah. v. 21 explains the last clause of v. 20 further—those evil men seek to trap an innocent man through one false word, or ensnare him as he pleads his case before the judges, or turn aside a just claim by legal twisting or maneuvering.

III. (:22-24) TRANSFORMATION FOR THE REDEEMED

“Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob,”

Van Parunak: It is curious that Isaiah describes the Lord as redeeming Abraham. To redeem someone is to deliver them from bondage by paying a price. The word is very commonly used often describes Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and some think that the reference here is to the nation rather than individual, much as the personal names Jacob and Israel sometimes represent the entire people. But I can't think of any text where the name “Abraham” is used collectively.

God's point is that even Abraham, the prototype of justification by faith, had to be delivered from bondage. Joshua reminded the people of Abraham's origins:

Jos 24:2 *And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.*

In calling Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, the Lord was delivering him from bondage to false gods. In addition, throughout his pilgrimage the Lord repeatedly delivered him from the oppression of other powers, an oppression that often resulted from sin: Pharaoh in Gen 12 (after Abram denied Sarah), the kings of Gen 14 (a consequence of strife between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's), Abimelech of Gerar in Gen 20 (Sarah again). And our Lord taught that Abraham looked forward to his coming as the ultimate redeemer:

Joh 8:56 *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*

Abraham was not a sinless patriarch. Like all of his children, he needed to be redeemed. So Israel should not think it strange if God takes them through chastisement into deliverance.

A. (:22b) Freedom From Shame and Fear

“Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now turn pale;”

B. (:23) Genuine Worship and Appreciation

“But when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, They will sanctify My name; Indeed, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, And will stand in awe of the God of Israel.”

Grogan: It is awe inspired by wondering gratitude that will bring about this profound sense of 'the godhood of God.' It is this deep awareness of God's goodness to them as a nation that will produce a penitent and receptive spirit in those formerly wayward and complaining.

Oswalt: As indicated by Ezek. 36:19-26, to defile God's name is to make him appear less than God.

C. (:24) Hunger for and Reception of Spiritual Truth

“And those who err in mind will know the truth, And those who criticize will accept instruction.”

It starts with the mind – receiving and loving God's truth

Oswalt: The order of events is significant here: deliverance is followed by praise, which results in understanding

Motyer: *Those who complain* is found only at Deuteronomy 1:27; Psalm 106:25, and is used of bitter refusal of the Lord's word, self-pitying determination to put the worst construction on things, paranoid inflexibility in the understanding of life

Constable: Those who are the work of God's hands, the Israelites, will demonstrate steadfastness in their lives. Their formerly incorrect understanding will be straightened out. Those who have been critical, feeling superior, will accept instruction. Deliverance leads to praise, which results in understanding, just as lack of understanding leads to pride resulting in judgment.

Beall: Vv 22-24 provide the conclusion to all of chaps. 28-29, as well as the conclusion to the immediately preceding verses. The Lord is introduced as the One who redeemed Abraham—as if a reminder that He would not ultimately forsake Abraham's descendants (despite their unfaithfulness so clearly seen in these chapters), but would be faithful to the Abrahamic covenant. The Lord tells Jacob that he will not be ashamed of his descendants, but indeed they would ultimately sanctify the Lord's name, and fear Him. Those who were erring in spirit (i.e., the deaf and blind of v. 18) would “*know understanding*,” and those who murmured would “*learn teaching*” (the noun in both cases reinforcing the meaning of the verb). A similar picture of the national repentance of Israel is given in Zech 12:10 (“*And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn*”). Israel, in the Millennium, will indeed come to know the Lord. As seen both in this passage and in Zech 12:10, however, the basis will not be her wisdom, but rather the redemptive grace of the Lord. The Lord will then give wisdom to the erring nation.

CONCLUSION:

Motyer: Life must be lived in the light of the wisdom of God. The proper course is to submit to his designs and his timetable, to eschew self-will and a do-it-yourself approach to life's problems.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Is there any dark side to your life where you need to repent and seek the Lord's forgiveness?
- 2) Why is it so essential to hold to the biblical view of creationism?
- 3) What gives us encouragement to endure the ridicule of the intellectual elite?
- 4) How can we sanctify the Holy One of Israel and stand in awe of our great God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: Vv 17-24 explain that, despite the futile counsels of man, the Lord has a plan which will be executed regardless. The leaders have been acting as if God did not exist, but He will soon change things (contrast v. 16: God says that He will turn things around!). The Lebanon forest would become a fruitful field, and the field a forest; the deaf would hear (the words of the book—certainly a slap in the face to the “leaders” who did not hear, and acted as if the book were “sealed”—v 11), and the blind would see. The humble would increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor would rejoice in the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah's favorite name for the Lord, once again—showing His holiness, His sovereignty, and His superiority over the counsels of the frail, human leaders). The praise and rejoicing, along with the now familiar “in that day” in v. 18, indicate that the ultimate fulfillment of these words will be in the Millennium, in the reign of Christ on the earth.

Van Parunak: *they shall sanctify my name*,--This is the only place in the OT where we encounter the phrase, “*sanctify* קדש C *the name [of the Lord]*.” But it is the antonym of a common Levitical phrase, “*to profane* הלל D *the name of the Lord*.” This phrase describes the result of a number of offenses:

- sacrificing one's children to Molech (Lev 18:21; 20:3)
- swearing falsely by God's name (Lev 19:12)
- for a priest, contact with the dead (Lev 21:6)
- for a priest, conducting holy ceremonies while ceremonially defiled (Lev 22:2)
- keeping God's commandments concerning sacrifices (Lev 22:32).

The emphasis on ceremonial ritual and outward obedience suggests that this level of piety is that observed by those condemned in 29:13.

The next two phrases follow the instruction of 8:13. When Ahaz was considering an alliance with Assyria against Israel and Syria, Isaiah urged the people,

Isa 8:13 *Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob,*

--To sanctify the Lord is the next step beyond sanctifying his name. Now the worshiper recognizes the one whom the name identifies and shall fear the God of Israel.

--The third step brings the worshiper to the fear of God that was so sorely lacking in v. 13.

David Thompson: Message #40 – 2nd Half of Isaiah 29

Churches are drifting away from reverent, deep worship and desire for knowledge of God from the Scriptures. God wants people standing in awe of Him – not superficial, shallow religion. Worship in Isaiah's day was shallow; God is going to put an end to all this shallow doctrine and nonsense. God's true remnant will rejoice knowing that one day God will eliminate all those who mock Him.

7 Wonderful Blessings

1) God will destroy all those who did not reverence Him (:15-16)

Specific target of this Woe judgment: those who are making up their own theology; false, arrogant religion; God wants to be feared and revered for Who He is rather than based on

man's ideas; man-centered religion; not a theology based on written word of God; failure to acknowledge sovereign greatness and majesty of God; talking about very religious people; they had drifted away from Word of God; became indifferent to biblical doctrine; Luther refocused on truth of God after a very dark period of biblical understanding;

invented 4 heretical theological lies:

- We make our own plans without any consideration for God's will and word; believed they could hide things from God and outsmart Him; didn't think they needed God; fatal mistake – don't lean on our own understanding; ask God for wisdom; high school and university counselors who provide counsel without telling them to seek God
- God does not see or know what we are doing; corrupt behind closed doors; arrogant humanism; we are not accountable to God; theologically insane; the eyes of the Lord are in every place watching the evil and the good; all knowing and all seeing; watch out if you downplay God's sovereignty; nobody knows what I look at and what I think;
- Man is equal to God; you turn things around; man is the potter and God is the clay; how crazy is this? Impossible to even imagine this; you cannot reverse this process of the potter and the clay; man's will can somehow usurp God's will – the free will of man;
- Man really wasn't made by God; **Is. 40:28** "*the Creator of the ends of the earth*"; stated from Genesis to Revelation; man has been made in the image of God; attribute of man that you will never find in the animal world; we live in a world that believes this lie; look at abortion; disturbed by the willingness of evangelicals to try to find some compatibility between Scriptures and evolution; State it boldly – "God is our maker" – don't soften the truth with just a watered down "intelligent design"; Defend the truth – don't waffle; it is a disaster when a nation forgets its great spiritual heritage; quote from Benjamin Franklin: God governs in the affairs of men ...

God will remove those God-mocking politicians and religious leaders from the face of the earth

2) Transform the Promised Land (:17)– Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field; a beautiful paradise --

A wild, mountainous, uncultivated land; challenge you to find any place in Scripture where this has yet happened; but it will at some point in the future; it will happen in the Millennium that will follow the Tribulation; What God promises to do nationally for Israel He is presently doing individually in the lives of believers – transforming barren lives by His grace -- making them fruitful and productive; a glorious reflection of His amazing power

3) Heal all Physical Deformities (:18)

Granting spiritual discernment and illumination

4) Reverse the Status of the Afflicted and the Needy (:19)

God will do some wonderful things for people who hurt; day of rejoicing when the Holy One of Israel – Jesus Christ – comes back a second time and puts His feet down on Mt. Zion

5) Put an End to All Brutal and Ruthless People (:20-21)

All the people who have mocked God and His people; did it through their words; we live in a world that laughs at God and the Bible today;

6) Cause All of Israel to Know Me and Worship Me (:22-23)

5 major changes that will transform Israel:

- Israel will no longer be ashamed; has been longing for a Messiah and a kingdom; all the promises will come true
- Israel will no longer be afraid; they will be the most esteemed people walking on the face of the earth
- Will see her children grow up with the blessing of God; these children are the work of God's hands; we are His workmanship; don't arrogantly rob God of His glory; we were not saved by our will or our works
- Israel will sanctify God's Name and God's Son – they will honor God the Father and God the Son at the same level; sanctified people lead to sanctified power
- Israel will stand in awe of God – don't forget that God has one special nation and it is Israel = the apple of His eye; wise is the nation that acknowledges this; bless those who bless Israel;

7) Cause All People to Know and Love His Truth and Instruction

All people hungering for the deep things of God; we are going to worship to be instructed in the Scriptures; we want to understand the deep things of all 66 books of the Bible

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/playpopup.asp?SID=817091852471>

TEXT: Isaiah 30:1-7

TITLE: *WOE #4 – AGAINST ALLIANCES WITH THE WORLD*

BIG IDEA:

RETURNING TO EGYPT IS THE PATHWAY TO SHAME AND FUTILITY

INTRODUCTION:

James warns his readers: “*You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*” (4:4) Nothing confusing about that warning. Do you really want God as your enemy? Do you want to declare war on God?

Likewise the Jews in Isaiah’s day certainly understood the dangers of forsaking their covenant marriage relationship with Yahweh and returning to trust in the land of Egypt from which they had been delivered. God’s Word could not have been clearer on this crucial point.

Deut. 17:16 “*nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall never again return that way.’*” But what if the pressures mount to the point that they did in Isaiah’s day where the threat of Assyria was so great that they had nowhere to turn? Stand fast and see the salvation of the Lord – slaying 185,000 in one day and sending Sennacherib back to his home base without capturing Jerusalem.

Egypt represents **the way of the world** = everything that stands in opposition to God’s holiness and His righteous paths. Egypt represents the place of bondage under the yoke of sin; the place from which the precious grace of the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed us forever. How can Christians forsake their spiritual liberty and return to the yoke of bondage of the world? It doesn’t make any sense, but it happens all of the time.

RETURNING TO EGYPT IS THE PATHWAY TO SHAME AND FUTILITY

[THE WORLD’S WAY IS THE WRONG WAY – BECAUSE IT LEADS TO SHAME AND FUTILITY]

Have you ever gotten on a highway headed the wrong way? Can be a terrifying experience. When we first moved to MD, I did that one night on Route 301 heading to Todd Beall’s house – one of those divided highways and I didn’t realize you had to cross over the median before turning left. Fortunately there was a place to turn around right away before disaster struck.

I. (:1-5) FALSE SECURITY LEADS ONLY TO SHAME

A. (:1-2) Human Sourced Game Plan = Reliance on the World

1. (:1a) Heading for Certain Disaster – Mindset of Rebellion
“*Woe to the rebellious children, declares the LORD,*”

A 4th judgmental Woe – Watch Out Earthlings!

A problem with the authority of God – resisting His control; rejecting His will;

Parents can relate to the agony caused by rebellious children – look at the relationship between King David and his wayward son Absalom

What a spurned privilege to be rebellious children of God

We have the privilege of spending time this weekend with our grandson – it would break our hearts if Dean grows up to be a rebellious child – he is showered with all of the affection and privileges that one could imagine – think of all that the Lord invested in caring for His precious vine – the children of Israel

2. (:1b) Executing Faulty Strategy – Misplaced Loyalties

*“Who execute a plan, but not Mine,
And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit,”*

Forbidden alliances with Egypt

Plans entirely of human origin and execution

Their choice to return to Egypt for help was a clear violation of the Word of God – nothing debatable about this strategy

I spent time with my sister Joanne yesterday – she has been trying to find a good church home in Frederick – had to cross one off her list – the pastor was talking about ordaining women to the eldership and the ministry – But what about the clear teaching of the Apostle Paul in **1 Tim. 2:12** *“But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.”*

Seems clear to me.

“Oh,” explained the pastor, “the Scriptures keep evolving to meet the needs of our current day.”

Talk about thumbing your nose at the Constitution! You can justify whatever man-made strategies you want on that basis.

Do you really want **God’s plan for your life**? When He says clearly that His will for you *“is your sanctification, that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality”* (**1 Thess. 4:3**) does that settle the matter for you? Or are you willing to go down that pathway of alluring pleasure and temptation?

3. (:1c) Shooting for the Wrong Goal – Mushrooming Culpability

“In order to add sin to sin;”

Compounding nature of sin; one sin leads to another; life becomes complicated; you end up with a mess; a disaster

Beall: In effect, the Lord states, they are adding sin to sin (the first sin being their reliance upon Assyria in Ahaz's time; the second sin being their reliance upon Egypt against Assyria).

Oswalt: sin of concealment added to the sin of alliance. In any case, it is true that something about the human condition leads us not to confess sin but to compound it with more.

The **cover-up** in politics is always more serious than the initial offense; look at Gov. Christie in NJ; the scandal regarding closing down lanes on the prominent George Washington bridge to punish his political opponents; starts out denying that he knew anything about this misguided tactic; if it can be proven that he has been lying and covering up his involvement – the adding of sin to sin will be his undoing – bringing down his lofty political ambitions in the flames of shame and futility

- He reportedly just sent an email to supporters ripping David Wildstein, the former Port Authority official claiming Christie knew of the George Washington Bridge lane closures as they happened. We will see how this plays out.

How has it worked out for you when you have tried to cover up your sins instead of coming clean and repenting?

4. (:2) Repeating the Mistakes of the Past – Mirage of Worldly Assistance
*“Who proceed down to Egypt, Without consulting Me,
 To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh,
 And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!”*

Motyer: Egypt is the place of death (Ex. 1:22) – Pharaoh ordering the death of all the Jewish male infants

“Without consulting Me” – **Josh. 9:14** [guile of the Gibeonites – pretending to come from a far off country; making an alliance with Joshua – *“did not ask for the counsel of the Lord”*] – good reason not to consult God is because you suspect that God will not give you the answer you are looking for; common practice of people looking for counselors that will tell them what they want to hear

Constable: How ironic that God's people thought they could find life in Egypt, which had historically been a place of death for them and from which they had fled formerly (cf. Exod. 1:22). Furthermore, they had done this without even consulting the Lord, a failure that had resulted in the Gibeonite compromise generations earlier (cf. Josh. 9:14). However, it seems that failure to consult God's Word was their mistake here more than failure to pray. Rather than seeking safety under the shadow of the Almighty (Ps. 91:1), they had sought it under the shadow of Pharaoh.

Thompson: Think of how spiritually rebellious and insane this is. Israel was willing to abandon her dependency and relationship with God who freed her, for a dependency and relationship with Egypt who enslaved her.

Van Parunak: Re vv. 2-7 Three times, the Lord describes Israel's attempt to seek help from Egypt, and three times predicts its failure.

B. (:3-5) Humiliating Outcome

1. (:3) False Security Ends In Shame

*“Therefore the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame,
 And the shelter in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation.”*

Constable: The safety they had sought would prove to be a delusion. The supposed protection that Pharaoh offered would result in the disappointment of hope, and the shelter that Egypt promised would turn to disgrace. The Pharaoh at this time was Shabako, a Nubian. The Egyptians were not even strong enough to provide a native Egyptian to rule them. This was a weak period in Egyptian history. I am assuming that the historical context of this prophecy was shortly before Sennacherib's invasion of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.

Oswalt: Thus the nature of Judah's rebellion is further underlined. It is not merely the making of a defensive alliance with a neighboring country which is so odious. It is the repudiation of a personal relationship of dependence upon and affection for their God. . . . They had in fact exchanged the shadow of the Almighty (Ps 91:1) for the shadow of one very small human being, the Pharaoh.

Thompson: The word “*humiliation*” is a different Hebrew word. The particular flare of this word is that God’s people would end up being shamefully wounded, insulted, disgraced, hurt and injured. Moving away from trusting God and His Word will not leave you happy. You will be bruised, pierced, and cut. You will be wounded, insulted and disgraced.

2. (:4) Irony in Trusting in Past Cities of Shame

*“For their princes are at Zoan,
And their ambassadors arrive at Hanes.”*

Is. 19:11, 13

MacArthur: Zoan – This major city of northern Egypt E of the Nile delta region was the first large city a Semite would encounter in traveling toward the Nile.

Beall: There is, of course, some irony that Zoan is mentioned, since Zoan was one of the places the Israelites had, years ago, served the Egyptians.

Young: Apparently Zoan and Hanes are considered as small seats of dynasties, and their mention shows that the ambassadors of Judah have penetrated the land.

Thompson: What we see here is that Israel’s ambassadors had traveled deep into the Egyptian infrastructure for help. They had selected key places which housed key leadership.

3. (:5) Impotent Help Ends In Shame

*“Everyone will be ashamed because of a people who cannot profit them,
Who are not for help or profit, but for shame and also for reproach.”*

Thompson: The first word for “*ashamed*” used here in verse 5 is a different word than the one used in verse 3 and at the end of verse 5. This particular word has to do with having a bad smell and to stink. Isaiah’s point is that instead of God’s people ending up beautiful, they end up putrid. Instead of them smelling sweet, as it were, they are a stench to the nostrils of God.

Motyer: From the feared killer (Assyria) they seek help in the proved killer (Egypt)! It is ever so when alternatives to the Lord’s salvation are chosen.

II. (:6-7) FUTILITY IS THE NAME OF THE GAME

“The oracle concerning the beasts of the Negev.”

You are opening yourself up to serious troubles when you get off God’s track of holiness and righteousness

Thompson: The Negev was the land located to the south of the Promised Land. In order for the leaders of Judah to get into Egypt, they had to pass through this land known as the Negev. . . . Rebellious people will do bizarre things to avoid turning to God and His Word, including risking their own lives and testimonies as they crawl back into a dangerous world.

A. (:6b) Forlorn Terrain of Wilderness Wanderings

*“Through a land of distress and anguish,
From where come lioness and lion, viper and flying serpent,”*

What’s the journey like when you get off track and are not walking with the Lord in faith and obedience? Times of distress and anguish; danger and unexpected snares and attacks; opposite of peace and rest; reversing the exodus covering the same route

Van Parunak: The doublet appears only three times: here, **8:22**, and **Prov 1:27** (which may be where Isaiah got it). In all three cases, it is associated with the consequences of neglecting counsel. . . . Perhaps the words are also meant to recall the bondage in Egypt (**Ps. 81:8**).

Message of Wisdom:

Prov. 1:27-33 *“When your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the naïve will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil.”*

Oswalt: A caravan loaded with treasures struggles through wild terrain infested with lions and snakes, all to buy the help of an old dragon who is in fact helpless. All the cost in effort and wealth will come to nothing, says the prophet.

Young: Here is one of the saddest pictures in all Scripture. Once God had led the ancestors of the nation through this very desert when He brought them from the country of their bondage (Deut. 8:15; cf. Jer. 2:6). Now, utterly unmindful of what God had once done for the nation, the people traverse this same wilderness for the purpose of seeking protection from the nation that in ancient times had been the home of their bondage.

B. (:6c) Fortunes Wasted In Soliciting the World’s Favor

*“They carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys
And their treasures on camels' humps,”*

Constable: Rather than going directly to Egypt through Philistia, the Judean ambassadors had taken the circuitous and dangerous route through the Negev, probably to avoid Assyrian detection. They had taken roughly the same route as their ancestors who left Egypt in the Exodus, only traveling in the opposite direction (cf. Num. 21:6; Deut. 8:15). This irony highlights the folly of returning to Egypt for help. The Lord expressed more concern for the animals that carried the ambassadors, than for the ambassadors themselves, since the ambassadors were rebelling against Him.

Look at how the Lord had blessed the Israelites at the time of the Exodus (**Ex. 12:35-36**) –

plundering the wealth of the Egyptians as they departed . . . now they are coming back and returning that wealth to the dominion of the world; to the kingdom of darkness; to the forces of Satan

C. (:6d-7a) Futility of Seeking Help From the World

*“To a people who cannot profit them;
Even Egypt, whose help is vain and empty.”*

Beall: Egypt will try to help, but it will be only vanity and emptiness as a result.

D. (:7b) Final Impotence of the World as a Political and Military Ally

“Therefore, I have called her ‘Rahab who has been exterminated.’”

Constable: Egypt, of all nations, would not be a help to God's people. She would live up to the nickname that the Lord had given her (cf. Ps. 87:4). "Rahab" means pride, turbulence, arrogance, boastfulness. There is no intended connection with Rahab the harlot (Josh. 2). In popular Ugaritic legend, Rahab was a sea monster, or a dragon. Her promises of help would be worth nothing. Rahab was a "do nothing" ally. This dragon would prove to be toothless (unable to ward off Assyria).

Van Parunak: “Strength” is רַהַב , the name of the legendary sea monster, applied to Egypt in Ps 87:4; 89:10. Egypt would like to think of itself as a powerful monster. But in fact God calls her, “Sit-still,” “Do-nothing.”

Young: In the eyes of the Egyptians and possibly of men generally, they were regarded as a Rahab, a powerful monster that could devour and destroy. In reality, however, they were but a resting. This latter word designates a ceasing of activity, a period of resting . . . so as a power that can be of no help to God's people.

Johnson: This is what Isaiah is saying about Egypt. They are a big mouth but they won't do you any good. They are arrogants, but they sit still. . . Now Egypt remember was an old country at this time. It had a great history and the ancient world respected Egypt for its past and they knew it, and consequently Egypt made a lot of promises based on the dignity in which they were held in the ancient world, but they did not live up to them and that's what Isaiah is referring to. They are just a big mouth do nothing. There is a lot of blustering inactivity as far as Egypt is concerned.

CONCLUSION:

Shame and Futility – not the desired outcome for any of us – yet the Lord assures us this will be our outcome if we forsake His counsel and devise man-made strategies and form alliances with the world.

RETURNING TO EGYPT IS THE PATHWAY TO SHAME AND FUTILITY

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some of the ways in which we are tempted to return to Egypt in our spiritual experience?
- 2) How can we make our boast in the Lord so that we will not suffer the shame of following man-made plans?
- 3) Do we consult the Lord for our day-to-day decisions and wait upon His guidance?
- 4) Where have we invested resources in human pursuits that have ended up in futility and have not profited us spiritually?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: Overall Structure (quoted by **Constable**)

A Contemporary events: Egypt no help (1-7)

B Coming human events: the refusal of the word, the way of death (8-17)

B' Coming divine events: the waiting God, the sure glory (18-26)

A' Contemporary events: Assyria no threat (27-33)

The command to write in vs. 8 is backed up by 2 parallel explanations:

The first explanation (9-14)

The second explanation (15-17)

Refusal of revealed truth (9-11)

Refusal of a specific message (15)

Consequence: an internal cause,
the sin of refusing the word (12-13a)

Consequence: an external cause,
the attacking foe (16-17d)

leading to destruction (doubly
illustrated, 13b-14)

leading to destruction (doubly
illustrated, 17e-g)

Constable: The first two parts stress human unfaithfulness, and the last two emphasize divine faithfulness. The first section (vv. 1-7) is divisible into two parts, the first dealing with the embassy to Egypt (vv. 1-5), and the second an oracle about the animals of the Negev (vv. 6-7). The whole woe is for stubborn rebellion against God by seeking foreign alliances.

Van Parunak: Re. vv.1-11

This paragraph is punctuated by two accusations of rebellion (vv. 1, 9). Notably, the Hebrew words are different.

The word in v. 1 means “to turn away,” and emphasizes turning one's back on the Lord and refusing to hear his word.

Zec 7:11 *But they refused to hearken, and gave a סוררת כתר , and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.*

In contrast, the word in v. 9 is used to describe positive acts of rebellion, such as the disobedience of Korah in Num 17, or Saul's unauthorized sacrifice in 1 Sam 15.

Significantly, the two roots are often used together, as in Deut 21:8, “*a stubborn (v. 1) and rebellious (v. 9) son.*” The term in v. 1 always comes first. First, one refuses to hear. Disobedience is the natural consequence.

It is well for us to keep this dynamic in mind. The first step to sin is a refusal to hear the Lord, an unwillingness to listen to his commandments. This unwillingness is serious, in itself and also because of the result to which it leads. . .

In introducing this woe (vv. 1-11), the Lord begins and ends with the refusal to hear his word, and in the center describes their active sin.

David Thompson: vv. 1-5

GOD PRONOUNCES A SPECIFIC WOE JUDGMENT ON REBELLIOUS CHILDREN AND WARNS THEM THAT THEY WILL END UP TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY HUMILIATED AND ASHAMED.

I. 4 Reasons

REASON #1 – They follow their own plans in life and not God’s plan for life. **30:1a**

REASON #2 – They make alliances with people not led of God, which adds sin to sin. **30:1b**

REASON #3 – They make decisions of movement in life without consulting with God. **30:2a**

REASON #4 – They find their refuge and safety in enemies of God. **30:2b**

II. 4 Disastrous Results

Disastrous Result #1 - Their lives will end in shame . **30:3a**

Disastrous Result #2 - Their trusts will end in humiliation . **30:3b-4**

Disastrous Result #3 - Their trusts will end in shame . **30:5a**

Disastrous Result #4 - Their name shall be a reproach . **30:5b**

TEXT: Isaiah 30:8-17

TITLE: GOD'S WAY OR THE HIGHWAY

BIG IDEA:
REJECTION OF GOD'S WORD DOOMS RELIGIOUS FRAUDS TO COMPLETE COLLAPSE

INTRODUCTION:

The world is full of **religious frauds**. These are folks that profess to be Christians; they claim to love the Lord Jesus Christ; they speak highly of His moral example; they want others to view them as religious and spiritual. They get together in churches on Sunday just as we are doing and listen to messages on Sunday and say a bunch of prayers and even give some money to good causes. But they can't stomach the **hard truths** of divine revelation. In our passage today, Isaiah calls these people *false sons* because they take the name of God as their Father when in reality they refuse to submit to His Word and obey His teachings.

(:1-7) THE WORLD'S WAY IS THE WRONG WAY – BECAUSE IT LEADS TO SHAME AND FUTILITY

(:8-17) REJECTION OF GOD'S WORD FORSAKES GOD'S WAY FOR THE HIGHWAY

When tyrants and egomaniacs try to govern from the perspective of "My Way or the Highway" we resent their arrogance and narrow mindedness; but when the righteous God reveals His exclusive gospel pathway – it truly is God's Way or the Highway

The road is narrow that leads to salvation; broad is the way that leads to destruction

REJECTION OF GOD'S WORD DOOMS RELIGIOUS FRAUDS TO COMPLETE COLLAPSE

I. (:8-11) REJECTION OF GOD'S WORD IS THE CHARACTERISTIC MARK OF RELIGIOUS FRAUDS WHO SUBSTITUTE SMOOTH SAYINGS FOR HARD TRUTH

A. (:8) Permanent Public Indictment

*"Now go, write it on a tablet before them and inscribe it on a scroll,
That it may serve in the time to come as a witness forever."*

You can't rewrite history once that history has been recorded and preserved as a witness to all; people like to have selective hearing ... claim that God never said that ...
God's Word abides forever ... bears witness forever

John 12:47-48 *"And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day."*

What exactly was Isaiah charged to write down? God's words of warning and impending

judgment.

God will say “I told you so” in the last day.

B. (:9) Against Rebellious Religious Frauds (rejecting divine instruction)

*“For this is a rebellious people, false sons,
Sons who refuse to listen to the instruction of the LORD;”*

Motyer: The versions are unanimous in translating “*lying*.” While this is a technically correct translation of *khs*, it is not so much that the sons tell lies as that they *are* lies. They are untrue to what a son should be, which is respectful and obedient.

Matt. 7:21-23 *“Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”*

James 1:22-24 *“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.”*

John 8:44 *“You are of your father the devil”* – only the truth can make you free; you are enslaved to sin; you are religious frauds because you claim to be of the same spiritual family as Abraham when you are really far removed from God

John 8:31 *“Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;”*

C. (:10-11) For Their Substituted Smooth Sayings

(in place of the hard truth of the Word of God)

1. Rejection of Divine Revelation

*“Who say to the seers, ‘You must not see visions’;
And to the prophets, ‘You must not prophesy to us what is right,’”*

Deut.. 18:18-20 *“I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. 20 But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.”*

- Possibility of prophets being bought off
- Possibility of prophets being physically threatened
- Possibility of prophets being man pleasers to enhance their numbers and importance

Motyer: They did not ask that preaching should cease but only that it be innocuous, void of moral imperatives and without the backing of the ultimate moral absolute of the nature of God.

2. Preference for Smooth Sayings / Pleasant Words

With no regard for truth; we would rather have illusions
“*Speak to us pleasant words, Prophecy illusions.*”

2 Tim. 4:2-4 “*preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.*”

Young: What the people desired to hear were smooth things and deceits. **Luther** brought out the basic thought by his translation, *Preach soft to us*. Smooth things were flattering things which did not point out the sinfulness and unworthiness of the nation but rather commended it.

Illustration: **2 Chronicles 18** – Micaiah the prophet

3. Hatred of Holiness

“*Get out of the way, turn aside from the path,
Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.*”

Van Parunak: This tendency is reflected in the tone of many modern churches, which try to “major on the positive” and be “seeker-friendly.” The gospel starts with the wrath of God against sinners, which is about the most seeker-unfriendly thing one can imagine. But to omit this part of the message in an effort to make the message “smooth” and palatable is to “prophecy deceits.”

Motyer: They did not want a supernatural message (10ab), nor a message of moral demand (10cd), but a ministry that left the surface of life unruffled (*pleasant, smooth*), a ministry of trifles . . . They did not want holiness, in a life that follows “*the way . . . the path*” (11ab); and certainly not the holiness of God himself (11cd). *Leave this way* requests the preachers to pioneer a new morality. . . They did not ask that preaching should cease but only that it be innocuous, void of moral imperatives and without the backing of the ultimate moral absolute of the nature of God.

II. (:12-14) BAD CHOICES (REJECTION OF GOD’S WORD) LEAD TO BAD CONSEQUENCES (YOUR WORLD COLLAPSING AND SHATTERING)

“*Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel,*”

Van Parunak: Re. vv. 12-17

This section is an alternation of two panels (:12-14 and :15-17), each with the same five elements:

- an introductory formula,
- a word from the Lord,
- the rejection of that word
- their confidence in some alternative authority
- a warning of sudden judgment

A. (:12) Bad Choices

*“Since you have rejected this word,
And have put your trust in oppression and guile,
and have relied on them,”*

Why would someone ever choose bondage and deceit?

Why would Israel ever consider returning back to Egypt for help?

Why would believers reject the gospel in daily living and turn back to sin and bondage?

B. (:13-14) Bad Consequences – 2 Images of Brokenness

1. Destruction by Way of Collapse – Comes Suddenly

*“Therefore this iniquity will be to you like a breach about to fall,
A bulge in a high wall, whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant.*

A high wall that collapses suddenly;

Young: In all probability the picture is that of a high wall of clay or mud. The dampness or moisture causes it to waken and a fissure begins to form. The rent begins as it were within the wall itself, and as it descends grows larger and larger, until finally the wall topples over. So the sin of the people within the nation itself increases in magnitude, until finally it causes the nation’s destruction. . . What actually caused the downfall of the theocracy was the sin within.

2. Destruction by Way of Shattering – Comes Completely

*And whose collapse is like the smashing of a potter's jar;
So ruthlessly shattered that a sherd will not be found among its pieces
To take fire from a hearth, or to scoop water from a cistern.”*

A clay jar that is totally shattered

Young: What a picture of the end of Judah!—a number of scattered, broken sherds, good for nothing.

Motyer: double figure of **brokenness** stresses completeness –

Two illustrations follow. First a wall collapsing under its own weight and secondly, a pot smashed by external force. Thus iniquity both destroys itself and also invites judgment. . .

Taking and *scooping* presumably refer to familiar practices: a fragment used to take an ember from a fire to light a fire elsewhere and the bottom of an old jar kept by the cistern to use for dipping.

III. (:15-17) REJECTION OF GOD’S WORD LEAVES NO WHERE TO TURN FOR DELIVERANCE

“For thus the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has said,”

Van Parunak: The repeated title reminds us again what is at stake: the fundamental relation of the trice-holy, infinitely separate God to his chosen people.

A. Repentance and Faith = Only Pathway to Salvation

“In repentance and rest you shall be saved,

In quietness and trust is your strength.”

Chiastic structure – A B B A – look how repentance aligns with trust

Constable: The second, more specific reason for Judah's coming judgment (cf. v. 9), was her refusal to listen to a particular message from the sovereign Lord her God, the Holy One of Israel. Isaiah had called the people to repent and rest in the Lord for their salvation. He had promised that their quiet trust in Him would prove to be their strength (cf. 7:4, 10-12; 28:12). He had commanded "not alliance but reliance." Yet the people refused to obey.

Young: They were busy sending messengers and beasts of burden laden with goods to procure the favor of Egypt. They were active, busily occupied in the task of trying to save themselves. Such, however, was not the way of deliverance; but only in rest, in a ceasing from human activity and a resting upon the grace of God.

“Be still and see the salvation of the Lord.”

B. Reliance on Any Alternative Resources = Futile Rebellion and Self Will

“But you were not willing, and you said,”

1. Fleeing on Machinery of Warfare = Futile

*“‘No, for we will flee on horses,’
Therefore you shall flee!’”*

2. Even Most Powerful Machinery of Warfare = Futile

*“‘And we will ride on swift horses,’
Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.”*

C. Resolve Disintegrates Into Terrifying Panic

*“One thousand shall flee at the threat of one man,
You shall flee at the threat of five;”*

MacArthur: Similar figures elsewhere describe Israel's victories (Lv. 26:36; Jos. 23:10) and defeats (Dt. 32:30).

Constable: The threat of only one man would so terrify a thousand Judahites that they would flee. The presence of only a few of the enemy would drive multitudes from their land (cf. Lev. 26:8; Deut. 32:30).

Thompson: What a change of events. When Israel was on her way to the Promised Land, it was the small numbers of Israel that caused the massive numbers of Canaanites to flee (Leviticus 26:8). The reason why this happened was because Jesus Christ caused it to happen (Deuteronomy 32:30). Now God was reversing this. Even when His people outnumber the enemy, God would see to it that the enemy would succeed.

D. Reduced to a Sign With No Substance – a Flag but no Nation

*“Until you are left as a flag on a mountain top,
And as a signal on a hill.”*

This is the sad image that the prophet leaves with these people:
Should have been a lighthouse to the nations – shining the light of God’s glory

Cf. the Olympics with each nation during Opening Ceremonies proudly entering the arena of competition behind their flag – what pride

Cf. Rin Tin Tin – when the Rangers ride onto the scene to save the day with the trumpets blaring and their flag out in front of the troops

2 Options: Positive or Negative Import??

- Positive: left with remnant in Jerusalem (some element of hope)
- Negative: left with empty flag and no people (no element of hope included here)

Motyer: A flagstaff on a mountaintop and banner on a hill are not natural features. They speak of human activity, but if they are all that is left, they only prove that people once lived there and are now gone. Doubled for completeness, the picture is of the end of the nation, the disappearance of the people (cf. **6:11-12**).

Beall: v. 17 gives a picture of near total devastation and chaos, with a thousand fleeing when threatened by one. This is the opposite of what the Lord had promised Israel in their conquest of Canaan (*“Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword”* [Lev 26:8; see also Deut 32:30]). Judah would be left stripped and almost extinct, with only one pole left on a hill (perhaps a reference to Jerusalem?). They would be reduced to a pitiful remnant.

Van Parunak: Only a tiny remnant will remain. But here is a glimmer of hope: that remnant will be like a beacon or an ensign, a token of the Lord’s faithfulness to deliver and restore his people. And that hope is the transition to the next section, which describes this deliverance in more detail.

CONCLUSION:

Transition: vs. 18 *“Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.”*

Young: He must first complete His work of judgment before He can manifest that of compassion. . . He longs, however, to be gracious, and earnestly awaits the time when He may.

Oswalt: Thus, because Judah will not wait on the Lord (26:8) but insists on rushing off on horses, the Lord must wait to show his grace until they are in a position to receive it. So to the repeated cry of “How long, O Lord?” his answer is, “Whenever you are ready.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When has God said “I told you so” to you?
- 2) In what ways do we see Christianity today watering down the Word of God to try to make it more palatable for people?
- 3) Why do men continue to put their trust in horses that cannot outrun their pursuers?
- 4) How empty of a symbol is a flag with no nation of followers?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Thompson: vv. 6-17

IF GOD’S PEOPLE TRUST IN ANYTHING OTHER THAN HIM AND HIS WORD AND ACTUALLY START MOVING BACK INTO THE WORLD FROM WHICH THEY WERE DELIVERED, GOD WILL SEE TO IT THAT THEY WILL END IN COMPLETE DISASTER .

Straightforward Message #1 – God’s people traveled through dangerous territory to bring a bunch of gifts to people who could not help them. **30:6**

Straightforward Message #2 – God’s people are trying to get help from a power that is vain and empty and will be exterminated . **30:7**

Straightforward Message #3 – God’s Word is written and it stands forever. **30:8**

Straightforward Message #4 – God gives His reasons why He will do negative things to His own people. **30:9-11**

Reasons why God wants His Word written down:

(Reason #1) - Because they are rebellious and false and refuse to listen to God’s Word. **30:9**

(Reason #2) - Because they want to hear only pleasant words from their religious leaders and not the true, living, rightly-divided Word of God. **30:10**

(Reason #3) - Because they do not want to hear about the Holy One of Israel. **30:11**

Straightforward Message #5 – The Holy One of Israel gives His reasons why He will judge. **30:12-14**

(Reason for Judgment #1) - Because you have rejected God’s Word. **30:12a**

(Reason for Judgment #2) - Because you have put your trust in oppressive liars. **30:12b**

(Judgment Fact #1) - Your collapse will come suddenly . **30:13**

(Judgment Fact #2) - Your collapse will come completely . **30:14**

Straightforward Message #6 – The Holy One of Israel gives His people an opportunity to repent. **30:15-17**

(Reason #1) - Because He offered people His grace. **30:15**

Grace Offer #1 - Repent and rest in God and be saved . **30:15a**

Grace Offer #2 - Trust in God and you will have strength and quiet . **30:15b**

(Reason #2) - Because His people rejected His grace. **30:16-17**

Grace Rejection Response #1 - They were not willing to repent and trust God. **30:16a**

Grace Rejection Response #2 - They would rather run than trust God. **30:16b**

(Result #1) - You will be pursued . **30:16c**

(Result #2) - Your enemy will destroy you even though you outnumber

your enemy. **30:17a**

(Result #3) - You will end up a small remnant on top of a mountain .

30:17b

MacArthur: Biblically-Anemic Preaching: The Devastating Consequences of a Watered-Down Message

Those who are familiar with my ministry know that I am committed to expository preaching. It is my unshakable conviction that the proclamation of God's Word should always be the heart and the focus of the church's ministry (**2 Tim. 4:2**). And proper biblical preaching should be systematic, expository, theological, and God-centered.

Such preaching is in short supply these days. There are plenty of gifted communicators in the modern evangelical movement, but today's sermons tend to be short, shallow, topical homilies that massage people's egos and focus on fairly insipid subjects like human relationships, "successful" living, emotional issues, and other practical but worldly—and not definitively biblical—themes. These messages are lightweight and without substance, cheap and synthetic, leaving little more than an ephemeral impression on the minds of the hearers.

Some time ago I hosted a discussion at the Expositors' Institute, an annual small-group colloquium on preaching held at our church. In preparation for that seminar, I took a yellow legal pad and a pen and began listing the negative effects of the superficial brand of preaching that is so rife in modern evangelicalism.

I initially thought I might be able to identify about ten, but in the end I had jotted down a list of sixty-one devastating consequences. I've distilled them to fifteen by combining and eliminating all but the most crucial ones. I offer them as a warning against superficial, marginally biblical preaching—both to those who stand behind the pulpit and to those who sit in the pew.

1. It usurps the authority of God over the soul. Whether a preacher boldly proclaims the Word of God or not is ultimately a question of authority. Who has the right to speak to the church? The preacher or God? Whenever anything is substituted for the preaching of the Word, God's authority is usurped. What a prideful thing to do! In fact, it is hard to conceive of anything more insolent that could be done by a man who is called by God to preach.

2. It removes the lordship of Christ from His church. Who is the Head of the church? Is Christ really the dominant teaching authority in the church? If so, then why are there so many churches where His Word is not being faithfully proclaimed? When we look at contemporary ministry, we see programs and methods that are the fruit of human invention, the offspring of opinion polls and neighborhood surveys, and other pragmatic artifices. Church-growth experts have in essence wrested control of the church's agenda from her true Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Puritan forefathers resisted the imposition of government-imposed liturgies for precisely this reason: They saw it as a direct attack on the headship of Christ over His own church. Modern preachers who neglect the Word of God have yielded the ground those men fought and sometimes died for. When Jesus Christ is exalted among His people, His power is manifest in the church. When the church is commandeered by compromisers who want to appease the culture, the gospel is minimized, true power is lost, artificial energy must be manufactured, and superficiality takes the place of truth.

3. It hinders the work of the Holy Spirit. What is the instrument the Spirit uses to do His work? The Word of God. He uses the Word as the instrument of regeneration (1 Pet. 1:23; Jas. 1:18). He also uses it as the means of sanctification (John 17:17). In fact, it is the only tool He uses (Eph. 6:17). So when preachers neglect God's Word, they undermine the work of the Holy Spirit, producing shallow conversions and spiritually lame Christians—if not utterly spurious ones.

4. It demonstrates appalling pride and a lack of submission. In the modern approach to "ministry," the Word of God is deliberately downplayed, the reproach of Christ is quietly repudiated, the offense of the gospel is carefully eliminated, and "worship" is purposely tailored to fit the preferences of unbelievers. That is nothing but a refusal to submit to the biblical mandate for the church. The effrontery of ministers who pursue such a course is, to me, frightening.

5. It severs the preacher personally from the regular sanctifying grace of Scripture. The greatest personal benefit that I get from preaching is the work that the Spirit of God does on my own soul as I study and prepare for two expository messages each Lord's Day. Week by week the duty of careful exposition keeps my own heart focused and fixed on the Scriptures, and the Word of God nourishes me while I prepare to feed my flock. So I am personally blessed and spiritually strengthened through the enterprise. If for no other reason, I would never abandon biblical preaching. The enemy of our souls is after preachers in particular, and the sanctifying grace of the Word of God is critical to our protection.

6. It clouds the true depth and transcendence of our message and therefore cripples both corporate and personal worship. What passes for preaching in some churches today is literally no more profound than what preachers in our fathers' generation were teaching in the five-minute children's sermon they gave before dismissing the kids. That's no exaggeration. It is often that simplistic, if not utterly inane. There is nothing deep about it. Such an approach makes it impossible for true worship to take place, because worship is a transcendent experience. Worship should take us above the mundane and simplistic. So the only way true worship can occur is if we first come to grips with the depth of spiritual truth. Our people can only rise high in worship in the same proportion to which we have taken them deep into the profound truths of the Word. There is no way they can have lofty thoughts of God unless we have plunged them into the depths of God's self-revelation. But preaching today is neither profound nor transcendent. It doesn't go down, and it doesn't go up. It merely aims to entertain.

By the way, true worship is not something that can be stimulated artificially. A bigger, louder band and more sentimental music might do more to stir people's emotions. But that is not genuine worship. True worship is a response from the heart to God's truth (John 4:23). You can actually worship without music if you have seen the glories and the depth of what the Bible teaches.

7. It prevents the preacher from fully developing the mind of Christ. Pastors are supposed to be under-shepherds of Christ. Too many modern preachers are so bent on understanding the culture that they develop the mind of the culture and not the mind of Christ. They start to think like the world, and not like the Savior. Frankly, the nuances of worldly culture are virtually irrelevant to me. I want to know the mind of Christ and bring that to bear on the culture, no matter what culture I may be ministering to. If I'm going to stand up in a pulpit and be a

representative of Jesus Christ, I want to know how He thinks—and that must be my message to His people too. The only way to know and proclaim the mind of Christ is by being faithful to study and preach His Word. What happens to preachers who obsess about cultural "relevancy" is that they become worldly, not godly.

8. It depreciates by example the spiritual duty and priority of personal Bible study. Is personal Bible study important? Of course. But what example does the preacher set when he neglects the Bible in his own preaching? Why would people think they need to study the Bible if the preacher doesn't do serious study himself in the preparation of his sermons? There is now a movement among some in ministry to trim, as much as possible, all explicit references to the Bible from the sermon—and above all, don't ever ask your people to turn to a specific Bible passage because that kind of thing makes "seekers" uncomfortable. Some churches actively discourage their people from bringing Bibles to church lest the sight of so many Bibles intimidate the "seekers." As if it were dangerous to give your people the impression that the Bible might be important!

9. It prevents the preacher from being the voice of God on every issue of his time. Jeremiah 8:9 says, "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord; so what wisdom do they have?" When I speak, I want to be God's messenger. I'm not interested in exegeting what some psychologist or business guru or college professor has to say about an issue. My people don't need my opinion; they need to hear what God has to say. If we preach as Scripture commands us, there should be no ambiguity about whose message is coming from the pulpit.

10. It breeds a congregation that is as weak and indifferent to the glory of God as their pastor is. Such preaching fosters people who are consumed with their own well-being. When you tell people that the church's primary ministry is to fix for them whatever is wrong in this life—to meet their needs, to help them cope with their worldly disappointments, and so on—the message you are sending is that their mundane problems are more important than the glory of God and the majesty of Christ. Again, that sabotages true worship.

11. It robs people of their only true source of help. People who sit under superficial preaching become dependent on the cleverness and the creativity of the speaker. When preachers punctuate their sermons with laser lights and smoke, video clips and live drama, the message they send is that there isn't a prayer the people in the pew could ever extract such profound material on their own. Such gimmicks create a kind of dispensing mechanism that people can't use to serve themselves. So they become spiritual couch potatoes who just come in to be entertained, and whatever superficial spiritual content they get from the preacher's weekly performance is all they will get. They have no particular interest in the Bible because the sermons they hear don't cultivate that. They are wowed by the preacher's creativity and manipulated by the music, and that becomes their whole perspective on spirituality.

12. It encourages people to become indifferent to the Word of God and divine authority. Predictably, in a church where the preaching of Scripture is neglected, it becomes impossible to get people to submit to the authority of Scripture. The preacher who always aims at meeting felt needs and strokes the conceit of worldly people has no platform from which to confront the man who wants to divorce his wife without cause. The man will say, "You don't understand what I feel. I came here because you promised to meet my felt needs. And I'm telling you, I don't feel like I want to live with this woman anymore." You can't inject biblical authority into that. You

certainly wouldn't have an easy time pursuing church discipline. That is the monster that superficial preaching creates. But if you are going to try to deal with sin and apply any kind of authoritative principle to keep the church pure, you must be preaching the Word.

13. It lies to people about what they really need. In Jeremiah 8:11, God condemns the prophets who treated people's wounds superficially. That verse applies powerfully to the preachers who populate so many prominent evangelical pulpits today. They omit the hard truths about sin and judgment. They tone down the offensive parts of Christ's message. They lie to people about what they really need, promising them "fulfillment" and earthly well-being when what people really need is an exalted vision of Christ and a true understanding of the splendor of God's holiness.

14. It strips the pulpit of power. "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). Everything else is impotent, giving merely an illusion of power. Human strategy is not more important than Scripture. The showman's ability to lure people in should not impress us more than the Bible's ability to transform lives.

15. It puts the responsibility on the preacher to change people with his cleverness. Preachers who pursue the modern approach to ministry must think they have the power to change people. That, too, is a frightening expression of pride. We preachers can't save people, and we can't sanctify them. We can't change people with our insights, our cleverness, by entertaining them or by appealing to their human whims and wishes and ambitions. There's only One who can change sinners. That's God, and He does it by His Spirit through the Word.

So pastors must preach the Word, even though it is currently out of fashion to do so (2 Tim. 4:2). That is the only way their ministry can ever truly be fruitful. Moreover, it assures that they will be fruitful in ministry, because God's Word never returns to Him void; it always accomplishes that for which He sends it and prospers in what He sends it to do (Isa. 55:11).

James Macdonald: 5 Things We Do Today Instead of Preaching the Word

I wish I could tell you that most pastors are preaching the Word. I can't—some are not. Here are five things we may choose to do instead of preaching the Word.

1. Entertaining

"Music, drama, and video, felt needs, topics, more stories"

None of those things are wrong—unless they displace the preaching of the Word of God. Some teachers will tell you that you need to tell stories in your sermons or you will bore people. I'm not bored. If you're not bored, no one is going to be bored. Can you take hold of the Word of God and take hold of a group of people and make them listen because you have something to say?

Are you bored? The greatest sin in ministry is to bore people with the Bible. Martin Lloyd Jones said, "Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire. A man who can speak about these things dispassionately has no right whatsoever to be in a pulpit; and should never be allowed to enter one."

You have to get the word of God, let it grip your heart by the power of the Holy Spirit and drive over to church with something to say.

Now if a story fits in, I might tell you a story before I sit down, but don't make that your thing. If people come up to you afterwards and say, "I love that story you told," it should make you crazy. Really, that's what I am? I'm a story-teller? The Gospel is the main story that you should be telling.

2. Sharing

"There are some things I just want to share with you today..."

Since when is the man of God some Dr. Phil and Oprah combo? You're supposed to proclaim a message. If you're not preaching, glory is not coming down. You have got to preach the glory down—people have to hear a Word from God.

3. Wooing

"Careful, careful, don't offend, always comfortable, never pressured, just a pinch of truth, when they're ready to handle it"

The preaching of the gospel has become so watered down that the non-elect can't even reject it. If you don't have people walking away from your ministry saying, "This is a hard word, who can accept it?" then you don't have a ministry like Jesus had.

I just hate this notion that we can be so clever and sophisticated that we can remove the offense from the gospel. It is foolishness to those who are perishing; it is the power of God to those who are being saved. It is the aroma of death to those who are perishing; it is the aroma of life to those who are being saved.

Listen, preacher: If you don't want to be the aroma of death to those who are perishing, you can never be the aroma of life to those who are being saved. That's why preaching is hard work.

4. Intellectualizing

"I've been thinking and researching this in the original languages..."

We're supposed to love God with our heart, soul, mind and strength. And preaching that stops at the shoulders is defective preaching. It has to move me—it has to call me to action—mind, emotions, and will. If you're just preaching your theological construct, you're blowing it.

Stop preaching the scaffolding around the Bible and preach the Word—what God actually says.

John Calvin said, "God deigns [considers it proper] to consecrate to himself the mouths and tongues of men in order that his voice may resound in them." Your preaching is at its best when your people have forgotten that you're even standing there, and God's Spirit is moving through you. I am afraid that we've lost sight of this.

5. Abbreviating

"Twenty-minute sermons"

I don't know how it works at your church, but for us it takes 5 minutes to set the rig up and another 5 or 10 minutes to take it down. If you're only preaching for 20 minutes, that gives you 5 minutes to drill. You're not going very deep, are you? It takes some time.

Luke 10:16—Jesus said, “He who hears you, hears me.”
“He who hears you,” Jesus said, “hears me.”

Yet there’s no pridefulness, is there? It’s so humbling. It’s a crushing weight, isn’t it? I tell people the weekly message preparation is the crucible of my sanctification. Never get in a habit of getting up in the pulpit when things aren’t square everywhere. That by itself will keep you going in the right direction. “He who hears you, hears me,” Jesus said. I love that challenge—to be that person.

<http://jamesmacdonald.com/blog/5-things-we-do-today-instead-of-preaching-the-word/>

Michael Brown: The Great Sin of Trying to Make the Gospel Palatable

One of the greatest failures of the contemporary church of America is our attempt to make the gospel of Jesus palatable to lost sinners—our effort to take away its offense, remove its reproach, water down its contents and explain away its standards. In doing so, we dishonor the Lord and contribute to the damnation of the lost. It’s time we wake up and repent of this worldly, faithless approach.

There’s a story I often tell to illustrate the folly of trying to preach a palatable gospel.

A doctor made an amazing scientific breakthrough, perhaps the greatest of all time. He discovered a cure for cancer that was 100% successful, and it worked for all forms and all stages of cancer. Perhaps the most incredible thing of all was that just one dose of the medicine would cure the cancer for life.

The only problem was that the medicine had to be taken in pill form; each pill cost \$1 million dollars, the pill was huge and very difficult to swallow, and it left a terrible, bitter taste that lasted for seven days.

Of course, the research and development team was ecstatic over the discovery, and they met with the doctor, telling him he had to make three simple changes for his breakthrough to be successful: He needed to figure out a way to reduce the cost of each pill so it would sell for \$10,000 per dose; he needed to reduce the size of the pill so people wouldn’t choke on it; and he needed to remove the bitter taste.

After two years of hard work, the doctor called the team back, announcing he had succeeded on all fronts. With the new formula he had developed, each pill would cost just \$10,000, it would be packaged in a small gel cap, and it would actually have a pleasant aftertaste.

There was only problem. The pill no longer cured cancer!

And that is exactly what we have done with the gospel. We have tried to make the narrow gate wide and tried to make the cross of Christ popular, thinking somehow we would get more people “saved.” But our message no longer saves!

We have tried to make Jesus acceptable to sinners rather than making sinners acceptable to Him, removing the call to submit to His lordship and live a new life in Him. And we have redefined repentance, reducing it to a mere change of mind rather than a change of direction—specifically, a turning from sin and a turning to the Lord, an about face by the grace of God and the power of the Spirit.

Today, we just say to people, “Change your mind about Jesus!”—but that is only a small part of the gospel message.

Belief in Jesus is now presented as a good insurance policy and packaged as a great deal, at that: “Just give up your guilt and depression, and in exchange receive success, prosperity and eternal life!”

May I ask you to show me one example of a message like that preached to the lost anywhere in the book of Acts? Or do we think we know better than the apostles?

Was there a reason that Paul, when reaching out to a lost sinner and speaking about “faith in Christ Jesus,” also spoke to him “about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come” (Acts 24:24-25)? Is this part of our gospel message?

Of course, we should be people of compassion, reaching out to the lost with hearts overflowing with genuine love and care. And of course we should exercise wisdom and cultural sensitivity. But we do not win the lost by becoming like the lost; we win the lost by becoming like Jesus—and by presenting the Jesus of the Scriptures and the gospel of the Scriptures, whether it brings offense or reproach or mockery.

Paul wrote that when Jesus returns, “He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 1:8). How often do we think of the gospel as something to be “obeyed”?

More than one generation ago, A.W. Tozer noted, “The trouble is the whole ‘Accept Christ’ attitude is likely to be wrong. It shows Christ applying to us rather than us to Him. It makes Him stand hat-in-hand awaiting our verdict on Him, instead of our kneeling with troubled hearts awaiting His verdict on us. It may even permit us to accept Christ by an impulse of mind or emotions, painlessly, at no loss to our ego and no inconvenience to our usual way of life.”

It’s time we get back to the New Testament gospel, exalting both the holiness of God and the love of God, presenting Jesus as both Lord and Savior (in that order), and preaching a message that is foolishness to those who perish but is the power of God to those who believe (1 Cor. 1:18).

Let’s preach the truth without compromise, empowered by the Spirit, filled with compassion and unashamed of Jesus and the cross, and God Himself will back the message about His Son.

<http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/39844-the-great-sin-of-trying-to-make-the-gospel-palatable>

TEXT: Isaiah 30:18-33

TITLE: GOD'S GRACE . . . OR . . . FIRE AND BRIMSTONE?

BIG IDEA:

**YOU CAN TURN TO GOD FOR RESTORATION OR HAVE GOD TURN ON YOU IN RETRIBUTION --
RESTORATION AND RETRIBUTION CULMINATE IN THE DAY OF THE LORD**

INTRODUCTION:

A lot of people today would dismiss any preaching characterized by **Fire and Brimstone** as too severe. Yet the prophet Isaiah was no stranger to relaying such communication from the mind and heart of God. Of course he was careful to balance such intense descriptions of judgment with open invitations to blessing based on God's gracious character. But make no mistake. Fire and Brimstone can be appropriate messages in some circumstances.

Wikipedia:

an idiomatic expression of signs of God's wrath in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament. In the Bible, they often appear in reference to the fate of the unfaithful. "Brimstone," the archaic name for sulfur, evokes the acrid odor of volcanic activity. The term is also used, sometimes pejoratively, to describe a style of Christian preaching that uses vivid descriptions of judgment and eternal damnation to encourage repentance.

Puritan preacher Thomas Vincent (an eyewitness of the Great Fire of London) authored a book called "Fire and Brimstone in Hell", first published in 1670. In it he quotes from **Psalm 11:6** "*Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup.*" [This from the poet David = a man after God's own heart]

Preachers such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield were referred to as "fire and brimstone preachers" during the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s. Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" remains among the best-known sermons from this period. Reports of one occasion when Edwards preached it said that many of the audience burst out weeping, and others cried out in anguish or even fainted.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: 'tis a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell; you hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder...

**YOU CAN TURN TO GOD FOR RESTORATION OR HAVE GOD TURN ON YOU IN RETRIBUTION --
RESTORATION AND RETRIBUTION CULMINATE IN THE DAY OF THE LORD**

- Think in terms of the nation of Israel – near term (threat of Assyria) and eschatological
- Think in terms of yourself personally

I. (:18-26) RESTORATION TO THE BLESSING OF COVENANT PRIVILEGE

A. (:18-19) Restoration Based on God's Character and Covenant Relationship

Remember the story of the Prodigal Son – shows the heart of God in longing to receive back into blessing those who have wandered away in rebellion and pleasure seeking

1. (:18a) Transition – Emphasis on God's Character

a. Gracious and Compassionate

*“Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you,
And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you.”*

“Therefore” – God cannot act in mercy and compassion until judgment has run its course since you are confirmed in your rebellious ways; He is actively waiting; longing to act on our behalf; just waiting to be able to bless us more abundantly – cannot do this when we are proud and stubborn; we must be broken before Him

Far different from the impression of many people who imagine God to be some type of Scrooge figure who delights in withholding blessings

Grace and Compassion are precisely what we need

Application: If we have the character of the Lord Jesus, we will long to be gracious and compassionate to others: **Col. 3:12-13**

b. Just

“For the LORD is a God of justice;”

“Holy One of Israel”—cannot compromise His justice
Can never go back on His promises; His standards of righteousness

Gen. 18-19 and the story of Sodom and Gomorrah teach us: *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”* (18:25) look at how the Lord had to align the heart of Abraham with his heart towards sin and defilement and wickedness

1 Pet. 3:18 *“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit”*

Rom. 3:26 *“that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus”*

2. (:18b) Primary Condition for Blessing

“How blessed are all those who long for Him.”

You have to want it; how badly do you want God's presence; His fellowship; His blessing?

Cf. the Beatitudes

Plenty of capacity to bless – sufficient for *“all”* who long for Him

Like URL of Piper's website: desiringGod.org – that is what it is truly all about
The Lord longs for those who desire to worship Him in spirit and in truth

Other conditions sprinkled through the passage:

- Cry out to God for deliverance (:19)

- Respond to God's hand of discipline (:20)
- Obey the guidance He provides (:21)
- Turn away from impure idols (:22)

3. (:19) Emphasis on Covenant Relationship and Responsiveness

“O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.”

One thing about baby Dean – when he cries, he wants you to respond

Privilege of answered prayer ... especially noteworthy when His gracious answer of deliverance comes immediately without delay

B. (:20-26) Restoration Unfolded in 7 Abundant Blessings – Eschatological Focus

Parunak: these verses are a chronological narrative, whose seven stages are introduced by verbs in the perfect conjugation with waw relative (colored green in the citations below). The starting point is the condition described in v. 19, the deliverance of the people from Assyria. Seven stages follow. The last three are marked with the phrase *“in that day.”* This phrase is used throughout Isaiah to anticipate the coming day of the Lord. Thus the seven stages reach from Isaiah's time down to the Millennium.

Note the shift from plural to singular starting in v. 19 and throughout this section. The singular addresses the nation as a whole, and thus emphasizes their constitution as a single people, while the plural emphasizes the responsibility of the individuals within the nation.

1. (:20a) Divine Discipline Where Necessary

“Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression,”

Need to see this as a **blessing** as well – if He just let people get fat and happy in their rebellion, they would never repent and return to Him; we respond to deprivation and oppression

Refers to food that would be given them in the Captivity as prisoners of war

Reminds one of the wilderness wanderings; provision of their needs – but still outworking of divine discipline for their lack of faith to trust Him implicitly and enter the Promised Land

2. (:20b-21) Discernible Divine Guidance = Spiritual GPS System

“He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. And your ears will hear a word behind you, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right or to the left.”

Sometimes God chooses to hide Himself ... Identification of the Teacher? The Messiah?

Guidance is not effective if you don't have the eyes and ears to understand it and respond;

Purpose of God's instruction is not just knowledge, but to keep us walking on the straight and narrow = pathway of blessing

Picture life as a luge run with the Lord keeping you in the center of the track – otherwise you would experience calamity

Oswalt: conveys both the nearness of the Teacher and the sensitivity of the pupil. Instead of the stubborn animal which has to be dragged or beaten into going in the proper direction, here is a person whose teacher is just at his shoulder and little more than a word of guidance from time to time is necessary for him to stay on the right path. This is the ideal of the Spirit-filled life, where the contact between us and him is so intimate that only a whisper is sufficient to move us in his way (Gal. 5:16-25). The opposite of this ideal is seen in 28:11 and 30:11, where stubbornness ultimately leads to a denial that God's way is right, with horrifying results.

3. (:22) Rejection of Idolatry

“And you will defile your graven images, overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold.

You will scatter them as an impure thing; and say to them, ‘Be gone!’”

These idols of silver and gold were worth quite a lot of money; no attempt to cash them in; radical reformation was needed; get rid of them because they are holding you back in your obedience to God

Book Karen is reading

Oswalt: Although people of the West in the twentieth century have taken off the faces of the gods of love, security, potency, and power, we still surround them with trappings of great material value. Thus it is no easier for us to desert our sources of support than it was for the people of Israel.

4. (:23) Material Provision

“Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous;”

Coming a day when God will reverse the curse
Farmers learn very quickly how much their harvest depends on things that are out of their control; they are still characterized by hard work and patience; but also by the perspective that unless God blesses, they will end up with nothing to show for their efforts

5. (:24) Economic Prosperity

*“**on that day** your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture.*

Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork.”

Notice millennial kingdom focus of these last 3 blessings identified in the time period:
“on that day” --

MacArthur: In the messianic kingdom of that future day, agriculture, cattle raising, food production, and water resources will prosper. The prophet predicted the redemption of nature (cf. Ro 8:19-21).

6. (:25) Abundant Water – Context of God Defeating All Enemies

*“And on every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water **on the day** of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.”*

Streams unusual on top of mountains – usually more of a barren terrain; here there are streams on even *every high hill*

John Martin: “*day of great slaughter*” may refer to the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev. 16:16; 19:17-21).

The towers of man’s pride and self reliance will fall

7. (:26) Abundant Light – Context of Healing

*“And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun,
and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days,
on the day the LORD binds up the fracture of His people
and heals the bruise He has inflicted.”*

More light and more intense light is a good thing here

The work of the Great Physician in binding up the wounds and fractures He has inflicted

II. (:27-33) RETRIBUTION WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE ON ASSYRIA AND THE ENEMY NATIONS – Both Near Term and Eschatological Focus

Many people react against Fire and Brimstone preaching – Isaiah could not have loaded up this paragraph with any more imagery of fire and brimstone than he did – apparently he thought it appropriate – “Sinners in the hands of an Angry God”

A. (:27a) Retribution Will be Other-Worldly

“Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place;”

Difficult to anticipate it and imagine it; yet consistent with the character of the Lord

Not like anything you have ever seen; comes quickly when it comes

B. (:27b-28) Retribution Will Be Intense and Consuming – many images combined here

1. Imagery of Intense Fire and Smoke

“Burning is His anger, and dense is His smoke;”

No smoke without fire when it comes to the Lord; you cannot say His bark is worse than His bite; He will come in power when He comes in wrath

2. Imagery of Consuming Fire and Flood – from the angry mouth of God

a. Lips

“His lips are filled with indignation,”

b. Tongue

“And His tongue is like a consuming fire;”

c. Breath

“And His breath is like an overflowing torrent,”

Young: By means of the mouth the pronouncement of judgment is made; and God will utter a severe judgment upon His enemies, which have been attacking His people.

3. Imagery of Subjugation and Devastation

*“Which reaches to the neck, To shake the nations back and forth in a sieve,
And to put in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin.”*

Motyer: The mixture of metaphors – the sieve to discriminate (cf. Am. 9:9) and the bridle to control and direct (cf. 37:29) -- is truly Isaianic.

Wiersbe: Imagery of the harnessing of a horse so that the enemy is led off like a farm animal.

C. (:29) Retribution Will be Celebrated by the Covenant Remnant

*“You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival;
And gladness of heart as when one marches to the sound of the flute,
To go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel.”*

How can we celebrate when people are being led to a ruin which consists of Fire and Brimstone?

Because God’s people can respond in the same way that God Himself responds – there is satisfaction when **God’s justice** prevails in ultimate victory – not that God takes delight in the judgment of the individual wicked but in the kingdom atmosphere of righteousness and peace that is established once sin has been dealt with decisively and finally

No particular festival in view (like Passover); Lord loves music in the context of worship

“Mountain” and “Rock” -- Images of power and strength and stability

D. (:30) Retribution Will Be a Powerful Spectacle

1. Seen and Heard

*“And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard.
And the descending of His arm to be seen”*

2. In Power and Fury

*“in fierce anger, And in the flame of a consuming fire,
In cloudburst, downpour, and hailstones.”*

True theophany

Young: Together with causing His majestic voice to be heard, the Lord also causes the falling of His arm to be seen. The entire sentence is arranged chiasmically and gives a forceful effect. An upraised arm is now brought down in punishment. This lowering of the arm is accompanied by an indignation of wrath and a flame of devouring fire, for the purpose of the action is to destroy. In a most vivid manner Isaiah brings the verse to a close, mentioning what accompanies the descending of the upraised hand. The words stand out vividly...

E. (:31-32) Retribution Will Be Terrifying and Painful to Assyria

*“For at the voice of the LORD Assyria will be terrified, When He strikes with the rod.
And every blow of the rod of punishment, Which the LORD will lay on him, Will be with
the music of tambourines and lyres;
And in battles, brandishing weapons, He will fight them.”*

Wiersbe: The “*timbrels and harps*” remind us of the songs of Miriam and the Jewish women at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:20-21).

F. (:33) Retribution Will Be the Culmination of Prepared Fire and Brimstone

*“For Topheth has long been ready, Indeed, it has been prepared for the king.
He has made it deep and large, A pyre of fire with plenty of wood;
The breath of the LORD, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.”*

MacArthur: Lit. a place of abomination. Idolatrous Israel had burned to death human victims in this valley just S. of Jerusalem, an area sometimes called the Valley of Hinnom (2 Ki 23:10). Later it became known as Gehenna, the place of refuse for the city with constantly burning fires, symbolizing hell. The defeat was to be so complete that the fire burns continually.

Wiersbe: The funeral pyre for the great king of Assyria would be a garbage dump! How humiliating!

Motyer: Though Judah’s dallying with Egypt (30:1-7) is deeply offensive to the Lord and useless in respect of the Assyrian threat, yet Jerusalem will not fall to Assyria. Rather, the Assyrian king, thundering towards Zion, is in fact climbing his own funeral pyre!

Fire and Brimstone should not be a surprising image to us of God’s severe judgment:

- Remember **Sodom and Gomorrah** in **Gen. 19**
- **John the Baptist** could certainly be called a Fire and Brimstone preacher –
 - o **Matt. 3:12** “*His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*”
- The **Lord Jesus** was not bashful about using such imagery
 - o **Mark 9:42-48**
- The Apostle Paul
 - o **2 Thess. 1:7-9**
- **Jude 7**
- The **Apostle John** prophesied about the end times in the same way:
 - o **Rev. 20:10, 14-15**

CONCLUSION:

- Do you truly long for God’s blessing in your life?
- Are you willing to cry out to God for deliverance and rescue?
- Do you respond well to those periods of divine discipline?
- Are you actively turning away from any impure idols that would distract you from full and genuine worship of the one true God – the Holy One of Israel?

Make no mistake; God makes no apology for clearly declaring that the path of rebellion ends in **Fire and Brimstone**. But His heart of grace and compassion longs to see you in that place of blessing.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When was the last time you heard a message on Fire and Brimstone?
- 2) How should the Lord's heart of grace and compassion give hope to those in even the most desperate of circumstances?
- 3) What idols of impurity seek to distract your worship and devotion?
- 4) How can you take encouragement from the blessing God has given you of being under the teaching of those who shoot it straight ... who teach faithfully the truth of God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: (:18-26) Seven divisions

- A1 Blessedness when the waiting is over (18)
 - B1 Comfort and care after tears (19)
 - C1 Spiritual blessing: revelation and receptivity (20-21)
 - D Response: the end of false religion (22)
 - C2 Earthly blessing: abundance of food (23-24)
 - B2 Abundant water in the day of victory (25)
- A2 Abundant light in the day of healing (26)

David E. Thompson:

Very unusual prophetic text of scripture; God has a parental heart for His children who have wandered away from Him; wants them to come back to place of blessing; God changing His tone at vs. 18 from threatening to consolation; God's people are in a covenant relationship with Him; His desire is to bless, but He is also a God of justice; His wandering people need to turn back to Him and His Word and remove the ungodly, impure idols from their land; transition from rebellion to potential restoration;

At the time God's people turned to Egypt they had already declined as a world power; this power couldn't even help them; hope for every rebellious child of God who has wandered far from Him; you can switch over the pathway of blessing;

3 Key Questions:

- Are you God's child today? (united by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ)
- Do you want God's blessings in your life?
- Are you willing to turn to the Lord and get rid of impure things?

3 preliminary keys to getting the blessing of God:

- 1) God's people must long for God (:18) – do you want to bind yourself to God; tie a knot in your relationship with God over a long period of time; long for the Word of God; you will never be disappointed
- 2) You must cry out to God (:19) – imploring Him for help with an attitude of sorrow over our sin and rebellion; Israel as a nation needs to do this; perhaps it seems that your world is barren;

cry out to the Lord;

5 specific answers you will receive:

- God will no longer hide Himself from you (:20) – hiding Himself from Israel right now; we are in the time of the Gentiles; God is actively hiding himself from nation of Israel

- God will permit them to know that He is their Teacher – rare plural form; shoot it straight at the target; not just randomly sharing thoughts; one who is zeroing in on the truth and shooting it straight; blessing if you are under a teacher that shoots the truth straight; during Tribulation things will get so bad that they will be eating bread and drinking water – true teachers then will be very rare

- They will be able to see their Teacher – 144,000 witnesses (Rev. 7) – in Isaiah's day they did not want to sit under true teaching; examples of how preachers today butcher the Word of God

- I will permit you to hear my Word – you will understand it; ability to mature in the Scriptures is a marvelous gift from God

- You will walk according to God's Word

3) You must get rid of impure idols (:23) -- every idol people make seems right to them ... but the end of it is death; they think idol can offer some type of blessing or security; don't trust in money instead of God; God must be the focal point of provision of all our needs; complete reversal of loves and hatreds = this is what you see when God converts a soul;

8 wonderful promises:

- I will bless your land; make it rich and fruitful (not what Israel looks like today); get avg. of 15 inches of rain per year so their water supplies are traditionally low
- I will bless your livestock; oxen and donkeys indispensable for their economy; drought out West and people are giving away their livestock
- I will destroy your enemies; fresh supplies of water; no shortage
- God will light up the sky (:26) – all darkness will be gone from the Middle East; shining bright for the glory of God; all people will be able to look to that part of the world and see bright lights
- I am going to heal my people – it is God who inflicts the bruises; nothing comes into our world but by the sovereign hand of Almighty God; wants us to draw close to Him
- I will destroy the enemy nations (:27-28) – these nations will be toppled by God
- I will cause my people to sing – today you hear blasting of guns rather than a choir singing praises
- I will destroy your enemies in fierce anger – I will throw them into hell to burn in fire and brimstone – secular world will try to convince you that this world is the only one that exists and matters – don't be fooled by that – there is an eternal world

4 parting thoughts:

- God longs to bless His people but they must turn to Him and long for Him
-
- When God's people have a desire to know true teaching from God and His Word you are being blessed
- When God's people get impure things out of your lives, you will receive the blessing of God
- God is a just God; Hell is real place

TEXT: Isaiah 31:1-9

TITLE: *WOE #5 – THE WORLD’S WISDOM AND POWER WILL FAIL YOU*

BIG IDEA:

THREE ARGUMENTS FOR TRUSTING IN GOD INSTEAD OF IN THE WORLD

INTRODUCTION:

Where do we turn for help when we are in danger? Instead of putting confidence in the flesh or seeking the help of sinful men, we need to put all of our dependence in the Lord who alone is the Righteous Judge and the Victorious Warrior. He will conquer all enemies and deliver us in the day of trouble. One day in the future the nation of Israel will repent and turn back to the Lord and experience complete deliverance.

Rich Cathers: Isaiah 31 picks up where we left off in chapter 30. The nation of Judah is facing the inevitable invasion from the mighty Assyrian army. There were some counselors in King Hezekiah’s court who were trying to get Hezekiah to get help from the Egyptians. They had already sent an entourage of camels bearing gifts to beg help from the Egyptians. Yet God was desiring that the people would look to Him for help.

Warren Wiersbe: Think of the money Judah would have saved and the distress they would have avoided had they only rested in the Lord their God and obeyed His will. All their political negotiations were futile and their treaties worthless. They could trust the words of the Egyptians but not the Word of God!"

Review of Woes:

- 1) Chap. 28 -- DISORIENTED DRUNKARDS AND SECURITY-SEEKING
SCOFFERS OF ISRAEL INDICTED – Fall of Samaria; Jerusalem in peril
- 2) 29:1-14 -- WOE AGAINST JERUSALEM FOR RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY
- 3) 29: 15-24 -- AGAINST THOSE WHO THINK THEY ARE SMARTER THAN GOD
= DECEIVERS AND DEFRAUDERS
- 4) Chap. 30 -- AGAINST ALLIANCES WITH THE WORLD

THREE ARGUMENTS FOR TRUSTING IN GOD INSTEAD OF IN THE WORLD

- by way of a **Reminder**
- by way of **Illustration**
- by way of **Warning**

I. (:1-3) REMINDER OF THE SUPERIORITY OF GOD TO WORLDLY POWER AND WISDOM

A. (:1) Don’t Choose the Power of the World Over the Power of God

“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!”

If you want to learn by experience and suffer disaster, go ahead and trust in the flesh and in

man's wisdom and see where it takes you . cf. how the modern church trusts in marketing schemes

Motyer: These images are of the adoption of worldly security: *horses* represent brute strength; *chariots*, military might; and *horsemen*, trained personnel.

Parunak: To “*seek the Lord*” is to inquire of him in time of trouble, from its very first use in Gen 25:22 on. The phrase is often translated “*inquire of the Lord.*” Their behavior reflects that of Ahaziah in 2 Kings 1:

2Ki 1:2-4 *And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. 3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? 4 Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed.*

Though Ahaziah did not send to consult the Lord, the Lord inserted a message to him anyway! Just so, Israel as God's covenant people may wish to ignore his counsel, but Isaiah brings it anyway.

Oswalt: Not only will Egypt not be able to help, but going to her necessarily involves rejection of God. Thus Judah has not merely chosen a poorer option; she has, in fact, rejected the true in order to choose the false (cf. 30:1-18).

B. (:2) Don't Choose the Wisdom of the World over the Wisdom of God

“Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster, and does not retract His words, But will arise against the house of evildoers, and against the help of the workers of iniquity.”

Irony of expression – have you considered the proven wisdom of God?

MacArthur: Sarcastically, Isaiah countered the unwise royal counselors who had advised dependence on Egypt.

Constable: The politicians in Jerusalem who advocated alliance with Egypt undoubtedly considered their policy wise (cf. 5:21; 19:11-15; 28:14-15; 30:1-2). But Isaiah, in irony, pointed out that the Lord, who purposed disaster for those who refused to trust Him, was the truly wise one. He would be faithful to His word to oppose the party of evildoers and those wicked "helpers" in whom the Judeans trusted.

Look at how negatively God characterizes Judah here: as “*the house of evildoers*” and “*the workers of iniquity*” – their physical heritage did not guarantee any spiritual loyalty or intrinsic connection with the Holy One of Israel

Oswalt: The modern church would do well to wonder whether such a denunciation could be leveled against it.

C. (:3) There is a Huge Difference Between Fleshly Power and Wisdom and Spiritual Power and Wisdom

“Now the Egyptians are men, and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit; So the LORD will stretch out His hand, and he who helps will stumble and he who is helped will fall, and all of them will come to an end together.”

***** Message within a Message

1 Cor. 1:18-25

ONLY THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED IMPACTS MAN WITH THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD

(:18) THE RESPONSE TO THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED DIVIDES ALL MEN INTO TWO OPPOSING CAMPS

(:19-21) GOD STANDS OPPOSED TO THE WISDOM OF MEN

(:19) God Will Ultimately Destroy Human Wisdom – Prophecy from Isaiah

“For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.’”

(:20A) Human Wisdom Cannot Refute the Wisdom of God

“Where is the wise man?

Where is the scribe?

Where is the debater of this age?”

(:21-25) ONLY THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION

(:21) Only the Mocked Message of the Cross Can Bring Salvation

Method Ordained by the Wisdom of God

“For since in the wisdom of God”

Failed Method of Human Wisdom

“the world through its wisdom did not come to know God”

Method Pleasing to God = The Mocked Message of the Cross

“God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

(:22-24) Christ Crucified Is the Power of God and Wisdom of God – Despite What Mockers Might Say

(:22) The World Seeks Different Solutions

(:23a) We Preach Christ Crucified – There is only one solution

(:23b) The World Mocks the Message of the Cross

(:24) The Elect Experience Christ as Both the Power and Wisdom of God

(:25) The Mocked Message of the Cross Far Exceeds Any Human Wisdom and Power

The Wisdom of God – mocked as Foolishness

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men,”

The Power of God – mocked as Weakness

“and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

II. (:4-5) ILLUSTRATION -- TWO IMAGES OF THE INVINCIBILITY OF GOD IN PROTECTING HIS COVENANT PEOPLE

God will effectively protect His people – He is the true deliverer in contrast to the false deliverers like Egypt

Do you want to enjoy victory or defeat? Do you want God’s umbrella of protection over your

life or do you want God to stalk and pursue you and hunt you down and punish you??

A. (:4) Image of Fierce, Unyielding Lion -- Relentless in Protecting its Prey

“For thus says the LORD to me, ‘As the lion or the young lion growls over his prey, against which a band of shepherds is called out, will not be terrified at their voice, nor disturbed at their noise, so will the LORD of hosts come down to wage war on Mount Zion and on its hill.’”

Don't mess with God; you can't scare off God

Cf. image of Satan going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour – Lord is stronger; no one can take us out of the protection of His hand

Jim Bomkamp: This is an illustration of a lion who has taken down a sheep amongst the fold and who is crouching over his captured pray, and as the shepherds over that flock begin to circle around the lion he is not the least worried or concerned about their threat or presence.

B. (:5) Image of Hovering, Protective Mother Birds -- Protective in Rescuing and Delivering His Own

“Like flying birds so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem. He will protect and deliver it; He will pass over and rescue it.”

Young: These two comparisons complement one another. First, God is compared with a strong lion, bold, unafraid, powerful; then with tender and loving birds which protect their nest.

Spurgeon: Let this be our comfort, that almighty love will be swift to succor and sure to cover. The wing of God is more quick and more tender than the wing of a bird, and we will put our trust under its shadow henceforth and forever.

Oswalt: This verse varies the figure by comparing God to a mother bird which flies back and forth over her nest when a predator is near, both to distract the enemy and, if necessary, to offer herself as a victim to save her little ones. . . Not only is he strong and determined, he is also personally attached to his people and will *defend* (or shield, as this is the verb from which that noun is derived) them, if need be, with himself.

Parunak: The second metaphor for the Lord's protection is a flock of birds hovering over the city, ready to attack anyone who might come near. Think of the effectiveness of air power in modern warfare. How terrible it must be to any enemy to have the Lord hovering over them!

Isaiah describes the deliverance with four verbs, in two pairs.

defending also he will deliver it;--“Defend” is נגן "to fence in"; “deliver” is לנצ “to snatch away, remove,” used in Amos 3:12 of a shepherd taking prey away from a lion! First we have a protective action, then removal from the threat.

The same two actions are presented in the second couplet:

and *passing over he will preserve it.*--“Passing over” is the same verb that describes the Lord's relation to the angel of death in the tenth plague in Exod 12. A better translation is “*hover over.*” It describes, not the Lord's passive neglect in judging them, but his **active protection**.

III. (:6-9) WARNING TO TRUST GOD ALONE AND ESCAPE THE FIRE OF HIS JUDGMENT

A. (:6) Call to Repentance

“Return to Him from whom you have deeply defected, O sons of Israel.”

B. (:7) Condemnation of Idolatry as Worthless, Ineffective and Evil

“For in that day every man will cast away his silver idols and his gold idols, which your hands have made as a sin.”

Idols look very valuable (made of silver and gold), but have proven worthless and powerless.

No power in these idols

No wisdom in these idols

C. (:8) Certainty of Divine Judgment on Assyria . . . Anti-Christ

“And the Assyrian will fall by a sword not of man, And a sword not of man will devour him. So he will not escape the sword, And his young men will become forced laborers.”

Take advantage of the forgiveness God offers now; God has promised what the future holds in store for those who insist on trusting in the flesh instead of in Him

Near term and eschatological reference – to Anti-Christ ultimately

Parunak: Assyria's end does not come through humans. When God chastises his people, it is usually through humans. Assyria is his “rod” (10:5), the instrument of correction (Prov 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15), to discipline Israel. But the destruction of Assyria, as of unbelievers in general (cf. the Flood) will be directly from God's hand.

MacArthur: The defeat of Assyria by other than human means matched this prophecy well (see 37:36,37), but other such foreign oppressors meet the same fate in the distant future of Israel, during the time of Jacob's trouble (cf. Jer 30:7).

D. (:9a) Confidence Reduced to Panic and Terror

*“And his rock will pass away because of panic,
And his princes will be terrified at the standard,”*

“rock” = fortress, place of strength

Motyer: speaks of the king of Assyria contrasting with the “Rock of Israel”

Oswalt: Proposals [for the identification of the rock] have included the god Ashur, the city of Nineveh, and King Sennacherib. . . Perhaps the sense is “all his confidence will pass away.” . . . When God raises his ensign against the powers of this world, not even the mightiest can stand against him.

E. (:9b) Centrality of Jerusalem for Caldron of Fire for Worship and Wrath

“Declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.”

Beall: “*whose fire is in Zion*” means that Jerusalem is the hearth on which the flame of God burns.

Young: The reference is to the fire burning continually upon the altar of burnt offering. Parallel to the “*fire*” is the “*furnace*” in Jerusalem by which the prophet designates the burning wrath of God. On the altar there is the sacred fire and in Jerusalem the wrath of God’s presence, which will consume the enemies of the nation.

Oswalt: That flame denotes both God’s sanctity and his destructive power.

CONCLUSION:

Some trust in

- Education
- Government
- Riches
- Prestige and Popularity
- Power
- Pleasure

“*Some trust in horses and some in chariots, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.*” – Ps. 20:7

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would you define the “horses and chariots” that cry out for our confidence as substitutes for reliance on God?
- 2) What types of battlegrounds exist today where the wisdom of the world seeks to undercut the wisdom of God?
- 3) What are the implications for the Lord’s power and wisdom deriving from the fact that He is Spirit and not flesh?
- 4) What type of *fire* does the Lord want to see in His church and what type of fire will He unleash against the wicked in the last days?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: This is the fifth of the six woes. We can trace a progression among them:

- 28:1, Fall of Samaria, with warning to Jerusalem that she is little better
- 29:1, Religious hypocrisy in Jerusalem, leading to the Lord’s blinding their wise men
- 29:15, Woe to them that hide their own counsel from the Lord (general principle)

concerning the

appeal to Egypt, but without reference to Egypt)

- 30:1, Woe to them that take counsel, but not of the Lord (makes the reference to Egypt explicitly; focus on Israel's sin and restoration)
- 31:1, Woe to them that go down to Egypt (acting on their godless plan; the Egyptian failure and the Lord's deliverance as a more general pattern)
- 33:1, The destruction of Assyria

Constable: The prophet condemned those in Judah and Jerusalem who were relying on the brute strength, the military might, and the trained personnel of Egypt to provide security for their nation (cf. Deut. 17:14-20). Going down to Egypt to secure these things revealed a lack of trust in the Holy One of Israel who had long ago proved His sovereignty over Egypt. Rather the people should have simply looked to the Lord and cultivated relationship with Him.

David Silversides: Our sufficiency is of God

In previous chapters, the Lord has been warning against Israel's misplaced trust in Egypt for the threat posed by Assyria. Many different expressions from chap. 30 are now brought together in 31:1.

1. (:1-3) A sense of need is no justification for a wrong confidence

Judah felt vulnerable; had a felt sense of need;

Deut. 17:16 – looking to Egypt expressly forbidden; Judah engaged in spiritual battles as the people of God so it was never appropriate to go to Egypt for help;

It is a contradiction of confidence in God and His sufficiency to trust in unlawful means;

God never needs our sinful expedience in order to care for us

Counsel of the world: We've got to be wise and do XXX. . .

2. (:4-5) The Lord will maintain His own cause

A pair of contrasting pictures:

- Lion roaring around its prey; shepherds trying to distract the lion and make it drop its prey and go away; but the lion persists;

- a Bird swift to protect His true people – judge apostasy but preserve the true church

3. (:6-9) A message of repentance before the inevitable shame

Their false religion would eventually bring shame

Timothy Dane: Woe to those who trust in flesh

No conflict with human responsibility and planning and taking necessary action; talking about areas where God has said: "This is the way it has to be" and then man seeks alternative counsel and help; Principles apply to us today because they are timeless;

Reasons why we should trust in the Lord and not in ourselves:

God's early warning system for us – listen or you will have serious consequences ...

1) (:1-3) If we trust in ourselves (or human strength) instead of God it will only bring disaster

What is our ultimate source of trust? Prov. 16:25 – our own wisdom might seem right to us; Ps. 118:8; not too far to get down to Egypt from Jerusalem; final result of not trusting in God = both Judah and Egypt will fall

2) (:4-5) If we do trust in God and follow Him with faithful heart, it brings forth God's protective care for you as His child

Zech 2:8; God is jealous for His own people; you don't have to fear anything if you follow God; rod and staff in Psalm 23; turn away from the Lord and you declare open hunting season against yourself

3) (:6-7) When God's Day finally comes there will be a certain judgment against sin

Eccles 12:13-14; God will bring every deed to judgment; we will have to give an account so let's follow God now; God knows the future as well as we know the past; so God gives a warning to His people; *Shuv* – return, repent – Isaiah's first name (10:21) = a remnant will return – all who are left after the tribulation period (Zech 13:9 – two thirds of nation will die in Tribulation period); Israel was very deep in sin; you are in a world of hurt and you don't even realize it; if you keep going in this path it will be all over; Subject of idolatry applies to us still today: *Little children, guard yourselves from idols* (1 John 5)

We need to repent because one day God will do away with the enemies (demons under the direction of Satan) that afflict us

David E. Thompson:

Church has drifted far away from trusting God and His Word and now trusts in marketing wisdom; no longer relies on prayer; look at the drift in the area of counseling; look at the trappings of rock and roll bands that are now being marketed to churches; we are trusting in the schemes of the world; look at fundraising techniques; no emphasis on systematic study of the Scriptures; Our boast and confidence must be in the Lord

When God's people start trusting in the tangible things of this world they are making a fatal mistake

We tend to trust in our job, our bank account and our house rather than in the God who gave us all these things

Pronounces a woe judgment on His own children

1. (:1) – what God's own people did -- 5 sinful actions that God's own people took

- went down to Egypt for help – to the godless Egyptians; instead of going to the temple and seeking God; instead of seeking out a man of God like Isaiah

- relied on horses – Deut. 17:16 – clearly forbidden;

- trusted in chariots – topography of mountain ranges and valleys – not even many places where you could use a chariot! Cf. church that boasted in its fleet of buses

- trusted in the strength of horsemen – ultimate weapons in Isaiah's day; we depend on our tanks and stealth aircraft and drones and missiles; when you put your head on your pillow at night what do you trust in? locks on your door, dogs, guns?? God expects us to take responsibility but never lose sight of trusting in Him

- would not look to God or seek Him – would look anywhere else – you go there so often you trample down a path with your feet; cf. dependence on drugs for behavior problems

2. (:2) – what God will do to His people – bring disaster; I can make your world fall apart when you move away from Me; God is infinitely wise; people walk into science class and toss away the wisdom of God for evolution and the big bang theory; you will never stir up the anger of God by trusting in Him and repenting of sin; 4 negative actions God will bring on His people:

- bring disaster – some bad and sad things; false teachers claim that God will never bring you into any hardship

- I will not retract My Word from promising judgment – we find God’s plan in His written Word; Rev. 6-19 – not one of those judgments in the Tribulation Period will be left out
- I will be against My people – repeated twice; God will move swiftly in a very negative and hostile way and attack His people; jogging along fine and then a dog will attack you
- I will not help those who help my erring people – cf. Jonah when he rebelled against God – impacted the sailors

3. (:3) – **how God used the Egyptians in whom His people turned to trust** – 3 views of these Egyptians:

- finite men and not infinite God – could not possibly protect Israel from something God was doing to them; Mormons pin their eternal hope on Joseph Smith; Catholics pin their hopes on the pope; Muslims pin hopes on Mohammed; millions of people pin their hopes on themselves and their own works
- horses are flesh and not spirit –
- I will stretch out my hand against them – When God decides it is time to smash something with His hand or fist, there is nothing you can do to stop His judgment

4. (:4-5) -- **God promises He will protect and deliver Jerusalem** –

One commentator: I used to think that the church replaced Jerusalem until I read these verses; God has a plan for physical Jerusalem;

The Lion is God and the Assyrian army are the shepherds that will try to steal God’s flock; nobody will completely take out His people; He is the one who can protect and bless; we don’t even know who all our enemies are; we can’t depend on ourselves – victory belongs to the Lord

5. (:6) -- **God challenges Israel to return to Him** – amazing grace in this invitation –

6. (:7) – **There will come a day when all the idols will be eliminated by Israel**

Doesn’t matter how much money you have invested in the idol or how many idols there are; where are you going to find your security: in your portfolio or in your God? You have to get rid of sin if you want God’s blessing; Israel will only trust God; if she had just trusted in God in the first place, think of the trouble she would have been spared

7. (:8-9) – **There will come a day when God will eliminate all enemies**

Metaphorical reference to the Anti-Christ – fall by God, not of man; no man will assassinate the Antichrist; Sennacherib was assassinated by his own sons; God will take that Antichrist and destroy him; the power and the presence of God headquartered in Jerusalem; we face our own intimidating enemies and challenges; we face the same temptation to turn to the world for help instead of God; faith is living without scheming

TEXT: Isaiah 32:1-20

TITLE: *BIG GOVERNMENT AT ITS BEST*

BIG IDEA:

LOUSY GOVERNMENT AND UPSIDE DOWN SOCIAL VALUES WILL BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF THE MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION:

We like to think that the United States represents the **best country** on the earth today. Certainly we enjoy freedoms and a standard of living that compare with the best. We think that our democratic form of government offers the best checks and balances against the corrupting forces of political power. But however patriotic you might be in assessing our country, at best we still exhibit the same type of overall lousy government and upside down social values when compared to the Kingdom of Righteousness that the Messiah will usher in during His Millennial reign.

The problem is that we have strayed too far from the standards and principles revealed in God's Holy Word. Where is the hunger to know and implement divine truth? Where is the discernment to value what God values and to be totally sold out to knowing and doing His will? We are governed largely by fools and rogues from God's perspective. In fact God's ideal government is not a democracy – it is a monarchy with a righteous king who cares about His people enough to lay down His life for their welfare.

So our cars display bumper stickers expressing a longing for “**World Peace**” and our beauty pageant contestants make that their platform = truly a noble goal. But we have no idea how to get there. **Peace** in the Scriptures is always associated with **righteousness** and only the truly Righteous One will be able to come and transform government and social values to reach this objective.

This chapter is linked to the fourth “*Woe*” introduced in **31:1** – since the fifth does not begin until Chap. 33. We saw last week that **THE WORLD'S WISDOM AND POWER WILL FAIL YOU**. So you will be sorely disappointed if you have invested your hopes in the rulers of this world.

LOUSY GOVERNMENT AND UPSIDE DOWN SOCIAL VALUES WILL BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF THE MESSIAH

This will truly be *BIG GOVERNMENT AT ITS BEST!*

I. (:1-4) TRANSFORMED RULERS AND DISCERNING POPULACE -- ANTICIPATION OF THE GLORIOUS REIGN OF THE MESSIAH

A. (:1) Inauguration of the Righteous Reign of Messiah

*“Behold, a king will reign righteously,
And princes will rule justly.”*

This is looking to sometime in the future – implies that the present government in the days of Isaiah was not characterized by righteous and just rule. Isaiah had painted many pictures of these wicked rulers and exposed their failures.

- In the millennial kingdom there will be no more tolerance for the abortion of those precious lives that cannot cry out for their own protection
- In the millennial kingdom there will be no more political corruption with its bribes and scheming and pattern of lies and deceit
- In the millennial kingdom there will be no more disparaging of God's Word and God's people
- In the millennial kingdom there will be no more advocacy for women elders, for the homosexual agenda, for the overturning of God's proper roles of men and women
- In the millennial kingdom there will be no more ponzi schemes with Wall Street crooks making a fortune on exploiting others
- In the millennial kingdom there will be no more abusive employers and supervisors who make the lives of their workers miserable

*“Behold, a king will reign righteously,
And princes will rule justly.”*

Look at the foundation already established in the book of Isaiah that identifies this pairing of a king reigning in righteousness and justice with the Messiah. What a glorious future to anticipate! **Gene Brooks:** A king will reign in righteousness and with justice. The pairing of these two words throughout Isaiah have always been used in the context of describing the Messiah (1:27; 5:7, 16; 9:7; 11:4; 16:5; 26:7-9).

Yet I think because **other princes** are mentioned here as ruling with this King, many commentators (especially those who don't hold to a literal millennial kingdom) want to see here a reference to King Hezekiah or possibly King Josiah ... NO WAY.

Rich Cathers: We will be ruling with Christ on the earth (**Rev. 2:26-27**) and we will also serve as judges. [*authority over the nations will be given to the overcomers*]

1 Cor 6:2 KJV *“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?”*

We long to see justice administered so that right decisions are made quickly and implemented efficiently. We want to see wickedness punished and right behavior rewarded.

Rom. 13:3 rulers should not be *a cause of fear for good behavior but for evil*

But while this passage anticipates the future reign of the Messiah in the millennial kingdom, we must not overlook the spiritual application = right now Christ wants to reign as Lord in the life of each one who repents and puts their faith in Him – He can right now administer righteousness and peace to us in a spiritual sense – Are you living in submission to His righteous rule in your life right now?

You must **track both threads** through this passage as we move forward

B. (:2) Images of Leaders Providing Protection and Refreshment

1. Protection

“And each will be like a refuge from the wind,
And a shelter from the storm,”

Speaking of all the rulers associated with the King, not just the king himself

Parunak: This king will protect his people from two kinds of threat, represented by meteorological extremes in the middle east: the raging tempest, and the searing summer sun.

Look at the protection that leaders should provide
Reminds one of the Good Shepherd in John 10 – willing to lay down His life for the sheep; not a hired gun who will run at the first threat of trouble

Imagine the worst possible calamity ...

Rom. 8:31-39

2. Refreshment

“Like streams of water in a dry country,
Like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.”

Brian Bell: Sometimes we need to get out of the glare & heat of life & slip into the restful shade of His presence!

Ps.91:1 “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

Rich Cathers: But God’s desire is that we too learn to give rest to others and refresh them. Paul writes,

1 Corinthians 16:17-18 “I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. 18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.”

Parunak:

We have heard these titles before:

4:6	25:4	32:2
And there shall be a tabernacle סכה for a shadow in the daytime from the heat , and for a place of refuge מחסה , and for a covert מסתר from storm and from rain.	For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge מחסה from the storm , a shadow from the heat , when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.	2 And a man shall be as an hiding place מחבא from the wind , and a covert מסתר from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land

All three passages mention the same two threats: storm and heat. All three promise a refuge or hiding place. But what is this refuge?

- In our current passage, 32:2, it is explicitly a man.
- In 25:4 it is just as explicitly the Lord.
- In 4:6 it is not defined. It is simply promised as part of the Lord's provision for Jerusalem, but it is related to the “branch of the Lord” (4:2), the promised Messiah, the one who is both Son of Man and Son of God.

Thus 25:4 and 32:2 bring us back to the Branch of the Lord of 4:2, the Messiah, both God and man.

Oswalt: In the coming era, leaders will no longer be **predators** from whom the people will need to seek relief (29:20, 21). Rather, the leaders themselves will be sources of protection and support, as they ought to be. (the Good Shepherd -- **John 10:11**; the Servant – **Matt. 20:28**)

C. (:3-4) Internalization and Clear Communication of Divine Truth

1. (:3) Perception of Divine Truth

*“Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded,
And the ears of those who hear will listen.”*

Isa 29:18 *“And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.”*

Motyer: Refusal to submit is the surest prescription for an ultimate inability to discern any difference between good and evil (5:18-23; Prov. 4:14-19; John 7:17).

2. (:4a) Discernment of Divine Truth

“And the mind of the hasty will discern the truth,”

Isa 29:24 *“They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.”*

3. (:4b) Proclamation of Divine Truth

“And the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly.”

MacArthur: The stammerers were former drunkards who uttered nonsense in their drunken stupor (28:7, 8; 29:9).

Ephes. 5:18 *“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.”*

We will be studying the **outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit** in the second half of this chapter next week.

If you have truly taken in the Word and applied it – you will be a bold proclaimer of truth to others; not shying away from opportunities to speak like people with a speech impediment who would avoid such situations

Parunak: We cannot emphasize too much that our God is characterized by language. He spoke the worlds into existence (Gen 1). He has magnified his word even above his own name (Ps 138:2), and when he sent his Son into the world, the exalted title that he gave him was, *“The Word of God”* (John 1; Rev 19). He delights to speak clearly to us, and wants us to speak clearly to him and to one another. **Clarity of communication** is at the heart of God's gracious revelation to us, and our fellowship with one another. In times of judgment he breaks that channel, but when the king comes to rule, we will perceive, understand, and speak with absolute clarity.

II. (:5-8) TRANSFORMED SOCIAL VALUES – RESPECT FOR LEGITIMATE NOBLES VS EXPOSURE OF FOOLS AND ROGUES

A. (:5) Valid Identifications of Fools, Rogues, and Nobles

*“No longer will the fool be called noble,
Or the rogue be spoken of as generous.”*

Things are turned upside down right now in the world – the ones who are respected are the ones who seem successful in the world’s eyes in accordance with the world’s value system

- The Hollywood types who promote a lifestyle of sensuality and luxury and indulgence
- The powerful politicians – men with no scruples and no convictions – who base their decisions on expediency to garner the most votes possible
- The sports heroes – paid ungodly sums to play games of no significance
- The professors in our academic institutions who make fun of God every day

Parunak: “*Vile*” is the Hebrew word נבל *nabal*. The word is most often translated “fool” or “foolish,” but it is not one of the standard terms used in Proverbs. Two contexts help us understand its meaning.

- This is the kind of person in Ps 14:1 who says that there is no God.
- This was also the name of the nobleman of the tribe of Caleb, the husband of Abigail, who refused to feed David and his men while they were fleeing Saul (**1 Sam 25**).

References in Proverbs to “fool”:

כסיל appears 49x

אויל appears 19x

נבל appears 3x

Constable: *Fools* disregard their moral and spiritual obligations. *Rogues* work deviously for their own advantage at the expense of others. In contrast, *noble people* are liberally outgoing to God and others.

Let’s look at the God-revealed characterization of each of these three types of people:

B. (:6-7) Characterization of a Fool

1. His Inclination / His Bent = Nonsense and Wickedness

*“For a fool speaks nonsense,
And his heart inclines toward wickedness,”*

2. His Practice in Words and Deeds = anti-God

*“To practice ungodliness
and to speak error against the LORD,”*

3. His Uselessness

*“To keep the hungry person unsatisfied
And to withhold drink from the thirsty.”*

Unable and unwilling to meet the needs of others and provide any type of fruitfulness
When you look back at his life you do not see any legacy of accomplishment or service to his fellow men; He has had a negative impact on the needy

Jim Bomkamp: For some reason, Christians sometimes get the notion that though they have received incredible mercy and grace from the Lord that they are for some reason supposed to be tyrannical and cruel to others themselves. However, we are called to emulate Jesus in His gentleness and kindness, both of which are fruits of the Spirit by the way (Gal. 5:22-23).

C. (:7) Characterization of a Rogue

1. His Methods

“As for a rogue, his weapons are evil;”

He is deceitful; a schemer; a conniver

2. His Mission

“He devises wicked schemes to destroy the afflicted with slander;”

Great skill in tearing others down and slandering them when they are most vulnerable; he does this in order to elevate himself and gain prosperity for himself

Motyer: *“Evil schemes”* (*zimma*, from “to meditate, plan”) apart from Job 17:11, has a uniformly bad meaning. It is used nineteen times of sexual misconduct (e.g. Lv. 18:17) and particularly of planning to get one’s way at all costs. *“To ruin the uninfluential by false speech and by speaking (to ruin) the helpless in court.”*

3. His Mindset

“Even though the needy one speaks what is right.”

D. (:8) Characterization of the Noble Man

1. Benefits Society

“But the noble man devises noble plans;”

- Generous – not selfish or self-centered
- Principled – man of convictions
- Large hearted – thinks and plans big things – wants to accomplish a lot

2. Builds on a Solid Foundation

“And by noble plans he stands.”

Legacy built his noble plans

Parunak: It is virtuous if I see a needy person and give my goods to feed and clothe him. It is wicked if I take your goods to feed him. But today, if a nation taxes your substance to feed the poor, that's seen as righteous. This change is reflected in the very shift in the meaning of the word “liberal.” Originally it referred to personal generosity, in obedience to the principles of God's word. Now it refers to socialist values, in which the government takes over wealth and redistributes it. Modern liberalism results when one tries to exercise the virtue of old-fashioned liberalism in the strength of the flesh, apart from the guidance and constraints of the Word of God and his Spirit. It is the form of godliness, lacking its underlying power. . .

The attitude that the promised king will honor is a willing, generous heart of service toward the Lord and his people.

Look at the **Lord Jesus** as the ultimate fulfillment of the **Noble Man**

CONCLUSION PART 1:

Make our transition into **Communion** -- the remembrance of the Lord Jesus as the righteous and just ruler who will usher in such transformation of government and of social values.

INTRODUCTION PART 2:

On the internet you can easily find a definition and example of word usage for anything. Just **Google** the phrase or go to **Ask.com**. I checked out the definition for “**spoiled brat**”:

A spoiled brat is a term that means someone gets a lot of stuff and doesn't appreciate it.

For example if a young lady from a wealthy family gets whatever she wants she becomes accustomed to that. Then if her parents say no she might throw a fit. That would be a spoiled brat.

We can relate to spoiled brats in the context of **children** – understanding their relative immaturity and the deficiencies in their upbringing. What do these spoiled brats look like when they reach **adulthood**? Isaiah focuses his prophetic lens on them in this paragraph as he gives a strong warning to the **COMPLACENT WOMEN AT EASE IN ZION**:

Oswalt: It may be that Isaiah, having failed to alert the men to the tragedy they were precipitating, turns to the women to try to get them to influence their husbands.

COMPLACENT FEASTING WILL SOON BE REPLACED BY JUDGMENTAL FAMINE IN PREPARATION FOR THE ESCHATOLOGICAL BLESSINGS OF THE OUT POURING OF THE SPIRIT

III. (:9-14) WARNING TO COMPLACENT WOMEN AT EASE IN ZION – ABUNDANCE REPLACED WITH ABANDONMENT

A. (:9-10) Good Times Coming to An End Shortly

1. (:9) Call to Attention

*“Rise up you women who are at ease, And hear my voice;
Give ear to my word, You complacent daughters.”*

Oswalt: While there is nothing inherently wrong with ease and security, they are bad when they are based on false premises (so Amos 6:1; Zech. 1:15; Ps. 123:4).

MacArthur points out in his notes that these same words can be used in either a positive or negative sense – depending on where you put your trust.

These women that Isaiah addresses are the high society types – the women of the leading families in the nation of Israel. They had grown accustomed to a life of luxury and abundance. But they had lost their spiritual edge. It is interesting that the prophet holds them accountable. They could not just hide behind the spiritual dullness of their husbands and excuse their lack of dedication to God's Word. They should have been challenging the political and religious leaders of the day with the truth of God's Word. Submission does not extend to compromising the Word

Isaiah is calling out and asking where are the women like **Abigail** in the story from **1 Samuel 25** we studied last week. Abigail was not bashful about admitting that her husband Nabal was a nabal indeed – a fool and a rogue. But the problem was that the women were not taking their spiritual responsibilities seriously. Despite the prophetic words of impending judgment, they continued on in their life of ease without blinking an eye. It was on to the next shopping event and the next hair appointment; it was arranging the next social outing with the appropriate entertainment; it was making sure that they had the proper jewelry accessories to go with all of their high-priced clothing. Where were the repentant women on their knees in prayer before God and seeking His face in His Word?

Women especially long for security ... but they here are acting like everything will be fine in their false security

Parunak: “careless” is from the verb נטב “to trust,” the “confidence” of 30:15.

Isa 30:15 “For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.”

He repeats this term in vv. 10, 11.

2. (:10) Complacency Terminated – Economic Disaster – the Harvest will not come
“Within a year and a few days, You will be troubled, O complacent daughters;
For the vintage is ended, And the fruit gathering will not come.”

Economic disaster is fast approaching and they are unconcerned; Presently they are enjoying a tremendous harvest feast ... but what about next year???

No more grape harvest and wine production; no more joy and luxurious living

The year represented an important economic harvest cycle in the culture of Israel – Isaiah warns that they should not expect that cash cow to keep producing for them year after year ... the good times were coming to an end and coming to an end very shortly – within about 1 year’s time.

Starvation is possibility; nothing to eat

Listen to what the Lord Jesus has to say about the lukewarm church in Laodicea – **Rev. 3:14-19**

B. (:11-13) Reversal of Conditions – from Joy and Complacency/Security to Bondage and Trembling and Despair

1. State of Shock and Terror

“Tremble, you women who are at ease;
Be troubled, you complacent daughters;

You thought you were the privileged untouchables;

2. State of Humiliation and Bondage

“Strip, undress, and put sackcloth on your waist,
Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine,”

Replacing very expensive, fancy clothing with sackcloth

David Guzik: Instead of an indulgent, self-focused life, they would be required to tremble, be troubled, and put on the clothing of mourning.

Motyer: “*strip and go bare*”. Neither verb is used as a sign of mourning, rather as a sign of enslavement or captivity (cf. 20:2-3).

This would be the condition of women led into captivity

3. State of Despair and Frustration

*“For the land of my people in which thorns and briars shall come up;
Yea, for all the joyful houses, and for the jubilant city.”*

Ironside: In the third chapter the Lord had sternly rebuked the daughters of Zion who lived in vanity and frivolity, despising the Lord and thinking only of self-gratification. Now He speaks again to those whose consciences should have been active and who ought, therefore, to have guided others in the way of righteousness but who failed to realize that the judgments of God were soon to fall upon them and who lived only for the present moment, surrounding themselves with every luxury, and delighting themselves in worldly follies of every description.

The day was soon to come when poverty would rob them of all these things which had ministered to their selfish desires, and they would realize at last the folly of forgetting God and thinking only of carnal pleasure and self-indulgence. When the fields and vineyards should be destroyed by invading armies and other means of sustenance come to an end, they would realize too late how foolish they had been in forgetting their responsibility to glorify God.

Celebration in homes and palaces will cease --

C. (:14) 4 Images of Abandonment

1. Abandonment of Royal Residence

“Because the palace has been abandoned,”

2. Abandonment of Populated City

“the populated city forsaken.”

3. Abandonment of Defenses – hiding out in caves instead

“Hill and watch-tower have become caves forever,”

Parunak: The very last thing that a city would abandon would be its watchtower, placed on a high hill for better surveillance. Now wild animals roam through it.

Dancy: Enemy has toppled the watch-towers – means that your army has been defeated in the open field and the walls of the defenseless city have been torn down; metaphorical aspect

4. Abandonment of Civilized Inhabitation – overrun with wild donkeys and wild animals

“A delight for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks;”

Wild animals will live in civilized places

How long will it be like this?? Answered in vs. 15; last days are upon us when the Holy Spirit (permanent presence of Christ) arrives as permanent indwelling

IV. (:15-18) BLESSINGS FROM THE OUT POURING OF THE SPIRIT

A. (:15) Radical Transformation by the Outpouring of the Spirit – Imagery of Abundance

*“Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high,
And the wilderness becomes a fertile field
And the fertile field is considered as a forest.”*

Motyer: The reversals of verses 13-14 are not final; an even greater reversal awaits, through the promised agency of the divine Spirit.

Ironside: Peter applied the words of **Joel 2** to what then took place, not as indicating that the prophecy was exhausted by that outpouring, but that it was of the same character as what was yet to come when Israel shall be brought back to God and the Spirit poured out upon them from on high and all the spared nations be blessed accordingly. It is of this the present passage speaks.

Parunak: This is the distinctive mark of the new covenant. This aspect of the promised age has already occurred.

We are all familiar with the key NT passage regarding the fruit of the Holy Spirit:

Gal. 5:22 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

But there is an OT passage from the prophet Isaiah that speaks of the fruit of the Holy Spirit as well. The context here is the future Millennial Kingdom – but the church certainly experiences right now the spiritual application of this fruit.

Time Reference:

32:15 *“Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high”*
(Joel 2:28-32; Eze. 39:29; Zech 12:10).

Genre: Hebrew parallelism

Young: As for this *karmel* (fruitful land), it is to be reckoned as a forest. What Isaiah means is that what at the present is considered to be a fruitful field will then be regarded as something far more glorious, as a forest where all grows wild. It is another picture of complete reversal, of complete change.

Brian Bell: The Bible never defines [the outpouring of the Holy Spirit] really. It just points out people who were.

[1] **John the Baptist** - *“For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.”*

[2] **Stephen** - *“But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory*

of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,”

[3] **Zechariah** - "Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: ...”

[4] **Bezalel** - "See, I have called by name Bezalel...And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, "to design artistic works,..."

Motyer: When that which is perfect comes, what now seems like ordered cultivation will look like scrub!

B. (:16-18) Reign of Justice and Righteousness in Peace and Security

1. (:16) Justice and Righteousness Administered

*“Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,
And righteousness will abide in the fertile field.”*

Oswalt: The true abundance will be in matters of the spirit. From the prophet’s perspective, Judah’s national life has been a desert. Righteousness and justice have withered away as people have abandoned God’s ways to pursue their own advantage and comfort. This abandonment has led to oppression of the poor and the establishment of a very questionable foreign policy. In effect, Judah has cut herself off from the source of her life. But in the days to come, when she is once again in touch with that source, God’s righteousness will be hers in abundance.

2. (:17) Peace and Security Established

*“And the work of righteousness will be peace,
And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.”*

Parunak:

30:15	32:17
In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength:	And the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever

peace – shalom – completeness, soundness, welfare, peace

quietness – shaqat – to be quiet, be tranquil, be at peace, lie still, be undisturbed

confidence – betach – assurance, security, safety

3. (:18) Peace and Security Enjoyed

*“Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation,
And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places;”*

(:19-20) EPILOGUE: SEVERE JUDGMENT PRECEDES ABUNDANT BLESSING

A. (:19) SEVERE JUDGMENT IN PREPARATION FOR BLESSING

1. (:19a) Judgment on Pride of Israel

“And it will hail when the forest comes down,”

Oswalt: 2 main options

(1) It is a promise of the destruction of Assyria (cf. 10:33; 30:31)

(2) It speaks of the destruction of Israelite pride which must accompany the restoration of righteousness (1:29-31; **2:13**; 29:2-4) [his preference]

2. (:19b) Humbling of Jerusalem

And the city will be utterly laid low.”

Constable: The last two verses of this "woe" serve as an epilogue (cf. the prologue, 31:1-5). Again there is an abrupt transition from present terror to future tranquility. Judgment and glory both lay ahead for the Israelites, and it was time for them to choose to return to the Lord. God has revealed the distant future, as well as the immediate future, so people will get right with Him now. . .

The forest is a figure of soldiers (10:18, 33-34) and of the fallen world (2:12-13). The city refers to Jerusalem, but it also represents humankind organized in rebellion against God (24:10). Thus both the near and the far views of God's actions blend here. God will destroy, the hail representing His devastating intervention in human life, both the Assyrian soldiers soon and the fallen world later (cf. 10:34). He would devastate Jerusalem soon and rebellious humankind later.

Guzik: If others feel the pelting hail, or are brought low in humiliation, it doesn't matter to those blessed by the poured-out Spirit of God.

B. (:20) ABUNDANT BLESSING ON THE RIGHTEOUS

*“How blessed will you be, you who sow beside all waters,
Who let out freely the ox and the donkey.”*

Martin: the redeemed nation is assured that they will be blessed with agricultural productivity (cf. Ezek. 36:30) and with no rivalry over each other's grazing land.

Young: These sow by every water, whenever the opportunity arises, and so enjoy the productivity and richness of a most fertile soil. Nor need they watch the animals, for these may roam where they will, unhindered and free from all dangers.

Oswalt: Those who plant their crops on the banks of streams have no fear of crop failure. In fact, they can even let their livestock loose to crop the first growth, so abundant will the plants be. So it will be for God's people when they learn that the source of spiritual abundance is in God.

Constable: Their blessing will consist of divine favor (cf. Ps. 32:1), personal fulfillment (cf. Ps. 112:1), and total rectitude (cf. Ps. 2:12; 37:8-9).

Jim Bomkamp: Isaiah is seeking to install the importance of having an eternal perspective in these verses. The one who will be blessed is the one who will sow God's word everywhere (beside all waters), and who allows the Lord to have free reign in all that he does (letting out freely the ox and the donkey). From the perspective of eternity these are the things that will be looked at as most important.

Motyer: This pastoral scene recalls the Messianic motifs of 30:23-26, where cattle range free and

mountaintops run with water. . . The word translated *how blessed* has three shades: under divine blessing (Ps. 32:1); enjoying fulfillment in life (Ps. 112:1); and doing the right thing at the right time (Pss. 2;12; 137:8-9). In the present verse all three meet: divine favour, personal fulfillment and total rectitude.

CONCLUSION PART 2:

God's intention for His people has always been **abundant blessing**. But we must not confuse the complacent feasting of Isaiah's day or our modern day culture with the true feasting which God has in store for us. God hates lukewarm hypocritical devotion. He want us to be sold out to Him and His Word so that we are serious about obeying and worshiping Him. This can only be accomplished by the out pouring of His Spirit. Hopefully you have experienced that already in salvation and are looking forward to that our pouring in the end times.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where do you see our present day political leaders acting as fools and rogues?
- 2) How can you best follow the example of the Messiah-King as a noble and generous person?
- 3) Identify areas of spiritual complacency in your life -- how you intend to deal with them?
- 4) How can you tell if internally you have experienced the out pouring of God's Spirit?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: These chapters [32-33] form a contrast to chaps. 30-31. In the former chapters, the foolishness of trusting in Egypt rather than in God for their strength was stressed; here, the intervention of God in delivering Israel from her enemies and establishing a righteous kingdom in her midst is stressed.

Parunak: God's ideal is not democracy, but monarchy; not the rule of sinful people, but of a righteous king. The problem with totalitarian government is that no sinful can be trusted with such authority. The Bible's view of an ideal government is a king whose reign is righteous, and whose princes govern according to that standard. And Isaiah promises that such an administration will one day arise. . . This reign will have three blessed characteristics: security, understanding, and an end of hypocrisy.

Oswalt: The thought in the two chapters [32-33] moves through four stages. The first describes the nature of true leadership and the effects stemming from it (32:1-8). The second explains what is the fundamental ingredient for that kind of leadership to exist: God's Spirit (32:9- 20). The third makes this necessity of divine intervention even more explicit, stating that Judah is helpless without him (33:1-16). Finally, in a more emotive segment, the author imagines the day when Yahweh rules over a serene and quiet land delivered from all her enemies (33:17-24).

Ironside: Scripture not only teaches a first and second coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST; it also predicts a first and second coming of the Holy Spirit. His first coming, to baptize believers into one body and empower them to carry His gospel throughout the world, occurred at Pentecost.

Peter applied the words of Joel 2 to what then took place, not as indicating that the prophecy was exhausted by that outpouring, but that it was of the same character as what was yet to come when Israel shall be brought back to GOD and the Spirit poured out upon them from on high and all the spared nations be blessed accordingly. It is of this the present passage speaks.

What a time of blessing it will be for this poor world when war and strife have come to an end; sickness and sorrow flee away; poverty and distress disappear; and men will enjoy the loving favor of the Lord and find every need met in abundance. So fruitful will the earth be at that time that a garden of herbs will become as a forest and the wilderness, as we are told elsewhere, will blossom as the rose. It is a great mistake to try to spiritualize all this and deny a coming literal fulfillment. There will, indeed, be great spiritual blessings at that time, but linked with the spiritual will be the literal fulfillment of this and other prophecies.

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will be the portion of those who enter the kingdom and enjoy the blessings of Messiah's reign, but we may be sure that the promise that they shall dwell in a peaceable habitation is to be taken in absolute literalness. There will be protection from every ill when Messiah takes over the reins of government.

Chuck Smith: THE EFFECT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Intro: There are many idealistic goals people are striving to attain: peace, happiness, calmness. These qualities seldom realized by direct pursuit, by-product.

I. THE NEED FOR QUIETNESS AND ASSURANCE.

A. We are living in a restless age.

1. Life has taken on a frenzied pace.
2. Look at people around you.
 - a. In restaurants, shopping malls, freeways.
 - b. Study their faces.

B. We are living in an uncertain age.

1. You really don't know who you can trust.
 - a. You read of corrupted police dept.
 - b. judges receiving bribes.
2. You don't know where your money can be safe.
 - a. Banks fail and the cost of living is rising faster than the interest rates.
 - b. The stock market is uncertain.

C. We have learned to accept this restless anxiety as a way of life.

1. And with the help of cigarette, booze and drugs we have learned to cope.

2. But is this the way God intended man to live?

Listen as God tells us how He wants us to live. Vs. 18 How do you get there?

II. THE NEED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. BEING RIGHT WITH ONE ANOTHER.

A. Certainly we can consent to it as an ideal.

1. What if everyone was completely honest.
2. What if no one was greedy.
3. What if we in love considered the needs of one another and sought to help.

B. Many seeing it as ideal seek to attain it.

1. They make their resolutions and take their vows.
 - a. If they attain any degree of success they become self-righteous, intolerant and impossible to live with.
 - b. Fortunately most of us just fail.
 - c. Unfortunately many despair, still consenting yet maintaining the impossibility of attainment.

C. The gospel declares you can be righteous.

1. God will do for you what you can't do for yourself.
2. Through the power of the Holy Spirit He will change you, and remold you after Christ.
3. To be right you must start right.
 - a. If you started with yourself and are still trying, forget it.
 - b. Start again with Jesus Christ as you yield more and more you will find yourself saying, "that's all right."

III. THE RESULTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Vs. 17.

A. The work in your life will be peace.

B. The effect.

1. Quietness.
2. Assurance (forever).

Dr. John Whitcomb: Isaiah 32

No kingdom coming on earth until the Holy Spirit is poured out from on high; the whole planet earth will respond to Him; Is. 30:15 – true security; look at how nation of Israel is threatened constantly today; must look to the Lord alone for security; vs. 19 – God will destroy all the security systems of humans; pride will be smashed

Timothy Dane:

Chaps. 28-35 are one whole unit; 28:1 – each section begins with a “Woe”; series of warnings – God promising judgment upon specific groups of people; Chap. 32 does not begin with a “Woe” – should be combined with Chap. 31;

The imagery of the outpouring of much water = mighty, gushing overflow on a parched land; the wilderness will become like a garden; a reversal in the execution of justice; Is. 57:21 – *no peace for the wicked*; No peace in the Middle East right now because there is no righteousness; Don't harden your hearts; if you want to know how not to live – just look at Israel; God will change that one day; vs. 20 – the Lord has a promise of blessing for those who will trust Him

David E. Thompson:

A glimpse of what life will be like when Jesus Christ reigns on earth. Look at variety of entertainment various churches are offering this week. America is greatest country in the world

but that is not saying much ... we need Jesus Christ to come back and run the world;
Identification of the coming King of Israel = Jesus Christ; no righteous govt. until that time;
righteousness comes through proper govt;

(:1-8) 7 Glimpses into the coming kingdom:

1) Jesus Christ will reign righteously – implies current govts. are not righteous; rulers moving the world away from God; in every situation things will be as they ought to be with respect to the character and will of God; for the purpose of righteousness reigning and He will reign by righteousness; there will be no more women pastors ... no more homosexual agenda ... etc.

What is so sad is that man's heart will still be exposed as wicked at end of that period;

2) Christ will rule justly – This is what godly govt. should do; addresses wickedness; makes good judgments; a forensic term; in accordance with what is lawful and right; will share His govt with His princes; church will share in reign of Christ on earth; return to true reverence and worship of God; church is to be a place that purges out leaven – not trying to accommodate sinful people; church that is not willing to exercise discipline cannot be ruling justly

3) Every person will know he is sheltered and protected and cared for – pure goal of every leader = true welfare of every citizen instead of serving themselves; this world makes you weary; you don't even know whom you can trust; Christ will turn it all around; life will be invigorating; find your shelter in Christ;

4) Every person will see and hear God's Word at a different level – God will lift blindness from His people; Israel in state of blindness now; people will understand God's judgments and His grace; Greatest judgment = taking away your ability to understand the Word of God; no more denominations at this time; no more religious manipulations by false teachers at that time

5) Every person's mind will understand truth and their mouth will communicate it clearly – we live in a world of fools; not many people really care about God's Word and very few are interested in communicating it; no more foolish deception;

6) Fools and rogue pretenders will no longer be popular and respected – comparison of what things are like now to kingdom days; no more bluffing; people will be seen and known for what they really are; Fool = stupid and wicked; pretends to be strong but has not strength; seemed to get promoted to high positions in govt and religion; Rogue = crafty and deceitful; a liar; People tend to honor fools and rogues in our society; no more esteeming of spiritual losers; they seem to be people of success; no interest in the word and will of God

5 traits of a fool:

- speaks nonsense – use your words to dance around truth; disgraceful and shameful; cf. making up a concept called global warming – probably you will win a reward

- inclines his heart to wickedness – leads to what is false and of no substance and vain; citizens must swear to speak the truth ... but not politicians;

- practices ungodliness – lifestyle that is an abomination to God; polluted and defiled behind the scenes;

- speaks religious error against God – says that all religions are good; says we are no longer really a Christian nation;

- intentionally does not meet people's needs – kiss babies during campaign for photo opps but could care less about them; claim to care about meeting the needs of their constituency; they are frauds; talk a good game;

4 traits of a rogue:

- His weapons are evil and deceptive – uses their position for personal profit;

- Devises wicked schemes – not interested in doing what is right before the Lord

- Destroys the afflicted with slander – tells lies about others to sway people his way
- Will not listen to right counsel from a needy one; heartless – want you to think they have great hearts; common tendency of all politicians is to listen to the rich and famous; will use Scripture if they can weave it into their speech to look good

7) The noble man will live and stand and end up ruling – the one who is in the family of God; look like they are losing now but will end up winning

We must endure a lousy world for awhile that is governed for the most part by lousy people = crooks and cheats;

Am I a person of nobility; am I by faith related to that righteousness?

(:9-20) – Importance of women in any culture or family or in the church – women wanted their nice comfortable life – ignoring that they were on the edge of judgment and disaster; interested in their clothing and houses and luxury; complacent attitude; not hungry for the Word of God; God will hold these women accountable; in some conflicts women and children are exempt from harm but here God is targeting them; very self reliant, worldly, prosperous; they are about to pay a price; not supposed to submit if the men are leading you away from Word and will of God; dig your heels in and take a stand;

3 Parts to this passage --

1) (:9-12) Three Warnings to God's Women

- Need to hear and listen to God's Word; these were upper class women; challenges them to do just the opposite of what they had been doing; get your focus back on the Word of God; in a state of ease and had become complacent = their attitude; very proud and careless in how they were living life; living a carefree and loose life; felt like they were on top of the world; strutting around and enjoying their luxurious lifestyle; must want to be accurately taught the Word of God; not picking a church because they have friends there;

- God can take all of their blessings away in a very short time; God can break you in a moment; I want my women serious about my Word

- Need to fear God and humble themselves before God; start making changes right now; no time to waste; shake like an earthquake out of fear; strip yourself of your luxurious clothing and put on sackcloth to show you are serious; leading refined women in capital city; Not a “God loves you just the way you are ladies” message; not trying to build up their self esteem

2) (:13-14) Three Reasons for These Warnings

- God is bringing a judgment on the land of thorns and briars
- God is about to remove all joy from your houses – God is going to run you out of your nice palatial homes; will humble and humiliate them
- I will remove all my blessing from their city –

3) (:15-20) God Will Not Bless His Women Again Until He Pours Out His Spirit on Israel as a Nation

The fruitful blessings of God are not on Israel right now; you live in constant fear – not knowing when the next bomb will go off; still paying the price for disobedience; God one day will pour out His Spirit on Israel in unique and national way; also see what God can do individually right now in a spiritual sense

5 blessings when God pours out His Spirit:

- The promised land will become fertile (:15b) – God takes individuals who have dry, desert hearts and starts process that makes them fruitful
- Justice and righteousness will reign everywhere – will dominate the whole world; righteousness should be taking more and more control of our hearts and wills
- There will be peace forever (:17) – close proximity between righteousness and peace; we are in a peaceful relationship with God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1)
- There will be security forever (:18) – Israel has never known that; nothing can separate you from the love of God right now
- There will have been a ferocious judgment (:19-20) – just before time of fruitfulness there will be terrible judgment in the Tribulation; coming a day when no matter what you do it will turn to gold; life will be wonderful for you; How blessed we are when we sow the Word of God by the waters; take the Word to the world

Phillip Dancy: When Will Things Be Made Right?

I. A Warning To The Women (9)

- A. A longing for security
- B. A false security embraced

II. What Will Happen? (10-14)

- A. Harvest will not come
- B. Thorns and briars will take root
- C. Celebration in homes will cease
- D. Watch towers will be torn down
- E. Wild animals will live in civilized places

III. How Long Will It Last? (15a)

- A. Until the Spirit is poured out and rules and reigns in the heart of man
- B. The outpouring of the Spirit as a permanent resident in the people of God is a key indicator that the eschatological “last days” are upon us.
- C. The physical and spiritual realities
 1. While it is true that the earth itself will be remade and the community of God is called to care for both the people and possession of God – this great picture of the life-giving Spirit is most manifest in the heart of humanity
 2. God’s people had become dry, lifeless and cold
 3. The Spirit would bring true life and transformation

IV. What Will The Out-Poured Spirit Bring? (15-19)

- A. Maturity and growth on a large/broad scale
- B. Justice
- C. Righteousness
- D. Peace
- E. Quietness & confidence (forever)
- F. Establishment of a peaceful habitation

V. What Is Our Calling? (20)

- A. To be faithful!
- B. To work the work of righteousness in the power of the Spirit, in conformity with Jesus Christ

TEXT: Isaiah 33:1-12

TITLE: *WOE #6 – JUDGMENT ON THE DESTROYER AND DELIVERANCE FOR ZION*

BIG IDEA:

WHEN GOD SPRINGS INTO VISIBLE AND DRAMATIC ACTION, THE DESTROYER IS DESTROYED AND GOD'S PEOPLE ARE DELIVERED

INTRODUCTION:

Accountability is coming says the Lord and He will destroy Judah's enemies and deliver His people. It might look like the Lord is silent; but He will arise and spring into action and sovereignly put down the destroyer in order to establish justice and righteousness in the Promised Land.

As we get to this 6th and final Woe of our section which began back in Chap. 28, we see the same type of near term and far term reference that we would expect. In the near term, the destroyer is the godless nation of Assyria under the leadership of Sennacherib – making a treaty with Judah and accepting her tribute money but still coming to her doorstep in 701 B.C. with the intention of destroying Jerusalem; However, God mercifully intervened and drove them off;

In the end times, the AntiChrist will arise and make a covenant with the Jews – appearing to be her friend and advocate (Daniel 9:27). But in the middle of the 7 year Tribulation Period, he will break that covenant in a treacherous way and unleash the power of wicked nations in a last ditch attempt to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. Once again, God will intervene and arise in judgment on the destroyer and deliverance for Zion.

Remember the important scriptural principle:

Gal. 6:7 – “*Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap*” -- Sin has Consequences

Accountability is coming. There will come a day **when God arises** – look at that emphasis in verses **3 and 10**.

WHEN GOD SPRINGS INTO VISIBLE AND DRAMATIC ACTION, THE DESTROYER IS DESTROYED AND GOD'S PEOPLE ARE DELIVERED

Don't be lulled into a false sense of security by thinking that God is passive. Your sins will find you out. You need to have your sins covered by the blood of Jesus Christ and His forgiveness. God will arise and there will be ultimate accountability. Jesus Christ came the first time to bring salvation; but He will return the second time to judge the earth and usher in justice and righteousness.

TWO MOVEMENTS to this great symphony describing the Lord's Judgment and Deliverance – at the heart of each is this emphasis on the Lord arising and springing into action to bring accountability and to establish justice and righteousness

Not a logical, linear development of thought here; more of a cyclical repetition by way of emphasis

I. (:1-6) FIRST MOVEMENT: JUDGMENT AND DELIVERANCE

A. (:1) Judgment Pronounced -- Woe Leveled for Two Evil Behaviors

1. Destructive Behavior

*“Woe to you, O destroyer, While you were not destroyed; . . .
As soon as you shall finish destroying, you shall be destroyed;”*

Plunders other nations; takes their treasure

Constable: The destroyer and treacherous one in view is Assyria. So far Assyria had practiced destruction and treachery without having them come back on her, but eventually they would (cf. Deut. 19:18-19). Sennacherib accepted a large sum of money that King Hezekiah sent to him so he would not besiege Jerusalem, but Sennacherib accepted the money and attacked Jerusalem anyway (2 Kings 18:13-17). That is treachery. Yahweh was the opposite of the Assyrian king. He was always true to His promises, and the Davidic kings were to follow His example as His vice-regents. To behave the opposite from how God behaves is to court divine discipline.

Beall: however, much of the language seems to go beyond this event to the battle of Armageddon and the millennial reign to follow. Again, the specific instance is used as a backdrop for the eschatological picture.

This cycle has repeated itself throughout history of Israel; nations rise up to do them harm; it appears that God is passive and not intervening; then those wicked nations are extinguished

2. Treacherous Behavior

*“And he who is treacherous, while others did not deal treacherously with him. . .
As soon as you shall cease to deal treacherously, others shall deal treacherously
with you.”*

Can't be trusted to keep agreements and treaties

Oswalt: As the royal annals demonstrate, Assyria took great pride in her capacity to destroy anyone who had the temerity to stand against her. By the same token, she had no qualms about breaking agreements which were not to her advantage, all the while punishing with great severity any who broke agreements with her.

Parunak: The judgment is a reflection of a fundamental principle throughout Scripture. Assyria will be treated as it has treated others.

This is a fundamental principle of the Mosaic law:

Deu 19:21 *And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*

David observed that this happens even apart from the intervention of the courts (**Psa 7:15-16**): *He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. 16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.*

After the captivity and return, even among the Jews who remained in dispersion, **Est 7:10** *they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.*

B. (:2) Deliverance Prayed for – Grace, Perseverance and Deliverance in the Lord

This is the **Plea of Isaiah** for the remnant people of God in the Tribulation Period – with application to the immediate present

1. Plea for Grace

“O LORD, be gracious to us; we have waited for Thee.”

Can't earn or merit God's grace; have to learn to wait humbly upon the Lord; we do not know when and how He will act in our situation

2. Plea for Strength and Perseverance

“Be Thou their strength every morning,”

Especially needed at the end of the Tribulation period; difficult to even make it through the day;

3. Plea for Deliverance

“Our salvation also in the time of distress.”

Beall: They are in trouble, and ask for the Lord's arm of salvation to be stretched out once again (as in the parting of the Red Sea—see **Exod 14:13-22**; 15:6, 12).

**C. (:3-4) Dramatic Judgment Effects of God Springing Into Action –
Dispersal and Looting of the Wicked Nations**

What happens when God lifts Himself up? When He arises and springs into visible action?

1. Dispersal

*“At the sound of the tumult peoples flee;
At the lifting up of Thyself nations disperse.”*

God will break these wicked nations into little pieces; they can try to run but they can't escape the judgment of God; this is a judgment that God will execute Himself; doesn't need any help to put these wicked nations down

2. Looting

*“And your spoil is gathered as the caterpillar gathers;
As locusts rushing about, men rush about on it.”*

Constable: When the Lord arose against Israel's enemies, the battle would be over almost as soon as it had started (cf. Rev. 19:19-20). The Jerusalemites would loot the spoils of war as voraciously as caterpillars and as swiftly as locusts (cf. 37:36-37).

**D. (:5-6) Dramatic Deliverance Effects of God Springing Into Acton –
Exaltation of the Lord in Jerusalem**

Nothing good happens apart from the godly judgments that are executed; today people shy away from the idea of godly judgment – “Judge not” they cry out; certainly they don't want to see the church exercise any form of discipline – “Who are you to cast the first stone” they cry out – But they fail to understand that no justice and righteousness can be displayed without the carrying out of godly judgments

1. The Transcendence of the Lord

“The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high;”

Beall: Vv 5-6 conclude the introductory section by seeing the result of the Lord's deliverance of His people: the Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high (He is the one who is truly superior, not Egypt or Assyria—contrast Isa 10:9-11, 15; 36:18-20; 37:10-24).

2. The Trademark of His Reign = Justice and Righteousness

“He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.”

Parunak: The motifs of the Lord's exaltation in Zion and the proliferation of judgment and righteousness show that Isaiah is here referring to the day of the Lord, the Messianic age

3. The Totality of His Sufficiency

*“And He shall be the stability of your times,
A wealth of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge;”*

Parunak: “*Strength*” means “wealth,” that which is protected by strength, cf. Jer 20:5; Ezek 22:25; Pr 15:6; 27:24. The verse is thus enumerating the kinds of wealth that will enrich the capital when the Lord rules there. Israel will spoil the Assyrians (v. 4), but that is not what will ultimately bring them “*stability of thy times.*” His treasury will be filled, not with the silver and gold captured from the Assyrians, but with salvation, wisdom, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. . .

Two verses in Proverbs suggest an important distinction between *wisdom* and *knowledge*. We have seen that Isaiah frequently refers to Proverbs, and he may have these verses in mind:

Pro 9:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

Pro 30:3 (Agur:) *I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.*

In these verses, wisdom is our understanding of the world around us, but the object of knowledge is specifically the Lord himself. In 9:10, “*knowledge of the holy*” is parallel to “*fear of the Lord,*” which is even more explicit in **Pro 2:5**,

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

We also see this pairing in **11:2**, the Messianic endowment of the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD where both knowledge and fear have the Lord as their object. In other words, wisdom is horizontal, while knowledge is vertical. Wisdom enables us to live skillfully in the world, in keeping with the law of the Lord, but knowledge brings us into intimate fellowship with the Law-giver himself.

4. The Treasure = the Lord

“The fear of the LORD is his treasure.”

Ironside: The hearts of those who confide in Him are moved to worship and thanksgiving as they see by faith His kingdom established over all the earth. It is surely a grievous misapplication of the scope of the prophetic Scriptures to spiritualize all this and to make Zion mean the Church,

the Body of Christ. Throughout all these chapters every sober expositor recognizes the fact that the judgments predicted have fallen or are yet to fall upon the Jews or their oppressors.

Surely then, it is very inconsistent to apply the blessings to the Church of the present age. Certainly the same people who have suffered at the hands of the Gentiles because of their disobedience to the Word of God are identical, nationally, with those who will participate in the privileges of the kingdom of God when it is set up in this world and Mount Zion will be the center of blessing for the whole earth.

II. (:7-12) SECOND MOVEMENT – JUDGMENT AND DELIVERANCE

A. (:7-9) Desperate Times Cry Out for Divine Intervention

1. (:7-8a) God’s People Look Defeated and Hopeless

a. Impact on the Military – **Futility of Human Power**

“Behold, their brave men cry in the streets,”

b. Impact on the Diplomatic Corps – **Futility of Human Wisdom**

“The ambassadors of peace weep bitterly.”

c. Impact on the Economic and Social Systems – **Futility of Human Wealth**

“The highways are desolate, the traveler has ceased,”

2. (:8b) The AntiChrist Looks Arrogant and Untouchable

*“He has broken the covenant,
he has despised the cities,
He has no regard for man.”*

3. (:9) The Promised Land Looks Sad and Devastated

*“The land mourns and pines away,
“Lebanon is shamed and withers;
Sharon is like a desert plain,
And Bashan and Carmel lose their foliage.”*

Jim Bomkamp: We see in these verses that the Assyrian king had broken his covenant he had made with Hezekiah, and despised the cities of Judea in the process, and had no regard for mankind at all. The result of this is that most of the people had migrated from the cities of Judea to Jerusalem for protection and thus the highways were now desolate and deserted, Lebanon had withered, Sharon had become like a desert plain, and Bashan and Carmel had lost their foliage.

John Martin: Lebanon, north of Israel and well known for its cedar forests, would wither. Sharon was the coastal plain south of Mount Carmel extending inland to the hill country of Ephraim. A fertile area, Sharon would become a desert **like the Arabah** (which means “arid” or “dry”), the desolate rift valley extending from the Dead Sea south to the Gulf of Aqabah. Bashan (“fertile plain”), east of the Sea of Kinnereth (later named the Sea of Galilee), was productive agriculturally (cf. Jer. 50:19) and known for its oak trees (Isa. 2:13; Ezek. 27:6;

Micah 7:14; Zech. 11:2). Carmel (“fruitful land”) was a mountain range thickly forested and well watered at that time. This destruction would show that the people could not save themselves.

B. (:10) Deliverance Associated with the Exaltation of God

*“Now I will arise,’ says the LORD,
‘Now I will be exalted, now I will be lifted up.’”*

Once again, at the heart of the movement, we see the key phrase: “*Now I will arise*” – scoffers mock the Lord’s promises about accountability at the Lord’s Second Coming – **2 Pet. 3:3** “Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o’er His foes”

Oswalt: *Now* appears three times in this short verse, before each verbal phrase. If the believer is called to abandon his or her own haste in patient waiting on the Lord, it is with the certainty that there always comes a divine “Now!” One part of the importance of waiting is so that we will be sensitive to recognize God’s moment when it does come (cf. Simeon’s prayer, Luke 2:25-32). Those who are consumed by their own plans are always taken unaware by God’s word. Nor is it surprising that God’s “now” follows the hopeless setting depicted in vv. 7-9. Human failure is divine opportunity.

C. (:11-12) Judgment Executed in the Last Days

1. (:11) Accountability -- Sin and Consequences – Imagery of Pregnancy

*“You have conceived chaff,
you will give birth to stubble;
My breath will consume you like a fire.”*

Young: Isaiah does not at all deny that the enemy is active. By addressing it as pregnant, he means that it is full of plans and schemes which it is seeking to carry out. In discharging them, however, it will fail; and all that it will bring forth is as chaff. Likewise, in the actual birth or bringing forth, the enemy will produce nothing but stubble. The entirety of the enemy’s purposes, their conception and their accomplishment, is a vanity. They strive and labor to no profit; they will be frustrated for they are fighting against the Lord of hosts. Hay, chaff, and stubble burn easily; they are readily consumed; they have no endurance, and so it will be with the plans of the enemy; they will readily come to naught.

2. (:12) Divine Wrath -- Judgment and Effects – Imagery of Limestone and Thorns

*“And the peoples will be burned to lime,
Like cut thorns which are burned in the fire.”*

Oswalt: The metaphors used here emphasize the completeness of the destruction to come. So when a rock like limestone is burned it is reduced to dust (note Amos 2:1 for a similar usage); and despite the hazardous nature of thorns when they are alive, once they are cut and dried, fire can consume them almost completely in a very short time. So it would be with Assyria and later with Babylon. For all their pomp and glory, each one’s collapse came with great suddenness.

CONCLUSION:

Do you need God to rise up and take action for you in your situation? Pray to God for His grace;

for His strength; for His deliverance. Lift God up and exalt Him in your heart and in your worship; recognize and appreciate His sovereignty – He will enforce accountability – He will judge in His time – He will deliver in His time.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What has been the history of nations who have had as their goal the destruction of Israel?
- 2) How can you lift God up and exalt Him?
- 3) How can the treachery and deceitfulness and malice of the AntiChrist be detected?
- 4) Are you waiting patiently for the grace of God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

S. Lewis Johnson: Now there are three movements in this chapter which end in the climactic clause “The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.” And I have put those three movements in the outline on the board. There is the movement of severity or judgment upon Assyria, there is the movement of serenity or the peace of Israel, and the final one, which is something of a summary, the all sufficient Jehovah; and we are going to look at these three movements in our study tonight.

Now let me remind you that these events that we are describing and reading about in the Prophecy of Isaiah at this point are typical events. That is, Jerusalem is besieged by the Assyrians and this of course is typical of the ultimate deliverance which Israel shall experience in the last days when she shall be besieged by the King of the North of prophecy, under the direction of course of the King of the North, who is the antichrist, so that these events of the Old Testament while they refer to specific historical situations as their background, they go far beyond those historical situations on into the future and speak of the ultimate siege of the city of Jerusalem prior to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus.

Motyer: 33:1-12 is significantly rooted in the time of the Assyrian threat and thus anchored in contemporary history, but by verse 12 the canvas is widening and thereafter the themes are eschatological. The basic motifs are provided by such Psalms as 46, 47, 48, 74, 83. The gathering of the nations in hostility against Zion is a concept rooted in the pre-exodus Egyptian situation, where the power of the “world” threatened the extinction of the people of God; yet it was they who emerged unscathed.

David E. Thompson: God has His way of destroying those who destroy others; Track the history of Israel – it seems like one destructive power after another has arisen to do destructive things against them – but they have also been destroyed; the chaos that will exist in the Promised Land just before Christ appears as AntiChrist is doing his damage; serious thing to do something destructive against God’s sacred people and sacred property;

5 Prophetic Parts

1) (:1) Pronounces a Woe Judgment on the Destroyer –

It isn't the sin that is judged ... it is the sinner;

“*destroy*” – violently destroying people from a strong position bringing them total devastation

“*treacherous*” – a fraud; they pretend to be on your side but are out to get you

Just as soon as he has finished his work, God will finish him off;

A political leader can come into power and seem to be successful for a time; will seem to be Israel's friend; but will then target Israel for destruction; a person can get away with being a phony for awhile;

2) (:2) – Isaiah's Prays for Israel –

Without prayer you don't get deliverance; 4 requests:

- Be gracious – all we deserve from God is His judgment and wrath; we don't realize how sinful and pathetic we are; can't earn this grace; must bow head and ask for it humbly
- Waiting in state of expectation upon God – we don't know exactly what God will do next; Israel has been waiting on the Lord for a long time – waiting for her Messiah and for deliverance;
- God be our strength every morning – reference to the Tribulation; tough to survive every day; we need God's strength every day too; can't glorify God without His strength;
- God will give them salvation in time of distress – salvation is only of the Lord; Tribulation time most stressful in history of Israel

3) (:3-6) – God's Judgment Will Come Upon the Wicked Nations --

- God causes these nations to flee; thunderous roar of God
- God will cause nations to disperse – breaks them to pieces; God lifts Himself up to spring into action; displaying His sovereign power and majesty;
- God causes them to lose their spoils; army of locusts sweeps in and destroys the crops; everything these people have trusted in will be gone in a second; Israel will receive the wealth of the nations
- Isaiah describes God's blessings in the world and in Israel
 - o Lord will be exalted as the Most High Living God universally; when you make biblical judgment calls you exalt God
 - o God has filled Jerusalem with justice and righteousness –
- God will spiritually bless Israel (:6)
 - o He will be her stability – not in those times yet; the key to stability is you have done something about sin
 - o God will be her salvation
 - o God will be her wisdom
 - o God will be her knowledge
 - o God will be treasured and all will fear Him

4) (:7-11) Description of what will happen to those who don't trust God –

- The brave men will cry;
- Their ambassadors will weep; strutting around like a proud peacock for winning the Nobel Peace Prize but now weeping;
- Their highways will be abandoned; God shutting the world down
- AntiChrist will break his covenant with Israel; he will despise and destroy cities of Israel; he will devastate the beautiful places of the Promised Land

5) (:12) God will arise quickly to turn things around for Israel

TEXT: Isaiah 33:13-24

TITLE: APPRECIATE THE SAVIOR AS OUR TRUE DELIVERER, LAWGIVER AND KING

BIG IDEA:

TWO RESULTS OF WITNESSING GOD'S JUDGMENT AND DELIVERANCE

- **FELLOWSHIP**
- **BLESSING**

INTRODUCTION:

Review of the first half of Chapter 33:

When God springs into action, the destroyer is destroyed and God's people are delivered.

I. (:1-6) First Movement: Judgment and Deliverance – Woe #6 – last one; climactic

- Judgment pronounced against both destructive and treacherous behavior
- Deliverance prayed for – we need God's grace to persevere each day
- Dynamic Judgment effects – Dispersal and Looting of the Wicked Nations
- Dynamic Deliverance effects – Exaltation of the Lord in Jerusalem

II. (:7-12) Second Movement

- Desperate times cry for divine intervention
- Deliverance associated with the exaltation of God – “*I will arise*” theme
- Judgment executed in the last days (:11-12)

Applications:

- Near term: Threat of Assyria in Isaiah's day
- Eschatological: Day of the Lord scenario
- Application to the church today

Today's passage = second half of Chapter 33:

TWO RESULTS OF WITNESSING GOD'S JUDGMENT AND DELIVERANCE

- **FELLOWSHIP**
- **BLESSING**

In absolute terms, there are two types of authorities and two responses to authority:

- Types: Authorities in the extreme sense are either good or bad
 - o The Messiah-King will prove to be the perfect authority
- Responses: Our response to authority is either one of submission or rebellion
 - o If we respond properly, we will enjoy fellowship and experience God's blessing

I. (:13-16) RESULT #1 = FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY OMNIPOTENT GOD

A. (:13-14) Fear Associated with Fellowship with the Holy Omnipotent God of Awesome Judgment

1. Seeing God For Who He Is – God Realization

Transition verse ... but linked to vs. 14 by **Chiastic structure**: A B B A

*“You who are far away, hear what I have done;
And you who are near, acknowledge My might.
Sinners in Zion are terrified;
Trembling has seized the godless.”*

Those who are far away = the godless = the Gentile nations
Those who are near = Sinners in Zion = the Jews
People tend to be consumed with what they have done (message for world leaders today like Putin) – God commands us to look away from self and look at His works and power – demonstrated in His judgments and deliverance

Cf. how we used to wrestle as kids ... make the other person say “Uncle” – yield to my superiority – God says, Yield to my superiority

The **fear of the Lord** should be the starting point for wisdom; can't come to understand God rightly without this mindset of fearing Him – not some cuddly, casual friendship relationship pictured here – these sinners must be brought to the point where they fear God

Stedman: When Jews in Jerusalem saw 185,000 Assyrian soldiers slain by God in one night, they realized anew that the God of Israel was “a consuming fire” (Isa. 10:17; Heb. 12:29). Were they even safe in Jerusalem? . . . Many religious people in Jerusalem had hearts far from God because their religion was only a matter of eternal ceremonies (Isa. 29:13). Isaiah hoped that the miracle deliverance of the city would bring these people to a place of true devotion to the Lord. It is only as we walk with the Lord that we have real security and satisfaction.

2. Seeing Self For Who You Really Are – Self Realization

“Who among us can live with the consuming fire?

Who among us can live with continual burning?”

Ironside: The questions of **verse 14** have, I think, often been misunderstood. The prophet is not speaking here of that which Scripture clearly teaches elsewhere, namely, the everlasting punishment of the finally impenitent. The “*everlasting burnings*” are not the fires of hell but the holiness of God, before which no unrighteous man can stand, whatever his pretensions to piety may be. The verses that follow give the answer to the passage. “*Our God is a consuming fire*” (**Hebrews 12:29**). They only can abide before Him who have judged themselves in His holy presence and are seeking now to walk before Him in truth and uprightness.

B. (:15) Fruit Consistent with Fellowship with the Holy Omnipotent God of Righteous Living

1 Positive and 2 Negative requirements: (cf. requirements of **Psalm 15** and **24**)

1. Embraces Righteousness and Sincerity

“He who walks righteously, -- Deeds

and speaks with sincerity,” -- Words

Not the type of answer we would have given --

Brian Borgman: this would not be the answer we would give – we would say those who have faith in the Lord; list of ethical dos and don'ts; not teaching that you are made right with God by merit or works; often in the Scriptures no distinction made between fruit and the root – between faith and the works it produces; describing a person who has been changed and made righteous by faith in God; a true faith is a works-producing faith; cf. Romans 2; James 2; Faith alone saves but the faith that saves is never alone; Read 1 John – keep His commandments and love the brethren = Love and Obedience; imputed righteousness leads to ethical righteousness;

2. Rejects Corruption

*“He who rejects unjust gain,
And shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe;”*

Lots of opportunity for corruption and graft and greed

Young: When others press into his hands the gain acquired from oppression he shakes his hands so that the gain falls to the ground. His action represents an indignant refusal of all such gain and money.

3. Avoids Malice

*“He who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed,
And shuts his eyes from looking upon evil;”*

Not talking about being an ostrich and looking the other way; not putting your head in the sand and not addressing wickedness; don't embrace or be a participant in activities that would harm others

Parunak: The last three lines recall the three monkeys, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_wise_monkeys, depicted on the stable of the Tosho-Gu shrine in Nikko, Japan (“hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil”). The earliest date for the oriental saying (which also included the hands, “do no evil”) is AD 800 in China, so Isaiah may in fact be the origin for this saying, which may have come in with Christian missionaries, who were in China before the 7th century (as shown by the Nestorian Stele), or Jews, who were there even earlier.

Young: His organs of receptivity, the eyes, the ears, and the hands, are not at the service of evil; and his organs of activity, the tongue and feet, likewise will have no part therein. The man who is to inhabit high places wishes that none of his members be yielded as instruments of unrighteousness.

C. (:16) Favor Resulting From Fellowship with the Holy Omnipotent God of All Sufficient Protection and Provision

1. All Sufficient Protection

*“He will dwell on the heights;
His refuge will be the impregnable rock;”*

This is actually the boast of the arrogant

Problem with being in such an inaccessible location: Where will you get your provisions? You might be protected from the enemy, but what about provisions??

2. All Sufficient Provision

*“His bread will be given him;
His water will be sure.”*

Everything comes as a gift from God's grace.

II. (:17-24) RESULT #2 = BLESSINGS FROM THE MAJESTIC MESSIAH-KING

A. (:17-19) Blessing of Beholding the Majestic Messiah-King

1. (:17) Vision of the Excellencies of the Messiah-King

*“Your eyes will see the King in His beauty;
They will behold a far-distant land.”*

Do we take time to meditate upon the beauties of our King? Study His attributes; His names; Study prophecy to bring near to you those events that are yet future

Beall: The reference here is to the fact that Judah will not simply be a small territory (as she was in the days of Sennacherib), but a vast land, occupying the territory promised to Abraham and his descendants (see Isa 26:15). This will happen in the Millennium.

2. (:18-19) Relief From Terrifying, Savage Oppressors

*“Your heart will meditate on terror: ‘Where is he who counts? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?’
You will no longer see a fierce people, A people of unintelligible speech which no one comprehends, Of a stammering tongue which no one understands.”*

New Living Translation: You will think back to this time of terror, asking, "Where are the Assyrian officers who counted our towers? Where are the bookkeepers who recorded the plunder taken from our fallen city?"

Pulpit Commentary: Where now are the Assyrian officials - the scribe, who registered the amount of the tribute and booty; the receiver, who weighed the gold and silver carefully in a balance; and the engineer officer who surveyed the place to be besieged, estimated its strength, and counted its towers? All have perished or have fled away in dismay.

Constable: There will be no fear there of enemy officials who noted things down, weighed things out, and assessed Israel's strength by taking inventories. Neither will there be terror caused by invading armies that used incomprehensible speech (cf. 28:11, 19). Foreign tax collectors who spoke an alien language may also be in view. These were all fears that the Judeans had when the Assyrians invaded.

Beall: There would no longer be the presence of an enemy in their midst. As v. 19 states, no longer would Judah see a barbarous (the word is a hapax, but probably means something like this) people, of unintelligible speech which no one understands (see Isa 28:11; 36:11; Jer 5:15).

B. (:20-22) Blessing of Boasting in the Majestic Messiah-King

Parunak: Isaiah alternates between the vision of the secure city and its glorious king.

1. (:20) Boasting in His Permanent Presence

*“Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts;
Your eyes shall see Jerusalem an undisturbed habitation, a tent which shall not be folded,
Its stakes shall never be pulled up nor any of its cords be torn apart.”*

Oswalt: Perhaps there were two factors in the prophet's choice of images. One might have been the idea of the tabernacle in the wilderness. The tabernacle was the place where God was, the place where he could be met. During the wandering of the Hebrew people the tabernacle – and in one sense, God – was continually moving with the people. Now God would no longer move. He would come in the last days to a **permanent rest**.

The other aspect of the tent imagery is also in the disparity of something designed for mobility never moving. The traveler has truly come home when it can be said that he will never strike his tent again. So here the wanderers will have found that fertile valley where they can put up their tents on a **permanent basis**. In this life we are all in tents, and happy is the person who realizes that. But one day the tents will be pegged down forever (**Heb. 11:9-10**).

2. (:21) Boasting in His Protective Refuge

“But there the majestic One, the LORD, shall be for us a place of rivers and wide canals, On which no boat with oars shall go, and on which no mighty ship shall pass—“

Pulpit Commentary: As he is "a Place to hide in" (Psalm 32:7; Psalm 119:114), so he may be "a Place of broad rivers," full, i.e. of refreshment and spiritual blessing. Wherein shall go no galley. The river of God's grace, which "makes glad the city of God, "shall bear no enemy on its surface, allow no invader to cross it."

New Living Translation: *The LORD will be our **Mighty One**. He will be like a wide river of protection that no enemy can cross, that no enemy ship can sail upon.*

Gill: Egypt had its Nile, and Babylon its Euphrates, but Jerusalem had no such river for its convenience, commerce, and defense; but God promises to be that to his Jerusalem, his church and people

Motyer: (:21-23) can be divided up as follows:

- A1 The presence of the Lord in power (21a)
 - B1 Much water, absence of shipping (21b-d)
- A2 The presence of the Lord as king (22)
 - B2 Inadequate shipping, abundant spoil (23)

3. (:22) Boasting in His Governing Sovereignty – Key Summary Verse

- a. Judicial Sovereignty
 - “For the LORD is our judge,”*

Who decides right and wrong for you?

- b. Legislative Sovereignty
 - “The LORD is our lawgiver,”*

Who tells you what you can and can't do?

- c. Executive Sovereignty
 - “The LORD is our king;”*

Who rules over you and commands your allegiance?

- d. National Sovereignty
“*He will save us—*“

Whom do you look to for deliverance?

Parunak: This is the third reference to the Lord, after vv. 17, 21, and the most intimate. Now we not only behold his beauty (17) and possess his majesty (21), but enjoy the deliverance that comes from having him in control. We noted at the end of ch. 12 that the pinnacle of our joy comes when “*the holy one of Israel*” is “*in the midst of thee.*” The promise of Isaiah's great vision is not just that the Lord will come and establish his rule, but that we will see him (v. 17), he will be ours (v. 21), he will save us (22).

Constable: Messiah will be the Judge (leader and governor), lawgiver (legislator and chief), and (permanent) ruler of His people. He will be the head of all branches of government—**judicial, legislative, and executive.** He will provide deliverance in every situation.

This verse, which is a **climax to chapters 28—33**, was the basis for the Mayflower Compact, the covenant that the Pilgrims made when they left England for America in A.D. 1620. It was also the basis for the government of the United States, which had its roots in the Mayflower Compact.

Parunak:

Within Israel's historical context, these are not different divisions of the government, but different forms in which the whole government was exercised at different periods.

Title	Historical Example	Characteristic	Failing
Judge	Judges (Gideon, Samson)	Deliverance from enemies	Self-serving
Lawgiver	Moses	Consistency of rule	Relied on own strength, could not finish
King	David, Solomon	Organized government, international extension	Fell into idolatry and turned away from the Lord

Now the Lord will realize the promise of all these modes of government: the consistency of Moses' law, the strength and deliverance of the judges, the organization and international influence of the kings. But he will have none of their tragic failures. The outcome of all this is that he will save us.

Beall: The reason for the people's confidence that no one will attack is made clear in v. 22, a verse which also provides a climax to the entire section (chaps. 28-33), and indeed the whole book. (It is a mistake to put this verse in parentheses, as NKJV does—it is an integral part of the thought process of these verses). Jerusalem will be safe from attack, because the Lord is the people's judge (or deliverer, as in the period of the judges; but the word also refers to righteous judgment, which will be characteristic of the Millennial reign of Christ); He is also their lawgiver (who establishes just laws; see also the prophecy of Gen 49:10); He is their King. Indeed, He is the One Who will save His people. This is the message of the entire book. In chaps 28-33 the issue had been whether the people could trust God to save them, or whether they had to go somewhere else. This verse provides the answer. Through the righteous ruler, the Lord Jesus Christ, there would be both salvation and justice.

C. (:23-24) Blessing of Benefiting From the Victory of the Majestic Messiah-King

1. (:23) Benefiting from the Victory of Abundant Spoils Seized by a Crippled Vessel

“Your tackle hangs slack; It cannot hold the base of its mast firmly, Nor spread out the sail.

Then the prey of an abundant spoil will be divided; The lame will take the plunder.

Could be a reference to Assyria:

Constable: The enemy of Israel, represented here as a disabled ship, would not be able to overcome other cities or pursue trade by normal means.

Could be a reference to the limitations of God’s people:

MacArthur: In her own strength, Jerusalem is as helpless to defend herself as a ship deprived of its ropes and pulleys, that cannot sail.

Motyer: As a “ship of state” Zion is crippled – rigging loose, mast unstopped, sails unhoisted – yet this limping hulk takes the spoil! The victory has been won by another on its behalf. Spoils are the fruits of a conquest already past.

2. (:24) Benefiting from the Victory of Physical and Spiritual Healing for All Kingdom Residents

“And no resident will say, ‘I am sick’;

The people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity.”

Beall: Ultimately, in Isaiah's day and ours, the security and peace of a nation rests not in its military might or its alliances with other nations, but in this one fact: whether their people's sins are forgiven by a holy God. Spiritual salvation is the key to the strength of a nation.

CONCLUSION:

Fellowship and Blessing – what tremendous incentive to respond properly to the lessons God gives us from history of His judgments and His deliverance – lessons that will be reinforced with His future fulfillment of all the prophecies culminating in the millennial reign of the coming Messiah-King – the one who is our judge, our lawgiver, our King! Let’s appreciate our Savior today!

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How have you found the fear of the Lord to be the beginning of wisdom in your own walk?
- 2) What can you do to meditate better on the excellencies of the Messiah-King?
- 3) How are you actively making your boast in the Lord?
- 4) What aspect of physical and spiritual healing do you look forward to the most?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: The Lord takes credit for the judgments on the Gentiles of vv. 1-12, but also calls on “*ye that are near,*” the Jews, to heed his power.

The balance of the section forms a chiasm: A BCB D BCBC A

A. Correction of sinners	14-15	23-24
B. A secure dwelling	16, 17b	20, 21b
C. The king	17a	21a, 22
D. The vanished threat	18-19	

The focus (vv. 18-19) is on the destruction of Assyria, which is the overall point of the Woe.

Brian Borgman: Our Judge, Lawgiver and King

When sinners are faced with the reality of God and His judgment, they sense the inevitability of their demise; that is a good place to be; there’s only one Savior who can rescue you from the wrath to come; saints in Zion described in terms of what they do; a sculpture that had lost its integrity was mixed with wax; the tongue of the wise speaks truth in a loving, wise way; no flattery = trying to earn the praise of men; tongue is hardest member of body to control; not sticking his head in the sand; vulnerability of eyegate and eargate; circumspect in the way they walk; careful about what they see and hear; our corruption comes from within but can be fed and kindled from what comes from without; out of the reach of the enemy and exalted by the Lord; nearness to God; cry of martyrs: “Thank you for hurrying me on my way to God.” Coming a time when God will raise us up on the heights; Faith is strengthened as it looks back but it is predominantly a forward-looking dynamic; we see Messiah now only with the eyes of faith; Fanny Crosby, asked if she is angry for her blindness: “I thank God for my blindness because the first thing I will see will be Jesus.” You will never again hear the language of the enemy; Look upon the holy habitation of God of which you are now a citizen; place of regulated worship of God where our hearts are made glad; There is something wonderful about being a part of Zion; assemble with God’s people and focus on the Lord; peaceful and permanent habitation; the Word became flesh and pitched His tent among us; He Himself is the tabernacle of God, the meeting place, the place where God dwells; Is. 54 – keep stretching the tent out more and more – Carey going to India because God has more sheep to add to His fold; If God is for us, who can be against us? If you are not on God’s side you will be the ultimate eternal loser; Zeph. 3 – a mighty warrior in your midst; presence of God and His Spirit; of life; Psalm 46; not a channel for the enemy to access you; you never knew when the wrong boat would come upstream; Yahweh is our judge – our deliverer like Gideon and Samson; What a contrast when Yahweh is your far better judge; Flee to Jesus for refuge;

TEXT: Isaiah 34:1-17

TITLE: SLAUGHTER AND DESOLATION

BIG IDEA:

IMAGES OF SLAUGHTER AND DESOLATION FLESH OUT THE HORRIFYING PICTURE OF THE UNLEASHING OF THE WRATH OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

I don't know how much you have heard of the controversy over the new biblical epic movie "Noah" that has just hit the movie theaters. Apparently, some of the key truths of the Genesis narrative have been turned upside down in this rendition of the world-wide judgment flood. The most significant aberration to me is that the major sin which stirs up God's judgment is not portrayed as lust or wickedness or idolatry or sensual indulgence ... rather, God is upset over man's failure to be good environmentalists – a very politically correct twist on the biblical plot.

In our passage today, as we reach the culmination of chapters 28-33 in terms of God's judgments against the nations, the Creator God unleashes His pent up wrath in graphic images of slaughter and desolation that impact not only the wicked nations but the lands they inhabit. God does not function here as some modern politically correct environmentalist. He wreaks havoc with His creation in preparation for the blessings of the millennial kingdom. In chapter 34 we are going to see the horrifying picture of a once productive land devastated by slaughter and destined to desolation; while in chapter 35 in summary fashion we will see the reverse: the desolate land being rescued and restored to unprecedented productivity and fertility.

IMAGES OF SLAUGHTER AND DESOLATION FLESH OUT THE HORRIFYING PICTURE OF THE UNLEASHING OF THE WRATH OF GOD

A picture is worth a 1000 words; not an analytical presentation here; but visceral; designed to appeal to the emotions; making a connection to the heart

Rev. 19:17-21

Zech 14

R-rated graphics – for violent content

(1:) CALL TO ATTENTION: BOTH NATIONS AND LAND

“Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples!

Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it.”

Universal Significance and Scope

Not something the nations wanted to hear – judgment is being executed against them;

This message has relevancy; but world wants to shut its ears to God's warnings

I. (:2-7) IMAGES OF SLAUGHTER OF THE NATIONS

A. (:2-4) Overview

1. (:2a) Divine Indignation Against the Nations

*“For the LORD's indignation is against all the nations,
And His wrath against all their armies;”*

God has had enough; His patience and forbearance exhausted; acting now in anger and wrath;
Not a respecter of nations – All nations fall under His judgment; Not going to be a pretty picture;
Armies are powerless to mount any type of defense

Parunak: This section is marked by the fourfold repetition (in Hebrew) of “for ... the Lord has X.” His four fearsome possessions are indignation (v. 2), a sword (vv. 5-6a.), a sacrifice (6b), and a day of vengeance (8). The first and last focus on his motive, and are universal in scope; the second and third focus on the means, and are described in terms of Edom.

2. (:2b) Description of Complete Slaughter

*“He has utterly destroyed them,
He has given them over to slaughter.”*

Not a time for mercy

Constable: He has determined to devote them to destruction, to put them under the ban (Heb. *herem*; cf. 11:15; Josh. 6:21; 1 Sam. 15:3).

3. (:3-4) Permanent Decaying Slaughter

a. (:3) Image of Rotting Corpses on Earth

*“So their slain will be thrown out,
And their corpses will give off their stench,
And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.”*

Constable: Unburied corpses were, and still are, shameful things (cf. Ezek. 39:17-20; Rev. 19:17-18).

Beall: corpses will be openly exposed, and there will be so much blood that the mountains will melt (as the soil can wash away with excess water).

[cf. images this week of huge mountain flowing into destructive mud slide in Washington state]

b. (:4) Image of Dissolution of Hosts of Heaven –

cf. **Rev. 6:13, 14; Ephes. 6:12 (principalities and powers)**

*“And all the host of heaven will wear away,
And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;
All their hosts will also wither away
As a leaf withers from the vine,
Or as one withers from the fig tree.”*

Parunak: At first glance, this seems to associate the destruction of the physical world with that of the nations. But careful attention to usage of the expression “host of heaven” (see notes) shows that we should understand it personally. There is only one passage in the Bible (Jer 33:22) where it refers only to the physical heavenly bodies, and that is later than Isaiah. Everywhere else, it refers either to righteous angels (1 Kings 22:19 = 2 Chr 18:18; Neh 9:6) or to objects of false worship, often personifications of the heavenly bodies. According to Dan 10:13-21; 12:1, earthly nations have their angelic counterparts, and when the nations are judged, their spiritual overseers must fall as well. Against this background, Isaiah is saying that not only will the nations fall, but in addition the false gods whom they served will be cast down. The physical

darkening of the heavenly bodies associated with the Lord's return (24:23; Joel 2:31: 3:15) is emblematic of this spiritual conquest.

Constable: This implies also the destruction of the pantheon of gods that these heavenly bodies represented in the ancient world.

Oswalt: the point is that even the mysterious, unchanging stars, the seeming guarantors of the universe's perpetuity, are in the hands of the God of Jerusalem.

B. (:5-7) Detailed Images

1. (:5-6) Image of the Sword of the Lord

a. Instrument for Slaughter in the Execution of Divine Judgment

*“For My sword is satiated in heaven,
Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom,
And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.”*

Parunak: the terrifying picture is that the One who dwells in heaven is thirsty and the sword descends to satisfy his thirst. *“My sword satiates [someone] in heaven.”* **Judgment.**--“Curse” is חרם, the ban to total destruction that Israel was required to exercise on the inhabitants of the land.

Motyer: Edom is introduced as a case in point and typical of the whole exercise of eschatological judgment. The sword is an instrument of person-to-person destruction, figuring the Lord's direct action in judgment and the exaction of the individual penalty.

Oswalt: The figure is that when the divine sword has done all it can do to the heavenly host, the pantheon of national gods, then it will fall on the nations themselves as represented by Edom.

Constable: The prophet now introduced Edom, as a case in point, whose end would be typical of the whole earth (cf. 11:14; 63:1-6). . . But why Edom? The Old Testament consistently treats Edom as the antithesis of Israel (cf. Obad.). Isaac told Esau that he would live in an infertile area (Gen. 27:39-40).

Beall: Why is Edom singled out here? The Edomites were descendants of Esau, brother of Jacob. Edom was a perpetual enemy of Israel (and is especially singled out for judgment in Ezek 35:1-36:15; see also Gen 25:23; Num 20:14-21; Mal 1:2-3), apparently rejoicing and aiding the Babylonians when Judah fell (Obad 11-14; Ezek 35:15).

b. Immersed in Guts and Gore

*“The sword of the LORD is filled with blood,
It is sated with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats,
With the fat of the kidneys of rams.”*

Sacrificial system is bloody and messy

Parunak: The repeated reference to blood and fat, and the naming of the sacrificial animals, reminds us that in the law, the blood and fat of the sacrifices was reserved to the Lord alone (Lev 3:13-17; 7:22-27). He is claiming that which is his right.

c. Intended for Sacrifice and Slaughter of Rebel Nations

*“For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah,
And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.”*

Constable: All sin must be atoned for with sacrificial blood (cf. Lev. 4:1-12; Isa. 53). Those who repudiate the sacrifice of Christ for their sins will forfeit their own lives as sacrifices to God. . . Bozrah ("*impenetrable*," modern Buseirah), the capital of Edom, stood about 25 miles south southeast of the Dead Sea.

Oswalt: The language here is of sacrifice, reminding the reader that unless someone provides a sacrifice for our sins, we must ourselves become that sacrifice. Ultimately, as the NT makes plain, it is only God himself who can offer that sacrifice for all (Rom. 5:5-10).

2. (:7) Image of Strong Animals Slaughtered

a. Death Overtakes the Strongest Animals

*“Wild oxen shall also fall with them,
And young bulls with strong ones;”*

Young: These were animals of strength and also of great rage. Possibly they symbolize the leaders of the nation, men strong and powerful, determined in their purpose, but nevertheless objects of the avenging sword of God.

b. Guts and Gore Poured Out

*“Thus their land shall be soaked with blood,
And their dust become greasy with fat.”*

II. (:8-15) IMAGES OF DESOLATION OF THE LAND

A. (:8-10) Overview

1. (:8) Divine Vengeance Against the Land

*“For the LORD has a day of vengeance,
A year of recompense for the cause of Zion.”*

2. (:9a) Description of Utter Desolation (cf. Sodom and Gomorrah)

*“And its streams shall be turned into pitch,
And its loose earth into brimstone,”*

Motyer: the blighted landscape shows again that the ultimate environmental threat is human sin, leaving in its wake a lasting pollution.

3. (:9b-10) Permanent Burning Desolation

a. Image of Unquenchable Fire and Smoke

*“And its land shall become burning pitch
It shall not be quenched night or day;
Its smoke shall go up forever;”*

Parunak: The duration of this judgment is emphasized with four statements of perpetual desolation. In Hebrew, in each case the time reference comes first, followed by the verb, imperfect in all but the last case.

night nor day It shall not be quenched;
forever the smoke thereof shall go up;
from generation to generation it shall lie waste;
forever and ever none shall pass through it.

Issue: When is there time for this long term duration if you take the judgments literally?? During the millennial kingdom??

b. Image of Enduring Desolation

*“From generation to generation it shall be desolate;
None shall pass through it forever and ever.”*

B. (:11-15) Detailed Images

1. (:11) Images of Emptiness and Isolation

*“But pelican and hedgehog shall possess it,
And owl and raven shall dwell in it;
And He shall stretch over it the line of desolation
And the plumb line of emptiness.”*

Mainly animals classified as unclean

Constable: "Desolation" and "emptiness" (Heb. *tohu* and *bohu*, cf. Gen. 1:2) point to chaotic conditions that existed before Creation.

Rich Cathers:

confusion – *tohuw* – formlessness, confusion, unreality, emptiness
emptiness – *bohuw* – emptiness, void, waste

The "measuring line" and "plumb line" (stones) are building terms. It's a picture of what God is going to build for these people. He's going to build confusion and emptiness for them.

Oswalt: ironic tone – Normally the line and the plumb bob would be tools of construction, not of destruction. But here God has compared the crooked and deformed structures of the world to his own righteousness and has decreed demolition (1:21-24; 28:17; 2 K. 21:13; Lam. 2:8; Amos 7:7-9).

2. (:12) Images of the Extinction of Royalty

*“Its nobles-- there is no one there Whom they may proclaim king—
And all its princes shall be nothing.”*

Parunak: Man was created to have dominion over the earth, and even control freaks are a reflection, however distorted, of this divine purpose. But no human, no matter how strong-willed, can subdue this wilderness.

Young: Evidently the point of pride as far as Edom was concerned was in its rulers. Genesis 36:40-43 mentions the chiefs of Edom in which the aristocracy apparently culminated. The greatness of disgrace and humiliation for Edom would be to be deprived of her rulers, and it is

just that humiliation which she will have to undergo. Her rulers will be cessation; they will no longer exist.

3. (:13-15) Images of Environmental Wasteland

a. Thorns and Thistles

*“And thorns shall come up in its fortified towers,
Nettles and thistles in its fortified cities;”*

Parunak: These three words for prickly weeds are uncommon. None of them is among the words used in the curse in Eden, but in the wisdom literature all three characterize the sluggard and the fool:

Ecc 7:6 For as the crackling of thorns רב הליהוּ [the LORD has a סַיְ הַּ under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.

Pro 24:30-31 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; 31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns נים / קַּ, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

Pro 26:9 As a thorn הַּ הַּ + goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

b. Jackals and ostriches

*“It shall also be a haunt of jackals
And an abode of ostriches.”*

c. Desert creatures and Wolves, Hairy Goat and Night Monster

*“And the desert creatures shall meet with the wolves,
The hairy goat also shall cry to its kind;
Yes, the night monster shall settle there
And shall find herself a resting place.”*

Constable: So devoid of human population will the earth be that animals that people have tried to control in the past will be safe enough to multiply. Even the goat demon and the night monster, representing the most detestable animals, will roam the land.

d. Tree Snake and Hawks

*“The tree snake shall make its nest and lay eggs there,
And it will hatch and gather them under its protection.
Yes, the hawks shall be gathered there,
Every one with its kind.”*

Ironside: It is difficult to identify with certainty all of the beasts, birds, and reptiles here mentioned. Scholars are not agreed as to the exact meaning of each of the Hebrew words employed, but even though we may not understand each term used, we can see the full meaning of the passage, namely, that the land of Edom, once a flourishing kingdom, will become utterly desolate and an habitation only for wild creatures of the wilderness.

(:16-17) CALL TO APPLICATION -- CERTAINTY AND EVERLASTING DURATION OF JUDGMENT

A. Certainty of Judgment

*“Seek from the book of the LORD, and read:
Not one of these will be missing; None will lack its mate.
For His mouth has commanded, And His Spirit has gathered them.”*

Parunak: The mention of their mates emphasizes that this is going to be an ongoing problem. They will breed and take over the land. . . this section is the origin of the NT teaching of the lake of fire.

B. Duration of Judgment

*“And He has cast the lot for them,
And His hand has divided it to them by line.

They shall possess it forever;
From generation to generation they shall dwell in it.”*

CONCLUSION:

Why did the Lord rise up in judgment in the days of Noah and destroy the whole earth and all of its inhabitants – men and animals – with a universal flood? Not because man was a poor steward of the environment; but because man rejected the authority and the law of God and chose to live in the depravity of his own wickedness. So in the last days, God will rise up once again and bring an even more severe judgment that will be the prelude to the inauguration of times of blessing in the millennial kingdom – which we will study next week in Chapter 35. Make sure that your sins have been forgiven by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. You do not want to experience the wrath of God poured out on you as God makes you a sacrifice for sin. God is a consuming fire. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us: *“It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* (10:31)

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does this picture of a wrathful God contradict the popular characterization of God today as an all tolerant loving God who would never deal harshly with His creation?
- 2) Are there any consequences for nations in our time that would treat the Israel of today harshly?
- 3) What application can we make from this passage to our understanding of the sacrifice for sin offered up by our Savior in His own body?
- 4) Is it proper to use fear as a motivator of godly behavior?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: Chapters 34-35 are similar in theme to chaps. 24-27: they are eschatological in nature, speaking first of the Lord's judgment upon the earth (chap. 34), and then His blessing (chap. 35). In addition, just as chaps. 24-27 are the climax of chaps. 13-23, so chaps. 34- 35 are the climax of chaps. 28-33. In chap. 34, the fertile land becomes a desert, while in chap. 35 the desert becomes a place of blossoming.

S. Lewis Johnson: And so here in the chapters that have preceded chapters 28 through 33 of the Prophecy of Isaiah have been woes upon the nation and upon the nations, and now these woes upon the nation and the nations that Isaiah knew merge into this grand apocalyptic finale of the end of all things, and so the prophet's view point moves from the present and the background of his own time on to the end of the age and the second advent and kingdom of God. In other words, just as in the earlier section, messiah and the lineaments of his personal character form the promise section, so in the latter part it is the coming of the messiah to the earth that is designed to stir the hearts of Isaiah's readers.

Oswalt: The Sovereign of the universe has commanded this desolation and he will bring it to pass. Just as he sovereignly apportioned Canaan to his people Israel, so he has apportioned the Edoms of this world to the birds of the desert. No nation or people are able to choose their destiny without regard to their own behavior. Rather, by its behavior it earns a destiny in keeping with God's immutable character. So again Isaiah asks, "Why trust the nations? They are not masters of their own destiny. Rather, they belong to God who, like the landowner, can use a string to divide them into plots of his own choosing" (cf. Ps. 16:6; Mic. 2:5).

David E. Thompson: Ferocious Vengeance

What a scary text ... but you can count on its truth. Churches refuse to face sin ... that leads to hypocrisy. One day there will be a call to accountability = the most terrifying day of a person's life. God is a consuming fire. There is coming a day of ferocious judgment. Many modern pulpits teach that God is too loving to be severe ... but look at the judgment of the Flood. People don't like to speak of impending judgment. Very threatening text; God calls all nations to carefully listen and understand what He has to say And it is not pretty.

God is on Israel's side and all nations that have sided against her will be judged. Fear of punishment is a great motivator.

1. God invites all nations to listen to His Word (:1)

A serious message of pending judgment; the nations better take notice; terrifying message; not just speaking to certain nations; I call people in every continent to hear this message; these are not empty words; people lump the bible in with all other religious books – saying they are all alike; God says there is one book you better listen to; you better not do anything negative to the nation of Israel

2. God warns that He will pour out His wrath on all nations (:2-4)

I am a God of indignation; not a God who tolerates everything; our world has experiences all types of natural disasters ... but nothing yet like this ... so it must apply to future event; earthly powers will have no defense weaponry; series of promises:

- He will destroy all nations – (:2) God has made a contract with Himself to utterly destroy all nations

- He will slaughter all people (:2)
- God will turn people into stinking corpses (:3) – land will be drenched with blood; you won't be able to bury all the dead; up to a horse's bridle for 200 miles; during Great Tribulation period; now is Day of Grace;
- God will cause the host of heaven to wither (:4) – judge all of the demonic hosts of heaven – cast them out of heaven

3. (:5-17) God warns that He will pour out His wrath on all nations hostile to Israel

9 facts:

- (:5) God will pour out His wrath on Israel's enemies – Edom will become a desolate wilderness; name given to Esau after he sold his birthright for pot of stew; these are his descendants; modern day Jordan; a special target for God's wrath; came to hate Israel more than any other nation; Palestinians today want to wipe out Israel; gather them together like a grape harvest and then squash them
- ???
- God will recompense Israel – How is it possible that Israel can even exist today, given hostility against her; God is on her side
- Water will be polluted (:9) – like the lake of fire;
- (:9) – the land will be burned – similar to Sodom and Gomorrah;
- This land shall be empty desolation (:11) – smoldering wilderness;
- Leaders will be gone – (:12) – they strutted around so arrogantly;
- Major cities will be abandoned (:13) – epitome of what man could build
- Animals will live there (predatory beasts) – feeding off dead bodies

(:16) – you better take this Word seriously; these things are on the verge of happening; the stage is being set;

2 Applications:

- As we near the end of the church age, many will fall far away from the faith and give in to seducing spirits (those who say that God will never judge anyone)
- Purpose Driven Life (p. 30) – the greatest tragedy is life without fulfillment – Wrong!
- Only Jesus Christ can keep you from experiencing the wrath of God

TEXT: Isaiah 35:1-10

TITLE: TAKE ME HOME, COUNTRY ROADS

BIG IDEA:

3 KINGDOM BLESSINGS THAT ENCOURAGE BELIEVERS AS WE EAGERLY ANTICIPATE THE FAITHFUL FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISES

INTRODUCTION:

When we are away from home for any extended period, our hearts long for a return to that place where we belong; that place of joy and refreshment; that place of love and security; that place that just feels right to us because we were created to live there.

[Almost like the TV show Cheers – where everyone knows your name ...]

I love John Denver's classic hit song, Take Me Home, Country Roads:

Almost heaven, West Virginia
Blue ridge mountains
Shenandoah river -
Life is old there
Older than the trees
Younger than the mountains
Growin like a breeze

Country roads, take me home
To the place I belong
West Virginia, mountain momma
Take me home, country roads

...
I hear her voice
In the mornin hour she calls me
The radio reminds me of my home far away
And drivin down the road I get a feelin
That I should have been home yesterday, yesterday

Country roads, take me home
To the place I belong
West Virginia, mountain momma
Take me home, country roads

...

Words and music by bill danoff, taffy nivert and john denver

As pilgrims on this earth, our citizenship is in heaven and we look forward to the full realization of the kingdom of God on earth. Likewise the nation of Israel in the OT enjoyed many precious promises of their eventual return to Zion when all of Israel would be saved and the Messianic Kingdom would be ushered in. Whatever sorrow and hardship we may be experiencing now will one day be replaced by complete joy and abundant prosperity as we revel in the majestic glory of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We have some blessings that should excite us.

This chapter stands in stark contrast to the bleak picture of slaughter and desolation in the preceding chapter as the Lord judges the land of Edom. Jerusalem, the City of God on its majestic mountaintop, is the end goal for the journey described here as these Jews are regathered in the last days in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom. The more immediate return of the exiles from Babylon is but a foreshadowing of those yet future days of deliverance and glory.

Review:

(28:1 – 35:10) **6 Woes Against Worldly Alliances** Based on Pride and Self-Reliance – Destined for Both Near Term and Eschatological Judgment With Some Remnant Hope – **Application:** Trust in God Alone!

1. (28:1-29) Woe #1 – Directed Against Harmful Political Leaders = Disoriented Drunkards and Security-Seeking Scoffers of Israel –
2. (29:1-14) Woe #2 – Directed Against Religious Hypocrisy in Jerusalem –
The Lord Judges Rote Religious Tradition with Spiritual Blindness
3. (29:15-24) Woe #3 – Directed Against the Sophisticated Self Sufficient = Those Who Think They Are Smarter Than God = Deceivers and Defrauders –
Those Who Think They are Smarter Than God Will be Wiped Off the Face of this Earth
4. (30:1-33) Woe #4 – Directed Against Alliances with the World –
5. (31:1-32:20) Woe #5 – Directed Against Those Who Trust in the World's Wisdom and Power
6. (33:1-12) Woe #6 – Directed Against the Destroyer with Deliverance for Zion –
When God Springs Into Visible and Dramatic Action, the Destroyer is Destroyed and God's People are Delivered

(34) Images of Slaughter and Desolation flesh out the horrifying picture of the unleashing of the wrath of God

3 KINGDOM BLESSINGS THAT ENCOURAGE BELIEVERS AS WE EAGERLY ANTICIPATE THE FAITHFUL FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISES

As we unfold these **promised physical blessings** to the nation of Israel and specifically the land of Jerusalem – anticipating the deliverance her Messiah would bring in the Millennial Kingdom – we will make the **spiritual application** to us as believers today. Faith in Jesus Christ today brings immediate parallel blessings in the spiritual realm to us today.

Tone of Gladness and Singing and Rejoicing pervades this chapter

I. (:1-4) MAJESTIC GARDEN IN THE DESERT – APPLICATION: ENCOURAGEMENT AND COURAGE IN ANTICIPATION OF OUR COMING DELIVERANCE

A. (:1-2) Glorious Description

1. Beautiful Blossoming of the Desert and Wilderness

*“The wilderness and the desert will be glad,
And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom;
Like the crocus it will blossom profusely
And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy.”*

God will transform the parched land of Israel into the most productive land –
He can do that in your life spiritually right now – transform your depression into joy

2. Majestic Testimony to God's Glory

*“The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, The majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They will see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.”*

MacArthur: Areas near the sea noted for their agricultural fertility.

Parunak: Lebanon was renowned for its majestic cedars, Carmel and Sharon as fruitful garden lands. Now the wilderness and desert will share in their fruitfulness. . . The wilderness receives restoration, but only humans can understand its significance as demonstrating God's power.

Beall: Lebanon, Sharon, and Carmel were all mentioned in Isa 33:9 as being in mourning as Israel was devastated by her enemies; here, they are used as symbols of Israel's restoration. Nature's glory, however, merely sets the stage for the glory of the One responsible for the rebirth of the wilderness—namely, the Lord Himself.

B. (:3-4) Encouraging Application

1. Provides Strength

“Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.”

Like the slumping of the shoulders which gives indication of discouragement

David E. Thompson:

“exhausted” – so worn down they have a hard time even lifting their hands

“feeble” – knees about to buckle

God’s people can find themselves in circumstances where they are exhausted and feeble; in those times they need encouraging words; speaking forth the marvelous truth of the grace and power and deliverance of God; take courage because God is going to pour out vengeance on all your enemies; you stay faithful

- God is for you if you are a believer
- God is with you
- God is in you
- God will help you; you wait on Him

Heb. 12:12-13 – writer of Hebrews quotes this verse in an exhortation to perseverance in the midst of difficulties and under the hand of divine discipline; we need the spiritual discipline to continue to run the race that is set before us – looking unto Jesus who provides the strength we need

2. Provides Courage

“Say to those with anxious heart, ‘Take courage, fear not.’”

Parunak: 1 Chron. 28:20 -- David is commissioning Solomon to build the temple. The focus in Isaiah is on the march to Zion. The people are on their way to the sanctuary, and Isaiah encourages them with the memory of how God strengthened Solomon as he prepared a place for the nation to worship the Lord. [Strength from the presence of God]

3. Promises Vengeance

*“Behold, your God will come with vengeance;
The recompense of God will come,”*

34:8 – studied this last week

2 Thess. 1:6-10

4. Promises Deliverance

“But He will save you.”

Motyer: The first move of reassurance is simply to “*Behold your God*”, the God who is still prepared to be “*yours*”, notwithstanding all your weaknesses. The second move is to recognize that he will put everything right: *vengeance* for “wrong suffered” (in this case, by his people) and retribution from “wrong done” (here to his people). Thirdly, he comes to effect salvation, full deliverance. Note the parallel phrases “*he will come with vengeance*” (what he will do against his adversaries) and “*he will himself come and he will save you.*” (what he will do for his people).

II. (:5-7) MESSIANIC MIRACLES OF TRANSFORMATION – FROM DEATH TO LIFE IN EVERY AREA – THE REDEMPTION OF ALL OF CREATION – APPLICATION: GOD IS POWERFUL TO BRING ABOUT COMPLETE DELIVERANCE AND RESTORATION OF LIFE AND FRUITFULNESS

A. Transformation of Every Human Deficiency – both physical and spiritual connotations

Davidson: The Healing of the Handicapped -- The blind, the deaf, lame and mute are used frequently to speak of spiritual conditions and well as physical (6:10; 28:7; 29:9-10, 18; 30:20-21; 32: 3-4). . . Physical, spiritual and social healing are signs of the Messiah and the messianic age (Mt. 11:5; 12:22; Acts 3:7-8). The Messiah will bring about this restoration of life.

1. Sight -- “*Then the eyes of the blind will be opened*”

No more need for seeing eye dogs and books of Braille and schools for the blind

2. Hearing -- “*And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped*”

No more need for sign language and for hearing aids

3. Mobility -- “*Then the lame will leap like a deer*”

Not just gradually get better like through physical therapy . . . but immediately restored to supreme mobility

No more need for crutches and canes and wheel chairs and walkers –

Saw commercial the other day for wheel chair that helps you go up and down stairs so you can continue to live in your two story house in your old age

Cf. **Acts 3:8** – Peter’s healing of the lame man in the temple

4. Speech -- “*And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy*”

David E. Thompson: Jesus quoted this text in **Matt. 11:4**; John the Baptist was in jail; wondering why Christ had not established His kingdom yet; Jesus leaves out the fact that the waters will break forth in the wilderness – Christ will do that at His Second Advent; performing the Messianic miracles but not fulfilling all of them at the present time; all will be healed and the land will be blessed;

B. Transformation of Nature – Water, fertility – Streams in the Desert

“For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah.

The scorched land will become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water;

In the haunt of jackals, its resting place, Grass becomes reeds and rushes.”

Water is such a precious commodity in the land of Israel – there will be no lack in the millennial kingdom (**41:18**)

Beall: roaming a desolate land (as there were in 34:13), but instead there would be abundant vegetation (“the rock crags which those animals normally inhabit have become a splashy meadow” [Oswalt, p. 624]). Again, Oswalt's comment is germane: “the way of man is to make the inhabited uninhabitable; the way of God is to take the barren and make it abundant” (p. 625).

Oswalt: The point is that God’s coming to his people (35:4) has its purpose in the people coming to him in holy lives for worship and fellowship (2:2-4; 4:2-6; 25:6-9; 66:18-23).

III. (:8-10) MIGRATIONAL HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS – APPLICATION: FELLOWSHIP AND JOY ON THE CELEBRATORY ROAD HOME AS THE REDEEMED PEOPLE OF GOD

Wayne Joyce: 4 other Places in Isaiah that speak of this **Highway**:

11:16; 19:23-25 – what a peace triangle: Egypt (called “*His people*”), Assyria and Israel; the highway will extend;

40:3 “*prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway*”;

62:10 – a cleared way for God’s people to go; safe to travel; cleared out of all stones; God kept His promises to Judah and will keep His future promises related to the kingdom

A. What is so Special about this Highway?

1. Surprising to find a Highway in the desert

“A highway will be there, a roadway”

A significant road that leads to a significant destination

2. Characterized by Holiness

“And it will be called the Highway of Holiness”

The road is narrow that leads to salvation

3. Off Limits to Unbelievers

a. *“The unclean will not travel on it”*

b. *“And fools will not wander on it”*

cf. Psalm 1 – don’t have to worry anymore about being contaminated by the wicked, the unclean, the polluted

Highways are a dangerous place today – all types of crazy people driving right next to you

4. Reserved for the Redeemed of the Lord

a. *“But it will be for him who walks that way”* = holiness vs unholiness

b. *“But the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord will return”*

Parunak: Finally we learn the identity of the company that is on this joyful earth-transforming journey: the redeemed, those whom the Lord has ransomed. The two words are very close semantically. Both describe setting someone free by paying a price. Each represents about half of the OT instances of the Greek λυτροω, the main NT word for redemption. Yet they have different emphases.

“Redeemed” reflects Hebrew אָדָּם, which emphasizes the one who pays the price. This is the first of 25 instances in Isaiah, who uses the word more than any other OT book (25x). Next are Ruth and Leviticus, with 22 instances each, and both emphasize that the one paying the price must be a kinsman. In keeping with the emphasis on the doer, the verb frequently appears as a participle (46/96 of the Qal instances), often nominally, “the redeemer.”

“Ransomed” reflects Hebrew קָנָה. This verb says nothing about the performer, and in fact only 2 of its 55 Qal instances are as the participle (and neither is nominal). The emphasis is entirely on the commercial transaction. This verb appears only 4x in Isaiah. Two are here and in the quotation of this verse in 51:11. The other two come before this point:

1:27 Zion shall be **redeemed** with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

The complement with אִינְדִּיקָטִיבָּ indicates the means or price; cf. Exod 13:13; 34:20. It may refer to God's exertion by which he accomplishes something (Deut 9:26; Neh 1:10).

29:22 Therefore thus saith the LORD, who **redeemed** Abraham

As we discussed on this passage, the focus is on Abraham's deliverance from his idolatrous past, which God condemned and judged.

5. Protected against Predators – Complete Security and Safety

*“No lion will be there,
Nor will any vicious beast go up on it.”*

B. What is so Exciting about this Highway?

1. It leads to the City of God – Throne of the Messiah of the Kingdom

“And come with joyful shouting to Zion,”

2. It ushers in long term Rejoicing

“With everlasting joy upon their heads.”

Oswalt: Joy is the by-product of the presence of God in life. When we, through our lack of trust, push Him away, the end result is dryness and lifelessness. It is only when we turn to Him, recognizing the insufficiency of all other help, that we perceive His coming to us and find the joy and healing of His transforming grace.

3. It replaces sorrow and hardship with gladness and joy

*“They will find gladness and joy,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.”*

CONCLUSION:

Marantha! Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus! Take me home, country roads.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When we see the beauty of nature blossoming around us in the spring time, do we make the application to the beauty of the Lord in all of His glory that will be evident in the Millennial Kingdom?
- 2) What spiritual truths encourage us to fear not and take courage along our pilgrim way?
- 3) Have you experienced the type of spiritual deliverance that has led to spiritual sight and freedom from bondage?
- 4) Is your life characterized by singing and joy and rejoicing?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Martin: This is the desired millennial state for which the nation has longed since God first promised it to Abraham. This is the state that mankind constantly longs for – a utopia in which peace and fertility prevail. This condition will not come, however, till after God’s judgment on the world (chap. 34). This emphasis in Isaiah rules out postmillennialism, which teaches that the world will get increasingly better thus bringing in the kingdom which will be followed by the Messiah’s return. The amillennial teaching that there will be no earthly kingdom at all because the Old Testament promises to Israel are being fulfilled in the church today is also foreign to Isaiah’s thought. Isaiah taught that the Lord will regather believing Israel, Abraham’s physical descendants, and will establish God’s long-awaited kingdom on earth. That promised restoration is not being fulfilled in the church today in any sense.

Dennis Davidson: The Lord’s Time of Blessing

- I. THE REJOICING OF NATURE, 1-2.
- II. THE RECOMPENSE OF THE REMNANT, 3-4.
- III. THE RESTORATION OF LIFE, 5-7.
- IV. THE RANSOMED RETURN, 8-10.

To demonstrate this time of transformation apparently God will bring about climatic changes that will result in more rain in the promised land. Small flowers burst forth to turn the desert into a place of beauty. Lebanon . . . Carmel, and Sharon, which were becoming barren (33:9), will once again become fruitful areas of agriculture. People in those areas will see the Lord’s glory, that is, they will see the fruitfulness that comes because of righteousness (33:17). They (emphatic), who have repeatedly asked for God to reveal Himself, will see the glory of Him who will make the land and nature rejoice and shout for joy. He who can do such things in nature can also do such

things within the human heart.

Kevin Burden: The King's Highway

1. It's a **Hero's Way** = the Way of the Lord

This is a "royal road." In ancient times powerful kings would build roadways through their kingdoms.

2. It's a **Holy Way**

We are "wayfaring men" on this road and do not know what lies around the next bend. But if we will walk in His path, and follow His lead, we will not "err." This word means "wander, go astray, stagger, and stumble." His holy way is found in staying in His Word and in communion with Him in prayer.

3. It's a **Harmless Way**

4. It's a **Heavenly Way**

- There is a mansion at the end of the Way (John 14:1-3).
- There is a glorious city at the end of the way (Rev 21:9-22:5).
- There is peace, joy and blessing at the end of the road (Rev 21:4).
- We will meet the King face to face at the end of the way (Rev 22:4).

5. It's a **Happy Way**

Those who walk the King's highway experience...

- His peace (Phil 4:7). "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
- His pleasure (1 Pet 1:8). "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:"
- His presence (Heb 13:5). "I will never leave thee..."
- His provision all along the way (Matt 6:25-34).

Timothy Dane: Reasons Why We can have Hope in the Promises of God

Our hope needs to be in God and in His promises; Dealing with Judah about 701 BC; Assyrians already surrounding the city; God did not let Judah fall to the enemy at that point; He did allow Babylonia to conquer Judah at a later date; the people of Israel were powerless against such a strong and ruthless army

Wayne Joyce: The Glorious Kingdom will be Established

Chap. 32 – A King will Reign in Righteousness

Chap. 33 -- Jerusalem will be Delivered

Chap. 34 – The Sinful World will be Judged

Chap. 35 – What a contrast to chap. 34; restoration glory throughout the whole creation;

Rom. 8:19 – all of nature waiting to be freed from the curse of sin; desert would become more beautiful and fruitful than the three places known to be pretty; strengthening people that are weak and afraid; God will set things right; remove our physical pain and make us completely whole to enjoy a glorious new world; Christ pointed to these types of miracles as validating Him as the Messiah when John the Baptist sent out a commission – Luke 7:18-23 – quoting from this passage;

Harry Ironside: Millennial Blessing

Every fruitful field or orchard, every lovely garden, presents a foretaste of what in Messiah's day will be everywhere prevalent, when the parched deserts will give place to verdant meadows, and the thorns and thistles brought in by the curse will vanish, and trees and shrubs bearing fruits to

appeal to the appetite and flowers to delight the eye, will spring up instead. But the physical and spiritual blessings that will come to all mankind will transcend all of these material changes.

David E. Thompson:

The work of God is first sad before it is happy; Hollywood presents Armageddon as end of civilization; but in biblical prophecy that is not true; 1000 years of millennial bliss in the kingdom; God promised Abraham that He would take him to a land and bless him in that land; Isaiah describes a utopia that will one day exist in the land of Israel; Israel has longed for that since the days of Abraham; chaos of world judgment now replaced with calm of world blessings; Al Gore: it is our responsibility to restore beauty to this environment or it will not get done; Wrong!

7 Powerful kingdom blessings promised:

1) God will turn Israel's parched land into productive land (:1-2)

Middle East is known as a desert area; growing and expanding; When Jesus reigns in your life He can make you productive right now – even though you were barren and unfruitful – produces joy

2) God will encourage and strengthen His people (:3-4)

3) God will heal the physically handicapped (:5-6)

Sickness and disease the result of curse from Fall of Man and sin; no more need for schools for blind and deaf;

4) God will turn waterless areas into well watered areas (:6-7)

Water will be plentiful in the promised land; no more parched ground; Jesus can do this spiritually right now when He reigns in your life; you can be refreshed by God and have a life that refreshes others;

5) God will make a Holy Highway through the land (:8)

Highways in Israel have not been safe; you will see armed soldiers because of threat of danger; major highway reconstruction that leads right into Jerusalem from Egypt in south and Iran in north; the way of holiness is the way to God; nobody gets near God who is unholy; “redeemed” – set free from their sins; one narrow way of entrance to get on this highway; crazy people on highway now; but here everybody on this highway is righteous and holy; Christ is the only Highway to Heaven

6) God will remove all the ferocious animals from the land (:9)

God will use wild beasts to kill people in the Tribulation Period; bears and lions and coyotes and wolves; world will be one big petting zoo; animal and people functioning in harmony

7) God will turn a land of sorrow into a land of joy (:10)

Middle East has never known this; Israel boxed in by nations that would just as soon exterminate them; a land of mourning and wailing at present; What God is going to do physically for Israel in the end times He can do right now for you spiritually;

TEXT: Isaiah 36:1-37:7

TITLE: DON'T MAKE A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

BIG IDEA:

SEEK THE LORD FOR DELIVERANCE IN TIMES OF SATANIC INTIMIDATION AND PRESSURE RATHER THAN CUTTING A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

INTRODUCTION:

I have a verse posted on the wall in my study above my computer that reminds me every day of the Lord's ability to rescue me in times of trouble. I posted it there when I lost my job after 28 years with the same company just as we were starting to trust God for the planting of this church 5 years ago. It was a time of satanic pressure and intimidation.

Psalm 50:15

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me."

Satan has a different message and a different agenda for our lives. He loves to put us in the crucible of pressure and hardship in order to solicit our surrender to his seductive temptations. "The Lord can't save you," our antagonist cries out. "I have something to offer you which will meet your needs and bring you comfort and happiness." Isn't that what Satan offered to the Lord Jesus to try to dissuade Him from going to the cross – look at all the kingdoms of this earth I would freely give you – just make a deal with me.

"I would never make a deal with the devil," you glibly protest. But do you really understand the schemes and the strategies of the one pursuing you like a roaring lion? He comes at us very deceptively – presenting himself as an angel of light. The serpent is crafty and subtle. We need to understand his **approach** and his **arguments** – they haven't changed.

4 chapters (36-39) of largely historical narrative inserted in between 2 major sections of Isaiah's prophecy. First section focused mainly on the threat from Assyria. The second section will focus more on **Babylon**.

Parunak: The narrative is repeated almost verbatim in **2 Kings 18:13-20:21**. Scholars debate extensively whether Isaiah is copying Kings, or Kings is copying Isaiah, or whether both are drawn from some common source. The fact that each differs at points from the other suggests that the third alternative is the case, but that discussion is not important for our understanding of the text.

Historical Context: Judah finally has a godly king – Hezekiah. He has been trying to institute religious reform; tearing down the idols and altars on the high places and pointing people back to the Word of God. But Satan puts him under some intense pressure in this confrontation with the armies of Assyria – under King Sennacherib in 701 B.C. and his arrogant mouthpiece Rabshakeh.

SEEK THE LORD FOR DELIVERANCE IN TIMES OF SATANIC INTIMIDATION AND PRESSURE RATHER THAN CUTTING A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

I. (36:1-10) LET'S MAKE A DEAL -- RABSHAKEH'S FIRST ATTEMPT AT INTIMIDATING GOD'S PEOPLE INTO SURRENDER

A. (:1-3) The Devil's Approach: Making a Deal with the Devil Becomes an Option Under the Pressure of Intimidating Danger

1. (:1) Applying Pressure

"Now it came about in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them."

Constable: On an Assyrian record, Sennacherib claimed to have taken 46 cities of Judah during this campaign (cf. 2 Chron. 32:1). The record is on the Prism of Sennacherib, also called the Taylor Prism, now in the British Museum.

Oswalt – should read 24th year = 701 B.C. ?? Sennacherib had been on his throne about four years by 701 B.C. Those four years had been largely taken up with attempts to put down revolts spurred by the death of his father, Sargon II, on the battlefield. When the east and south had been dealt with in an at least temporary fashion . . . the Assyrian emperor was ready to turn to the West.

2. (:2) Asserting Dominance

"And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller's field."

Constable: Rabshakeh is a title that seems about equivalent to field commander. The word literally means "chief cup-bearer," but this appears to have been the name of the original office from which the present one evolved. The chief cup-bearer was the king's personal advisor (cf. Neh. 1:11). Lachish stood about 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. A bas relief, now in the British Museum, shows Sennacherib besieging Lachish. Interestingly, the place where the Assyrian commander took his stand near Jerusalem was the same place where Isaiah had stood when he urged Ahaz to trust God 23 years earlier (cf. 7:3).

Beall: Hezekiah here is presented in conscious contrast to his father **Ahaz** and his actions in chaps 7-12. Indeed, Rabshakeh picks the very spot to blaspheme the Lord where Isaiah had stood years before to exhort Ahaz to trust in the Lord. And it was Assyria to whom Ahaz had turned for refuge; now that nation was threatening Judah! Yet, Hezekiah's godly response differed entirely from his father's reaction to a much less serious threat.

3. (:3) Assembling the Key Leaders

"Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him."

Oswalt: Hezekiah had thought he had bought the Assyrians off with tribute, but there they stood, with all the calm arrogance of those who have absolute power on their side.

Pressure directed against Hezekiah, against his key leaders, and against the people as a whole

B. (:4-7) The Devil's Argument: Making a Deal with the Devil is Your Only Viable Option

1. (:4-5) Folly of Resisting the Devil

“Then Rabshakeh said to them, ‘Say now to Hezekiah, Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, What is this confidence that you have? I say, Your counsel and strength for the war are only empty words. Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me?’”

Constable: The Rabshakeh told the Judean officials to give Hezekiah—he did not call him a king—a message from "the great king," a title the Assyrian monarchs arrogantly claimed for themselves (cf. 10:8; 30:33). He questioned Hezekiah's confidence that led him to rebel against Sennacherib. Clearly Sennacherib wanted the Judahites to know that he regarded Hezekiah as a minor chieftain incapable of resisting the massive power of the Assyrian Empire.

But God commands us to resist the devil.

- Adam and Eve failed here
- Christ was successful in the Temptation in the wilderness
- The command of Scripture is clear: *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”*

2. (:6) Folly of Relying on Egypt (= Other Resources of Power and Wisdom)

“Behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt; on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.”

Very subtle; the devil speaks truth here; in agreement with divine counsel; trying to gain some credibility so you will succumb to his other lies

Constable: Sennacherib had already defeated the Egyptians, who for the first and last time had unsuccessfully come to the aid of the Philistines, at Eltekeh northwest of Lachish.

Oswalt: According to Sennacherib's annals, the Assyrian army struck the coast at Sidon and from that point worked its way southward, devouring opponent after opponent until the Egyptian army finally made a stand at Eltekeh about twenty miles west of Jerusalem at the edge of the hill country. There Isaiah's prophecies concerning the foolishness of dependence upon Egypt (20:1–6; 30:1–5; 31:1–3) proved painfully true as the Egyptians were routed and the Assyrians continued on to Lachish, Judah's last hope for stemming the tide.

3. (:7) Folly of Relying on the Lord

“But if you say to me, ‘We trust in the LORD our God,’ is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, ‘You shall worship before this altar?’”

Hezekiah not very popular; had ruffled some feathers with his aggressive policies of worship reform;

Motyer: Hezekiah had conducted a centralizing reform of religion (2 Ki. 18:1-7; 2 Ch. 29-31) with the closure of local sanctuaries and their (at best) corrupt Yahwism. The Rabshakeh speaks from his own heathen background where reduction in quantity of worship detracted from a god's glory, but he may have been playing also on the frayed nerves of any who were less than convinced of the rightness of what the king was doing.

C. (:8-10) The Devil's Appeal = Closing Pitch: Making a Deal with the Devil is a Good Deal for You

1. (:8) The Devil Always Has Something to Offer – Seductive Appeal

“Now therefore, come make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them.”

Appeals to our Greed, our Pride, the Lusts of our Flesh

2. (:9) The Devil Always Tries to Magnify Our Weakness – Stirring Up Doubt and Fear

“How then can you repulse one official of the least of my master's servants, and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?”

When we rely on God's Grace, we turn our weakness into a strength

3. (:10) The Devil Always Lies to Try to Subvert Our Loyalty

“And have I now come up without the LORD's approval against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land, and destroy it.’”

He has been a liar from the beginning

II. (36:11-21) LET'S MAKE A DEAL – RABSHAKEH'S SECOND ATTEMPT AT INTIMIDATING GOD'S PEOPLE INTO SURRENDER

A. (:11-12) The Devil's Approach – Intensifying the Pressure

1. (:11) Attempt to Mitigate the Pressure – Confine the Confrontation to the Leadership

“Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah said to Rabshakeh, ‘Speak now to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak with us in Judean, in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.’”

2. (:12) Intensification of the Pressure – Expand the Confrontation to the Masses

“But Rabshakeh said, ‘Has my master sent me only to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, doomed to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?’”

Constable: He explained that his message was for all the people, many of whom were sitting on the city wall listening, not just the politicians in Jerusalem. All the people were, after all, doomed to the horrible conditions of siege warfare. He wanted to separate the people from their king and his policy of resisting Sennacherib. He also wanted to shock and terrorize the people by using the most crude and disgusting terms he could to picture siege warfare.

B. (:13-15) The Devil's Argument – No Hope in Other Options

1. (:13) Braggadocio of the Devil

“Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean, and said, ‘Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.’”

Young: we may be sure that he stood in such a position as to focus attention upon himself. In

this position and in these words the voice and attitude of Satan are manifest. It is the kingdom of man, unregenerate, self-sufficient man, that now speaks, confident that Yahweh is merely a god like other gods and can be embraced in man's empire. To heighten the infamy Rabshakeh raises his voice, and speaks in the language the inhabitants of Judah would understand. He is about to lay down an ultimatum.

2. (:14) Belittling of Spiritual Leadership

“Thus says the king, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you;”

Oswalt: How dare this nobody range himself against *The King*? And how could anybody commit himself to his nobody and his god? For those who persisted in believing, faith was never more audacious than at that moment! But then, it is always audacious, or it is not faith.

3. (:15) Blasphemy Against God

“nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, ‘The LORD will surely deliver us, this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’”

Oswalt: sums up what this entire section (chs. 7-39) is about. The question has been explored in scores of ways: Can God be trusted? Is he strong enough? Is he good enough? Is he faithful enough? If not him, then who or what should be trusted? The nations, humanity – what? The answer has come back in scores of ways: God *can* be trusted? . . . Sennacherib claims to be more trustworthy than God

C. (:16-20) The Devil's Appeal – My Deal is Your Best Deal

1. (:16-17) Promise of Peace and Prosperity

“Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria, 'Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.’”

Terms of surrender: cut a peace treaty with me

Constable: The Rabshakeh promised that if the city surrendered, the people would enjoy peace and prosperity rather than war and starvation. They would be deported, a well-known Assyrian policy toward conquered peoples, but he portrayed the land where they would go as similar to their own but even better.

Motyer: He is too shrewd to try to hide the well-known Assyrian policy of deportation, but he tries to sweeten the pill.

2. (:18-20) Pattern of Assyrian Dominance Over Other Lands and Gods

“Beware lest Hezekiah misleads you, saying, ‘The LORD will deliver us.’ Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand? Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”

Transition (36:21) – Refusal to Negotiate

“But they were silent and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, ‘Do not answer him.’”

Sometimes silence is the best approach; there is no adequate human response; the Lord must intervene and deliver

III. (36:22-37:7) SEEKING THE LORD – RESPONSE TO THE INTIMIDATION OF RABSHAKEH

A. (36:22) Seeking the Lord by Appealing to God-Ordained Authority

“Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of Rabshakeh.”

B. (37:1) Seeking the Lord by Humbling Yourself in Repentance and Prayer

“And when King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD.”

C. (37:2-5) Seeking the Lord by Invoking His Glory and Inquiring of Divine Revelation

“Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. And they said to him, Thus says Hezekiah, ‘This day is a day of distress, rebuke, and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver. Perhaps the LORD your God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.’ So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.”

Oswalt: All the delegation were in sackcloth by this time. One wonders if Isaiah’s and Shebna’s eyes met for a moment as both remembered the time when Isaiah had denounced the then prime minister and prophesied his humiliation (22:15-19). So also Eliakim may have remembered Isaiah’s words about too much weight being hung on a new peg (22:23-25). At any rate, the king’s example had touched the entire government establishment at last. God was their only hope. Why had they not realized it sooner? . . .

It is of great significance that both here and in the next incident Hezekiah’s greatest concern is the honor of God. This is surely a testimony to the essential greatness of Hezekiah’s heart. He is not first concerned with his or his nation’s survival. He is chiefly concerned that their action have provided the vehicle whereby God’s name has been brought into contempt. Furthermore, he knows that if God’s glory is made paramount, then the nation will survive. It was the putting of survival first which had brought them to this perilous state.

Young: The metaphor pictures extreme distress, need, and suffering, and above all the fact that the intervention of extraordinary help is needed. In reality it is a cry of utter acknowledgment

that God's help is required. If the womb does not open so that the child can be born, the child will die and probably the mother also. So, unless strength is at hand to deliver Judah, she too will perish.

D. (37:6-7) Seeking the Lord by Believing in the Resources of Divine Grace and Power

“And Isaiah said to them, ‘Thus you shall say to your master, Thus says the LORD, Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.’”

CONCLUSION:

"Voice Of Truth" – Casting Crowns

Oh what I would do to have
The kind of faith it takes to climb out of this boat I'm in
Onto the crashing waves

To step out of my comfort zone
To the realm of the unknown where Jesus is
And He's holding out his hand

But the waves are calling out my name and they laugh at me
Reminding me of all the times I've tried before and failed
The waves they keep on telling me
Time and time again. 'Boy, you'll never win!
"You'll never win"

But the voice of truth tells me a different story
And the voice of truth says "Do not be afraid!"
And the voice of truth says "This is for My glory"
Out of all the voices calling out to me
I will choose to listen and believe the voice of truth

Oh what I would do to have
The kind of strength it takes to stand before a giant
With just a Sling and a stone
Surrounded by the sound of a thousand warriors
Shaking in their armor
Wishing they'd have had the strength to stand

But the giant's calling out my name and he laughs at me
Reminding me of all the times I've tried before and failed
The giant keeps on telling me
Time and time again "boy, you'll never win!
"You'll never win"

But the stone was just the right size
To put the giant on the ground
And the waves they don't seem so high
From on top of them looking down
I will soar with the wings of eagles
When I stop and listen to the sound of Jesus
Singing over me

I will choose to listen and believe the voice of truth

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some of the types of deals that people cut with the devil?
- 2) How can we trust the Lord for His strength in our weakness?
- 3) How is Satan able to make his arguments sound persuasive?
- 4) What are some practical steps you can take to actively seek the Lord?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: **Internally**, the first two chapters are integrated by an inclusion between 36:1 and 37:37-38, Sennacherib's coming and departure, setting them off from ch. 38-39, which we will consider later. The handout shows the overall structure of this section. Note how subsequent inclusions in the **arrival and departure of key individuals** mark the next two levels of the section.

Within ch. 36-37, Assyria twice sends messengers to challenge Hezekiah and urge him to surrender. In the first cycle, the adversary is represented by Rabshakeh, whose approach and withdrawal mark its bounds. In the second, Hezekiah deals with anonymous messengers. Each of these encounters has its own internal structure, which we will consider as we go along, but at a high level they correspond with one another, as shown by the dotted lines on the left-hand side of the handout. In each case

- the Assyrian representatives come to Jerusalem,
- they deliver a message warning that resistance is vain, and demanding surrender,
- Hezekiah turns to the Lord,
- the Lord offers a message of reassurance,
- historical events fulfilling the Lord's promise cause the enemy to withdraw.

Now let's focus on the first challenge. Like the overall section, it is marked by an inclusio: the approach and subsequent withdrawal of a key figure, in this case Rabshakeh, "the chief cup-bearer."

Recall from your high-school study of Shakespeare that in narrative, a scene is a portion of narrative with the same characters, location, and time. If you change any of these, the scene shifts. On this basis, the Rabshakeh episode consists of two major scenes.¹ The first takes place outdoors, “by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field” (36:2), and the characters are Rabshakeh, the Judaeans nobles, and a crowd of curious citizens gathered on the city wall. It is marked by an inclusio: the approach and withdrawal of the nobles. The second scene takes place within the city, and involves the nobles, Hezekiah, and Isaiah.

In both cases, the people of Judah are confronting an external power. In the first scene, it is Assyria, represented by Rabshakeh. In the second scene, it is the Lord, represented by Isaiah.

In the second challenge, Sennacherib sends an anonymous group of “messengers” to repeat his demands. Here the structure is chiasmic, rather than an alternation. The chiasm is enhanced by the repetition of the Hebrew word מַלְאָכִים "messengers" in the outer members to describe both the Assyrian envoy and the angel that the Lord sends to destroy the Assyrian army. The focal point of the chiasm is Hezekiah's eloquent prayer.

In both challenges, the narrative structure sets Assyria in direct comparison with the Lord. In the first challenge, the scene shift turns on whether Judah is dealing with Assyria or with the Lord. In the second, the difference between the two panels of the chiasm is a shift from Assyria to the Lord. The claim throughout the burdens and woes of ch. 13-35 is that the Lord is greater than any human kingdom. In these two chapters, Sennacherib comes to Jerusalem to test that claim. The structure emphasizes the confrontation, and the history shows the outcome.

Oswalt: Several factors make it plain that a conscious contrast with Ahaz is intended. One of the most striking of these is that the place where the Rabshakeh stood to blaspheme God (36:2) is the same place where Isaiah stood to urge Ahaz to trust God (7:3). It is because of Ahaz’s refusal to trust in that place that the Rabshakeh would stand there (8L5-8). Furthermore, it is not just any nation which threatens to engulf Hezekiah, but Assyria, the very nation Ahaz chose to trust in place of God. Thus we have two kings of Judah, father and son, both threatened with imminent destruction so far as they know, both recognizing the inadequacy of their own strength. But there the similarity ceases. Faced with a considerably less destructive threat, Ahaz chose to trust his worst enemy rather than God. He would not put God to the test. On the other hand, Hezekiah did put God on his mettle and God demonstrated that he was indeed master of the nations.

Dr. John Whitcomb: Isaiah 36-37

11 tons of silver and a ton of gold was the tribute that Hezekiah had paid to king of Assyria; All his money was now gone; he hoped the Assyrians would be gone as well; but Sennacherib was encouraged by this submission and came back to demand more; You don’t negotiate with Satan ever (cf. example of Hitler); 33 years earlier Ahaz had stood on the exact same spot; Ahaz sowed seeds of compromise and deceit and his son now reaped the harvest; terms of surrender spelled out; trying to brow beat and intimidate and threaten them into surrender; he needed to devote his forces to threat of Egypt;

6 arguments of Rabshakeh – 3 are religious; our god is bigger than yours

1) (:6) You can’t rely on Egypt – 100% true; must have read Isaiah 30

2) (:7) **religious argument** – misunderstood whole point of what Hezekiah had done; eliminating idolatry

- 3) (:8-9) very intimidating argument – Your army cannot compare to forces of Assyria;
- 4) (:10) **religious argument** – Your God has authorized my invasion – quoting Isaiah 10; implication was that repentance and obedience would avert destruction
- 5) (:11) my strategy is to terrify the common people – speak in their language;
(:13) make your peace with Assyria and trust my mercy and generosity and you will be happy forevermore
- 6) (:18-20) **religious argument** – other gods have not been able to defend their lands; Hezekiah denounced the religious perversion of Assyrian ambassador; best possible answer to blasphemy at times is silence

God had healed Hezekiah of his deadly boil, given him another 15 years of life and allowed him to enter the temple again; God should be our first resort rather than our last resort; followed God's way in time of crisis

- Humility of mind and heart; I can't solve all my problems by myself
- Go to God for help; we are temples of the living God; pray
- His concern was for the glory of God; to honor name of God; don't ask for our own selfish purposes; pray with right motives

David E. Thompson:

Ps. 50:15 – Powerful promise of the Lord; God wants His people turning to Him; What evidence that God will actually fulfill His amazing promises about the future; Everything in history is sovereignly controlled by God; God permits threatening things to come into the lives of His people to prove that He will deliver them when they turn to Him; Judah finally turning back to God under Hezekiah – yet now their world seems about to fall about;

6 Historical Parts to this Narrative

1) (:1-3) Literal historical threat of Assyria – big mouth bully leading this expedition against Jerusalem; trying to get them to surrender; there will always be Goliath types trying to intimidate the people of God; Hezekiah initially attempted to buy off the Assyrians; sometimes even the most spiritually minded leaders do stupid and bizarre things; trying to weasel way out of trouble; this threat was not a surprise to God;

2) (:4-10) Literal Verbal mockery of the Assyrian army – trying to undermine the faith of God's people; When you find yourself under attack by Satan he will try to make you feel that you are a nobody; Don't listen to Hezekiah because there is no substance to his words; Satanic people shoot off their big mouths; bulk of book of Job (chaps. 3-37) = friends of Job shooting off their mouth and trying to undermine his faith; People who aren't right with God just don't get it – didn't understand why altars were torn down; You have nobody on heaven or earth you can trust for deliverance

When you turn to God you can count on 3 things:

- God will always fulfill His Word
- God will help those who turn to Him
- God will break down the proud and the arrogant

3) (:11) Verbal Response from Hezekiah's Commanders – Please speak in Aramaic; did not want morale of people broken down; these were good leaders; did not want the people to hear Hezekiah being slammed;

4) (:12-20) Arrogant Response of Rabshakeh – threatens them with 7 messages

- you had better listen to message of Assyria = humanistic philosophy
- you had better not listen to Hezekiah
- you had better not let Hezekiah convince you to trust in God; only Jesus Christ can save

you from sins – not your works or religious system

- you had better make peace with us and you will have plenty – if you fight us you will lose; Satan trying to keep Jesus from going to the cross; Give in and you will enjoy life
- you better make peace with us and we will take you to a land that is better than yours
- you better not follow Hezekiah's advice to trust Jehovah
- you had better realize that we have destroyed every nation that tried trusting in their gods – it will be no different for you

5) (:21) Quiet Response of People of Judah – they had listened to Hezekiah – there are times when the best thing you can do is to keep your mouth shut; Silence is golden; don't try to argue with such arrogant blasphemers

6) (37:1-4) Hezekiah Seeks Counsel From Isaiah – a crisis does not make a person but shows a person what he is made of; took decisive actions:

- He went to the house of the Lord – humbles himself; prays
- He sent his leaders to find Isaiah – an old man at this time; this man has a special connection to God; need to seek the living God

TEXT: Isaiah 37:8-38

TITLE: TURN TO THE LORD FOR DELIVERANCE – THE POWER OF PRAYER

BIG IDEA:

CRISIS SITUATIONS PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR GOD TO VINDICATE HIS PREEMINENCE AND GLORY AS HE RESPONDS TO PRAYERS FOR DELIVERANCE FROM HIS COVENANT PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION:

Life is a series of responding to one pressure after another; one crisis situation after another; overcoming one obstacle after another; We are met with intimidation and threats; Satan tries to attack us in a variety of ways; Will we respond in paralyzing fear or turn to the Lord for deliverance?

James 5:16 *“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”*

James goes on to use the example of Elijah – praying for no rain and then praying for rain. [I used to do that when I was very young and scheduled to go out to the ballpark to see the Phillies for my one visit a season.]

Could have very well cited the example of King Hezekiah -- here is a model approach you can use in the times of crisis that you face

CRISIS SITUATIONS PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR GOD TO VINDICATE HIS PREEMINENCE AND GLORY AS HE RESPONDS TO PRAYERS FOR DELIVERANCE FROM HIS COVENANT PEOPLE

I. (:8-13) PRESSURE OF IMMEDIATE CRISIS – CHALLENGING THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD

A. (:8-9) Assyria Under Pressure

1. (:8) King of Assyria Receives Report From Rabshakeh

“Then Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish.”

Constable: The Rabshakeh returned to his master, having learned that Hezekiah would not surrender. He found him five miles closer to Jerusalem than Lachish, at Libnah, where he was fighting the Judahites. The message that Tirhakah, King of Ethiopia, was coming to engage him in battle, caused Sennacherib to decide to terminate further campaigns in Palestine and return to his homeland temporarily.

2. (:9a) King of Assyria Hears Rumors Regarding Tirhakah

“When he heard them say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, ‘He has come out to fight against you,’”

Martin: In 701 Tirhakah was an army commander; he actually did not become king of Cush until 690; but since he was king when Isaiah wrote this account, Isaiah called him the king.

3. (:9b) King of Assyria Applies Pressure to Hezekiah

“and when he heard it he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,”

Parunak: [vs. 9-10] -- Suddenly, Sennacherib is on the defensive. Expecting an Egyptian advance from the south, the prospect of an unsubdued capital on his flank is untenable. He cannot afford to besiege them, and must quickly persuade them to surrender. So he sends messengers. To understand Isaiah's literary art here, we must recognize that the Hebrew word for “messenger,” מלאך, is the same one often translated “angel,” and in particular forms an inclusio with יהוה מלאך in v. 36. . . Recall that Rabshakeh's message had two components: do not trust in Egypt, and do not trust in the Lord. Now, Sennacherib thinks that the Egyptians really are coming against him. So these messengers repeat only the second component of the message, the futility of trust in the Lord.

Most worldly leaders, when faced with pressure; try to apply pressure to someone else they think they can control

B. (:10-13) Hezekiah Under Pressure

1. (:10) Attack on Hezekiah's Faith

“Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’”

Not pointing here to the futility of trusting in Egypt ... but to the futility of trusting in God
“Voice of Truth” song

Provides 3 supporting arguments:

2. (:11) Argument from the Greater to the Lesser – History Lesson

“Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared?”

Who do you think you are, O little town of Jerusalem? Far greater nations have already fallen and been destroyed by the ruthless power of mighty Assyria.

Application: Why do you think God is on your side and will deliver you?

3. (:12) Argument from the Impotence of Gods – Religion Lesson

“Did the gods of those nations which my fathers have destroyed deliver them, even Gozan and Haran and Rezeph and the sons of Eden who were in Telassar?”

Religion is just a crutch; opiate of the masses; nice to have something to prop you up, but when the chips are down, religion is exposed as futile and powerless

Application: Why do you think your God is any better than any of the others and has any power to help you?

4. (:13) Argument from Silence – Arrogance Runs Its Mouth

“Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, and of Hena and Ivvah?”

Application: Why do you think you will have any eternal destiny consistent with God's promises?

II. (:14-20) PRAYER FOR DIVINE DELIVERANCE – IN THE CONTEXT OF GOD BEING GLORIFIED

A. (:14-15) Initial Reaction of Turning to the Lord in Prayer

1. Objective Intake of the Facts and the Circumstances – What am I faced with?

“Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it,”

- not emotional
- not cursing and ranting and raving
- quick to hear and slow to speak
- didn't kill the messengers

2. Worshipful Approach to the Presence of God

“and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD.”

Is this what we do with our problems as our first reaction?

Do we interact with the Lord in a spirit of worship and humility?

Do we have confidence in the Lord's control over all the details of our life?

Do we have confidence in the access we have into the Lord's presence and His willingness to hear our concerns?

3. Intercessory Appeal in Fervent Prayer

“And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD saying,”

Could be a sermon in itself –

not some ecstatic utterances but using language to verbalize intelligent thoughts

B. (:16) Humble, Reverent Address of Faith – Recognizing God for Who He Is in His Awesomeness

1. Omnipotent God -- *“O LORD of hosts,”*

Hezekiah under pressure from the hosts of Assyria outside the gate ... but the Lord commands much more impressive hosts

2. Covenant Keeping God -- *“the God of Israel,”*

Keeps all of His promises

Special place in His heart for His elect

3. Majestic God -- *“who art enthroned above the cherubim,”*

Yet available and approachable

4. Sovereign God -- *“Thou art the God, Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth.”*

Make no mistake about who is in charge

Exclusive rule – this is a classic confrontation between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the earth

5. Creator God -- *“Thou hast made heaven and earth.”*

Motyer:

A1 *Lord Almighty of hosts*: the Lord in his personal omnipotence

B1 *God of Israel*: his chosen link with his people

C *Enthroned between the cherubim*: sovereignty, personal presence, availability

B2 *God over all*: his sway over all the earth

A2 *You have made heaven and earth*: omnipotence of government as Creator

The cherubim, as Ezekiel saw them, represent all created excellence (the lion represents wild beasts; the ox, domestic beasts; the eagle, birds; and man, the greatest of all creatures). Thus enthroned over all, the Lord was nevertheless present at the centre of his people's life. The Old Testament doctrine of God the Creator is fourfold. The God who made all, preserves all in being, controls all in operation and guides all to their appointed destiny. The appeal to the Creator in prayer is, therefore, not a simple appeal to greatness or to abstract power but specifically to the God who actually rules and determines all.

Parunak: Hezekiah's prayer is an alternation: Statement, request, statement, request. His first statement describes the Lord, the only true God, while his second describes Sennacherib and the false gods that he has conquered. . . Note that Hezekiah does not start with his problem. He starts by focusing his mind on his great God. This is a central principle for us. In time of trouble, our natural tendency is to focus on our problem and try to solve it. Hezekiah's example urges us, in any time of trouble, to focus our attention on the Lord and meditate on his attributes.

C. (:17) Call to Attention in Light of the Gravity of the Blasphemy

“Incline Thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open Thine eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God.”

D. (:18-20) Plea for Deliverance in Contradistinction to Devastation

1. (:18-19) Devastation of Other Nations – Trusted in Idols

“Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them.”

2. (:20) Deliverance Requested – Trusting in the One True God

a. Request for Deliverance

“And now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand”

b. Reason = Glory of God

“that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou alone, LORD, art God.”

III. (:21-35) PREEMINENCE OF THE LORD VINDICATED – IN DEMONSTRATING HIS SOVEREIGN CONTROL

A. (:21-22a) The Lord Always Has the Final Word

“Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent word to Hezekiah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, the

God of Israel, Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word that the LORD has spoken against him: ”

B. (:22b-25) The Lord Always Takes Blasphemy and Reproach Personally

1. (:22b) Mocking God’s People is a Serious Offense

*“She has despised you and mocked you, The virgin daughter of Zion;
She has shaken her head behind you, The daughter of Jerusalem!”*

2. (:23) Because It Constitutes Blasphemy and Reproach Against God

*“Whom have you reproached and blasphemed?
And against whom have you raised your voice, And haughtily lifted up your eyes?
Against the Holy One of Israel!”*

3. (:24-25) With the Unrestrained Arrogance of Boastful Pride

“Through your servants you have reproached the Lord, And you have said, ‘With my many chariots I came up to the heights of the mountains, To the remotest parts of Lebanon; And I cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypresses. And I will go to its highest peak, its thickest forest. I dug wells and drank waters, And with the sole of my feet I dried up All the rivers of Egypt.’”

Grogan: It looks as though the course of his boasting follows that of his conquering marches. The emphasis here is on the king’s ability to overcome any natural obstacle that lay in his path (v. 24). The mountainous, tree-covered terrain of Lebanon could not hold him back, neither could the waterless lands of southern Palestine and Sinai (v.25). The streams of the Nile Delta were equally powerless to stop him, for he had but to tread on them. This final claim, of course, went beyond the facts but was perhaps made in anticipation of a great victory over Tirhakah (cf. v.9).

C. (:26-29) The Lord Always is In Control

1. (:26-27) Your Former Victories Were Controlled by the Lord

“Have you not heard? Long ago I did it, From ancient times I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass, That you should turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were short of strength, They were dismayed and put to shame; They were as the vegetation of the field and as the green herb, As grass on the housetops is scorched before it is grown up.”

Motyer: The threefold simile of verse 27 exposes how the Assyrians thought of the world and its peoples: they exist for their benefit (*plants in the field*); they are totally incapable of offering resistance (*tender green shoots*); and are transient, insubstantial, of no ultimate significance (*like grass sprouting on the roof*).

2. (:28) Everything About You Is Known and Controlled by the Lord

“But I know your sitting down, And your going out and your coming in, And your raging against Me.”

3. (:29) Your Future Submission Has Already Been Determined by the Lord

“Because of your raging against Me, And because your arrogance has come up to My ears, Therefore I will put My hook in your nose, And My bridle in your lips, And I will turn you back by the way which you came.”

D. (:30-35) The Lord Always Keeps His Promises to His Elect

1. (:30-32) Provision for the Surviving Remnant – Another Sign

“Then this shall be the sign for you: you shall eat this year what grows of itself, in the second year what springs from the same, and in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall perform this.”

Constable: [vs. 30] -- For two years normal agriculture would be impossible around Jerusalem, but God would cause the land to produce enough to sustain the inhabitants. Probably the two years of interruption resulted from Assyrian military activity in the region. Fruitfulness has always been God's blessing on those who trust Him. Then the third year, planting and harvesting as usual would resume. It was particularly unusual that the Judahites would be able to plant vineyards and eat their fruit shortly after that because it often took several years for new grapevines to yield a crop.

2. (:33-35) Protection for the Davidic Dynasty

“Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, 'He shall not come to this city, or shoot an arrow there; neither shall he come before it with a shield, nor throw up a mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come to this city,' declares the LORD. 'For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'”

Motyer:

A1 Fact: prayer answered in the departure of Assyria (22)

B1 The Sovereign defied (23-25)

B2 The Sovereign in action (26-29)

B3 Sovereign faithfulness (30-32)

A2 Explanation: the Lord's defence of the city (33-35)

IV. (:36-38) POWER OF THE LORD ON DISPLAY – IN THE FINAL RESOLUTION

A. (:36) Power of the Lord in Eliminating the Assyrian Crisis

“Then the angel of the LORD went out, and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead.”

Constable: [vs. 36] -- The Lord Himself slew 185,000 of the Assyrian soldiers in one night. Evidently this was an act of the angel of the Lord similar to the slaying of the Egyptian firstborn before the Exodus (Exod. 12:12-13, 23; cf. 2 Sam. 24:1, 15-16; Luke 12:20). The angel of the Lord may have been the preincarnate Christ, since He is identified as the Lord (Yahweh), and yet distinct from the Lord, in various Old Testament passages. Some scholars believe the angel of the Lord was an angel whom the Lord sent who was intimately identified with the Lord in the Old Testament because he represented the Lord and carried out His will precisely. Probably the phrase designates the preincarnate Christ in some places and simply an angelic representative of Yahweh in others. The verb "to smite" implies smiting with a disease. Sennacherib had sent a messenger to intimidate Hezekiah's people and, ironically, Yahweh responded by sending a

messenger to destroy Sennacherib's army. George Robinson reproduced Lord Byron's famous poem, "The Destruction of Sennacherib."

B. (:37-38) Power of the Lord in Executing the Arrogant Challenger

"So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed and returned home, and lived at Nineveh. And it came about as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place."

Parunak: [vs. 37] -- God fulfills his promise, The chronology is foreshortened; Sennacherib would not die for 20 more years, but the end was determined.

Constable: [vs. 38] -- Ironically, it was while worshipping in the temple of his idol in Nineveh that God effected Sennacherib's assassination, whereas it was while worshipping the true God in His temple in Jerusalem, that God moved to spare Hezekiah's life. Hezekiah went into the house of his God and got help, but Sennacherib went into the house of his god and got killed. The Babylonian royal chronicles recorded the assassination of Sennacherib and the accession of Esarhaddon in 681 B.C.

Motyer: Thus Isaiah brings together in this incident five major divine manifestations: the word (31:2), the Spirit (37:7), the hand (31:3), the arm (30:30) and the angel.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What tends to be your initial reaction in time of crisis?
- 2) Why does God not always respond with an immediate answer to prayers for deliverance?
- 3) How does disrespecting authority ultimately cascade upwards to disrespecting God?
- 4) What are some of the current areas of confrontation and crisis in the evangelical church where the Lord has a stake in vindicating His name and upholding His preeminence and glory?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Martin: The message [21-35] included 3 parts:

- First, the Assyrians would be driven back (vv. 21-29).
- Second, God assured Hezekiah that a remnant would remain (vv. 30-32) and that life would go on as usual.
- Third, the message again addressed the king of Assyria (vv. 33-35). God told him that he would not set foot inside the city of Jerusalem or even build a siege ramp against its walls.

Motyer: The way of believing prayer is the truly practical way of dealing with the harsh realities

of this world. What neither armaments (36:9) nor diplomacy (30:1-2) nor money (2 Ki. 18:13-14) could achieve, prayer has done. But what the Lord is about to do he has planned of old (26-29). Here is a mystery of prayer: it is a means by which the Lord brings eternal counsels to pass.

Anchor Bible Dictionary: Siloam Inscription

The Siloam inscription is an inscription of six lines written in archaic Hebrew dating from the 8th century b.c. This inscription, which was discovered in 1880 and since its removal in 1890 has been on deposit in the Imperial Museum in Istanbul, was carved on the E wall 10 m inside the S end of the tunnel that conducts the waters of the Gihon spring in the valley E of the City of David to the Pool of Siloam at its SE corner. The tunnel was dug from both ends at once; the joining at midpoint was an engineering feat. . .

The inscription describes the event which demonstrated the head engineer's skill and success. It is the nearly unanimous view of historians that the Siloam tunnel is Hezekiah's conduit, and that the inscription in it was written shortly before 701 b.c.e. The form of its script agrees with this dating. According to the Deuteronomist and the Chronicler, Hezekiah had the waters of the Gihon spring outside the city walls diverted to a reservoir inside the walls by means of a conduit, as part of his fortification of Jerusalem to withstand the anticipated siege by Sennacherib in 701 b.c.e. (2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chr 32:30; cf. Isa 22:11; Sir 48:17). The construction of the tunnel from both ends at once, multiplying the difficulties in engineering, reflects the haste forced upon Hezekiah by the threat of Sennacherib.

The word translated "increase (in sound)" in line 3 (zdh) is regarded by most scholars as obscure. Since the well attested Hebrew and Arabic meaning "increase" has not seemed fitting, other suggestions have been made from context: crack, fissure, overlap, excitement, meeting, and others. These guesses are not necessary. The jumble of directional changes in the tunnels during the last few meters substantiates the inscription's point that it was their voices that finally brought the crews together, while those same changes also attest to the difficulty of locating the direction of sounds coming through the rock seemingly from all sides.

However, the remarkable achievement was not that the crews met over the last meter and a half, but that they ever came that close to each other in the first place. The tunnel follows not a straight line but a ragged s-shaped curve. See Fig. DAV.04 and Fig. JER.09. Whatever the purpose of this intentionally winding path—long a puzzle to investigators—it vastly complicated the survey required by the head engineer, and hence magnifies his accomplishment. When each crew was between 40 and 45 m from the eventual meeting-point, the engineer initiated a series of at least four highly accurate corresponding corrections in both tunnels that brought the crews within shouting distance. Evidence suggests these corrections were performed by use of a method similar to "plane table surveying" as developed by the Romans. The successful joining of the tunnels demonstrated the engineer's proficiency with the primitive means at his disposal. The satisfaction evinced by the inscription may reflect as well the realization that if the crews had not met, the engineer's life would doubtless have been forfeit.

The success of the moment enabled and induced the engineer to commemorate the event by an inscription. It appears that his commemoration was more private than public, as it was clearly not intended for public notice and makes no mention of the ruler of the city or its god, the political crisis that necessitated the construction, nor even of the master excavator himself, at least in the present form of the inscription. The inscription occupied the lower half of a prepared surface; it is probable that the upper half was intended for a relief showing the joining of the tunnels, with

possibly the name of the engineer inscribed thereon. Suggestions that the inscription was written by the stonecutters themselves or that it records an excerpt from annals have not found wide acceptance. Freedman, David Noel, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, (New York: Doubleday) 1997, 1992.

David E. Thompson:

Fear = most paralyzing emotion; To whom do we turn when we are afraid? God wants His people turning to Him; No matter how threatening or intimidating the situation or the enemy, God will protect His people when they turn to Him in faith; He will never leave you or forsake you; I will trust and not be afraid;

5 Responses:

1. (:6-7) Isaiah Responds to Hezekiah – 3 messages

- a. (:6) don't fear the verbal threats of Assyria; God wants His people courageous
- b. (:7a) God will cause Assyria to return to its own land
Calvin: God can blow away enemies like straw.
- c. (:7a) God will kill the king in his own land – God is not just an idle spectator in our world

2. (:8-13) Sennacherib Responds to Hezekiah –

Didn't want to get caught in crossfire between 2 battles; thought he would bully Jerusalem into submission; quick to shoot off his mouth; cf. Saddam Hussein – ends up hiding in a hole in the ground;

4 intimidating threats

- a. (:10) Don't be deceived by God's Word that says Jerusalem will not fall
 - enemies of Israel know there is a God of Israel
 - they knew King Hezekiah trusted in his God
 - But God cannot lie or deceive;
- b. (:11) You have heard how successful Assyria has been in its other conquests
 - We are a big power; don't you know our reputation
- c. (:12) No other god was able to stand against our intimidation
 - going up here against the living God – not the same as the god of the Muslims
- d. (:13) No king was able to stop us from succeeding – we wiped them out

3. (:14-20) Response of Hezekiah to threats of Sennacherib

Going to speak directly to God; smartest move we can make; man of prayer

G. Campbell Morgan: This prayer characterized by: Reverence, simplicity and directness

Masterpiece of prayer; very effective prayer – has amazing results; **4 parts:**

- a. (:16) Acknowledges the majesty and sovereignty of God – 6 ways he identifies God
 - God of all the armies, hosts
 - God of Israel, a very special nation
 - Ranks higher than the higher and holiest angels = cherubim
 - You are the only God
 - You are the God of all the kingdoms of the earth
 - You are the Creator of all – can bless or curse
- b. (:17) Asks God to hear his prayer
- c. (:18-19) Assyria had a track record of some pretty impressive conquests
- d. (:20) Asks for deliverance so that God would glorify Himself

4. (:21-35) Response of God to prayer of Hezekiah

God is rewarder of those that diligently seek Him; sends His answer through prophet Isaiah;
Structure within leadership; going through proper channels; 3 answers

- a. God has assessed Sennacherib and Assyria
Assyria has reproached and blasphemed God
(:24-27) Assyria had taken credit for the things that God had done
mountains, forests, rivers could not stop us
just a puppet in hands of God
any success we have ever had in anything comes from God
- b. God assures Hezekiah that a remnant will be left
sign comes into effect after the deliverance
3 years from now you will be in your land producing crops with blessing
Eschatological point to this – last half of tribulation – remnant will survive
- c. God will protect and defend Jerusalem for His sake and David's sake
because name of God is at stake
Messiah supposed to be born through this Davidic line

5. (:36-38) God Responds to the Assyrians

Never made it through the night; don't presume you have more time to repent

4 practical lessons

- When we are threatened and scared, go straight to the Lord in prayer
- God does not usually instantly destroy the enemy
- When people mock God and His Word and people they are building up the rage of God and He will crush them in His time
- God knows everything people think and say and do

TEXT: Isaiah 38:1-22

TITLE: *DIVINE DELIVERANCE – HEZEKIAH HEALED*

BIG IDEA:

DIVINE DELIVERANCE DEMONSTRATES THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD OVER LIFE AND DEATH . . . AND DEFINES OUR LIFE IN TERMS OF WORSHIP -- 3 QUESTIONS THAT PROBE WHETHER WE TRULY WORSHIP GOD

INTRODUCTION:

God seeks people that will worship Him in Spirit and truth. Do we look at our lives as an opportunity to offer up praise and thanksgiving in worship? When we are confronted with the prospect of death, we very quickly re-evaluate our priorities and goals in life. We come to the account this morning of the death sentence issued to godly King Hezekiah. Make no mistake, he was a hero figure in Judah – one of the most godly kings despite having a wicked father – King Ahaz and eventually a wicked son Manasseh. He restored worship; he tore down the idol worship; he demonstrated a heart of faith in turning to the Lord for deliverance; yet as we shall see next week – because of his battles with pride, he was not without some points of weakness.

2 Kings 18:1-7 – half his reign occurred as a result of the 15 years God tacked on here; vs. 13 – it was the 14th year of King Hezekiah when the events of Isaiah 36-37 occurred – 701 B.C.

This story in chaps. 38-39 seems to be reported out of chronological sequence (although some would argue that point). The events prophecy deliverance from Assyria which we just saw Jerusalem experiencing in chaps. 36-37. It is not uncommon for the biblical record to present things from more of a thematic order rather than a strict chronological order. It is evident that chaps. 36-39 form a hinge for the two main sections of Isaiah's prophecy:

I. First half of book -- Dealing with the threat from Assyria

II. Second half of book -- Dealing with the later threat from Babylon

From that perspective, chaps 38-39 form a nice bridge – providing closure from the issues related to Assyria and introducing the threat from Babylon. However, some would argue for a normal historical chronology since the parallel passage in Kings maintains the same order without the structural thematic needs; and since the events surrounding the Assyrian threat covered a wide range of years. Regardless, the lessons for us today will be the same.

Lying at the heart of the book, it is not surprising that the main theme of Isaiah receives special focus here: God wants His chosen people to turn only to Him for deliverance and salvation. Here we have a concrete historical example of the implications of Divine Deliverance.

DIVINE DELIVERANCE DEMONSTRATES THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD OVER LIFE AND DEATH . . . AND DEFINES OUR LIFE IN TERMS OF WORSHIP -- 3 QUESTIONS THAT PROBE WHETHER WE TRULY WORSHIP GOD

Ask yourself 3 questions today:

- **DO YOU TURN TO THE LORD ALONE FOR DELIVERANCE?**
- **DO YOU APPRECIATE THE MERCY AND DELIVERANCE OF THE LORD?**
- **DO YOU LIVE TO PRAISE YOUR GOD?**

I. (:1-3) DO YOU TURN TO THE LORD ALONE FOR DELIVERANCE? -- HEZEKIAH'S DAYS ARE NUMBERED DUE TO MORTAL ILLNESS

A. (:1) Imminent Prospect of Death

1. Physical Cause

“In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill.”

He had the physical symptoms and all of the uncertainty about his condition before he received the word from Isaiah about his prognosis. Only about 39 years old; had a lot of responsibility on his shoulders – not just a personal issue – the continuity of the kingdom of Judah was at stake – larger issues in play here

Think of how disturbed we become with the relatively minor ailments that afflict us ...
How would we react if we were struck down with a mortal illness?
Let's see how it played out with Hezekiah

2. Prophetic Pronouncement

“And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’”

Sounds like quite the note of finality – but we know from other contexts that it is possible to appeal to the Lord for more favorable outcomes – remember the preaching of Jonah to Nineveh; the response of the people can turn the heart of the Lord to alter His timeframe

Constable: Sometimes what God announced through His prophets seemed inevitable, but when His people prayed it became negotiable (cf. Gen. 32:26; Exod. 32:7-14; James 4:2).

Why was the Lord issuing such a death sentence here?? Was it because of some sin on Hezekiah's part? No such connection is stated here – although the king makes somewhat of a reference in vs. 17

“Set your house in order” – here is the derivation of that familiar saying; make sure your will is up to date; give instructions to your household about how you want things to be handled; tie up any loose ends – this is it for you

Country music has a song: *Live like You Were Dyin'*: **Tim McGraw** lyrics

He said I was in my early 40's,
With a lot of life before me,
And a moment came that stopped me on a dime.
I spent most of the next days, lookin' at the x-rays,
Talkin' 'bout the options and talkin' 'bout sweet time.
Asked him when it sank in, that this might really be the real end.
How's it hit ya, when you get that kind of news.
Man what ya do.
And he says,

[Chorus]

I went sky divin',
I went rocky mountain climbin',

I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu.
And I loved deeper,
And I spoke sweeter,
And I gave forgiveness I've been denying,
And he said someday I hope you get the chance,
To live like you were dyin'.

He said I was finally the husband,
That most the time I wasn't.
And I became a friend a friend would like to have.
And all the sudden goin' fishing,
Wasn't such an imposition.
And I went three times that year I lost my dad.
Well I finally read the good book,
And I took a good long hard look at what I'd do
If I could do it all again.
And then.

[Chorus]

Like tomorrow was a gift and you've got eternity
To think about what you do with it,
What could you do with it, what can
I do with it, what would I do with it.

[Chorus]

Sky divin',
I went rocky mountain climbin',
I went 2.7 seconds on a bull name Fumanchu.
And I loved deeper,
And I spoke sweeter,
And I watched an eagle as it was flyin'.
And he said someday I hope you get the chance,
To live like you were dyin'.

To live like you were dyin'.
To live like you were dyin'.
To live like you were dyin'.
To live like you were dyin'.

This would be the hedonistic response – cram as much pleasure as you can ... but also has the perspective that we are only prepared to live when we live in the perspective that our death is imminent

B. (:2-3) Immediate Response

1. Turning to the Lord in Prayer

“Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the LORD,”

Wanted his privacy; wanted to focus and shut out the world
No problem with concentration in prayer here; no daydreaming or drifting of your thoughts
Easy to be fervent and focused

2. Pleading for Healing

“and said, ‘Remember now, O LORD, I beseech Thee,’”

- a. Integrity as Measured by God’s Truth – Obedience; Faithfulness
“how I have walked before Thee in truth”
- b. Integrity as Measured by Conscience – Sincerity; Devotion
“and with a whole heart,”
- c. Integrity as Measured by Accomplishments – Good Works
“and have done what is good in Thy sight.”

Does not specifically request healing – but that is his intent here

2Ki 18:3-6 *And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. 4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. 6 For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.*

3. Weeping Bitterly

“And Hezekiah wept bitterly.”

Phil. 1:21 *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”* – perspective of Apostle Paul

Constable: Hezekiah was a good king who reformed his nation spiritually (cf. 2 Chron. 29—31). He appealed for longer life on the basis of his godliness, because God promised to bless the godly who lived under the Old Covenant with long life (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:33; 7:12-15; 30:16). His bitter tears showed the depth of his sorrow. He would apparently die without an heir to the throne, in the full strength of his manhood, and with his nation in an unsettled state.

Parunak: One chronological detail may help us understand his distress. We learn in v. 5 that his life is extended 15 more years. At the time of his death, his son Manasseh is only 12 years old (**2 Kings 21:1**). Thus, at the time of this illness, Hezekiah has no heir. The land is in shambles from the Assyrian invasion, and without a successor the peaceful transition of the government is in question. . .

Unlike the prayer of **37:15-20**, his motive is based entirely on himself, and not on the Lord's glory.

Are you ready to live like you are dying?? Because we are
 Do we turn to the Lord alone for deliverance?

II. (:4-8) DO YOU APPRECIATE THE MERCY AND DELIVERANCE OF THE LORD? –

HEZEKIAH GUARANTEED GOD’S MERCY AND GRACIOUS DELIVERANCE

A. (:4-6) Mercy and Deliverance Communicated

1. Communication Related to God’s Faithfulness

“Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, ‘Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David,’”

2. Communication Responding to Desperate Prayer and Circumstances

a. God is Compassionate and Responds to Prayers of His People

“I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears;”

b. God is Abundantly Gracious

“behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.”

Basically doubled the years of his reign – pretty significant
Opportunity to do good; but also opportunity to slip up

c. God is Ultimately Glorified

*“And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria;
and I will defend this city.”*

Constable: Verse 6 clarifies that Hezekiah became mortally ill before God delivered Jerusalem from Sennacherib. Consequently the events of chapters 38 and 39 must predate those of chapters 36 and 37. Since the Lord added 15 years to Hezekiah's life (v. 5), and since Hezekiah died about 686 B.C., the time when he became mortally ill was evidently **early in 701 B.C.**

Parunak: Jer 18:7-10

“At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; 8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will relent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. 9 And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; 10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will relent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.”

God's promises of blessing and cursing are always conditioned on the behavior of those who are blessed or cursed. Every threat of judgment carries with it the implied promise, “Unless you repent,” and every promise of blessing is subject to retraction if the recipient despises it and rebels.

Parunak: 2 Kings inserts vv. 21-22 here. Isaiah displaces them to form an inclusio framing Hezekiah's prayer (not, as Delitzsch thinks, because they dropped out and got added back from the margin).

B. (:7-8) Mercy and Deliverance Confirmed by Miraculous Sign

1. Purpose of the Sign = Confirmatory

“And this shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that He has spoken:”

given personally to King Hezekiah

given personally by the Lord

given to assure the Lord's faithfulness to His promise of mercy and deliverance

2. Peculiarity of the Sign = Making Time Go Backwards

“Behold, I will cause the shadow on the stairway, which has gone down with the sun on the stairway of Ahaz, to go back ten steps.”

2 Kings 20:9 Isaiah gave Hezekiah the option of having time go forward or backward
Very appropriate – peculiar nature of the sign directly tied to Hezekiah’s gift of 15 more years of life

3. Performance of the Sign

“So the sun's shadow went back ten steps on the stairway on which it had gone down.”

Incredible miracle – don’t lose sight of the WOW factor just because you are familiar with the incident

Constable: The stairway of Ahaz was evidently an exterior stairway that led to his upper room on the roof of the palace, where Ahaz had erected altars (2 Kings 23:12). This stairway was probably not built as a sundial, but it served that purpose as the sun cast its shadow on more or fewer steps depending on the time of day. That stairway may have been constructed as a sundial, or a different stairway constructed for that purpose could be in view. One writer believed it was an obelisk that rested on a stepped base and served as a sundial. Evidently Hezekiah could see it from his sickbed. The passing away of daylight on the stairway symbolized the passing away of Hezekiah's life, and the return of sunlight represented the restoration of life.

III. (:9-20) DO YOU LIVE TO PRAISE YOUR GOD? – HEZEKIAH TRANSITIONS FROM LAMENT TO THANKSGIVING

“A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, after his illness and recovery:”

Constable: This psalm is also chiasmic in structure. It begins with reference to the gates of Sheol and sorrow at the prospect of shortened days (v. 10), and it ends with reference to the house of the Lord and joy at the prospect of lengthened days (v. 20). The king began by referring to the land of the living being exchanged for the departed (v. 11), and he ended with reference to the land of the departed exchanged for the land of the living (vv. 18-19). In the middle, he contrasted God's hostility (vv. 12-14) with His restoration (vv. 15-17).³⁸⁸ Hezekiah described his condition first (vv. 9-14), and then he praised God for His mercy (vv. 15-20).

Beall: In vv. 9-20 we are given Hezekiah's psalm of lament and thanksgiving. Note that Prov 25-29 are edited by the “*men of Hezekiah*,” so it is clear that Hezekiah was interested in literary pursuits as well (see also 2 Chron 29:30).

A. (:10-14) Protestations Against Death With Supporting Pictures

1. (:10-11) Four Protestations Against Dying Now

a. Premature -- Too Early

“I said, ‘In the middle of my life I am to enter the gates of Sheol;”

Age 39 seems very young; even the Psalms say we can expect average of about 80 years

b. Penal and Undeserved

“I am to be deprived of the rest of my years.”

- c. Presence of the Lord No Longer Enjoyed
“I said, ‘I shall not see the LORD, The LORD in the land of the living;”
- d. Participation in Human Relationships Cut Off
“I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world.”

2. (:12-14) Four Pictures of Earthly Demise

- a. Temporary, Fragile Nature of Pilgrim Existence – Death comes quickly
“Like a shepherd's tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me;”
- b. Harsh End to Life Before Fulfillment is Reached
“As a weaver I rolled up my life. He cuts me off from the loom;”
- c. Painful Process of Death
*“From day until night Thou dost make an end of me.
 I composed my soul until morning.
 Like a lion-- so He breaks all my bones,
 From day until night Thou dost make an end of me.”*
- d. Mournful, Lonely, Forlorn Tone of One in Search of Security
*“Like a swallow, like a crane, so I twitter; I moan like a dove; My eyes
 look wistfully to the heights; O Lord, I am oppressed, be my security.”*

Parunak: Literally, *“I have been inventoried with respect to the remnant of my years.”* My days have been counted up, and are complete.

Parunak: The word translated “age” can be used in poetic contexts to mean “dwelling,” and that sense yield a better parallel here. Nomadic shepherds often pitch their tents within view of the walls of established cities in the Middle East. Hezekiah lived all his life in Solomon's beautiful palace of stone and cedar, but in his sickness he realizes that this gives no security. In the end, he is more Bedouin than city dweller. His body is nothing more than a tent. One day it is there, the next it has moved away.

Constable: Hezekiah viewed his life as fragile as a shepherd's temporary tent, which shepherds frequently moved from place to place. His life was like a weaver's finished piece of cloth that the weaver cuts off decisively and rolls up to take away. Both images are of objects that suddenly disappear from their expected places. Before the day of his life was out, the Lord would end it.

Motyer: Four similes constitute this section: the fragility of life (the tent); its decisive end (the weaver); divine hostility (the lion); and the seeming feebleness of prayer (the swift, thrush, and dove).

Parunak: *undertake for me.*--Literally, “be surety for me,” “cosign for my debt.” Not only does Hezekiah say nothing of his earlier boasts of righteousness, he now acknowledges his complete

dependence on God. He sees himself as a debtor, and begs God to take responsibility for it. His petition is the same as that of Job in 17:1, and of the Psalmist in 119:122.

B. (:15-17) Perplexity Regarding Death [difficult verses]

1. (:15a) Acknowledgment of the Lord's Control Over Life and Death

"What shall I say? For He has spoken to me, and He Himself has done it;"

2. (:15b) Potential for Bitterness

"I shall wander about all my years because of the bitterness of my soul."

Resignation under the divine hand of judgment?? Difficult verse

3. (:16) Desire for Restoration

*"O Lord, by these things men live; And in all these is the life of my spirit;
O restore me to health, and let me live!"*

Emphasis on God's sovereignty and trustworthiness

4. (:17) Blessing of Forgiveness of Sins

*"Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness;
It is Thou who hast kept my soul from the pit of nothingness,
For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back."*

Parunak: his praise will be all the greater because he remembers the bitterness from which the Lord delivered him.

C. (:18-20) Purpose of Continued Life on Earth

1. (:18) No Opportunity for Praise in Sheol

*"For Sheol cannot thank Thee, Death cannot praise Thee;
Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Thy faithfulness."*

2. (:19) Opportunity for the Living to Praise God

*"It is the living who give thanks to Thee, as I do today;
A father tells his sons about Thy faithfulness."*

3. (:20) Deliverance Extends Opportunity for Worship

*"The LORD will surely save me; So we will play my songs on stringed instruments
All the days of our life at the house of the LORD."*

TWO HIGHLIGHTED ADDITIONAL DETAILS (:21-22)

A. (:21) Healing Process Used Medicinal Means to Eliminate the Poison

"Now Isaiah had said, 'Let them take a cake of figs, and apply it to the boil, that he may recover.'"

Lord can choose to means or not to use means;

We make appropriate use of doctors and medicine even though our ultimate trust is in the Lord

B. (:22) Hezekiah Had Requested a Confirming Sign for the Purpose of More Worship

“Then Hezekiah had said, ‘What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?’”

In contrast to his wicked father Ahaz

Grogan: The words of Isaiah and Hezekiah may have been recorded here to satisfy the reader’s natural queries about the means of healing and the reason for the sign.

CONCLUSION:

‘You are not ready to live until you are ready to die.’

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Was Hezekiah wrong to desire to live longer rather than embracing the message from Isaiah that his time was up?
- 2) What do you learn from the contrast between Hezekiah asking for a sign and Ahaz refusing a sign from the Lord?
- 3) How can we take better advantage of our opportunities to praise the Lord?
- 4) Why are verses 21 and 22 included at the end of the narrative?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Constable: The events in these chapters evidently predate those in chapters 36—37 by a few months (cf. 38:1, 6). Isaiah apparently placed them here, out of chronological order, to make them a historical prologue to chapters 40—66. This section opens with Hezekiah contemplating death (38:1a) and ends with him contemplating life (39:8). In between, Isaiah delivered two messages to the king (38:1b-7; 39:3-7). Hezekiah's dedication (38:8- 22) followed the prophet's first message, and his defection (39:1-2) precipitated the second message. Thus the structure of these two chapters is chiasmic.

Beall: Chaps 38-39 are chronologically to be placed ahead of the events of chaps 36-37, which occurred at 701 B.C. Hezekiah's coregency with his father began around 727 B.C., and he reigned for 29 years (2 Kings 18:2, 13). Since he is given 15 years additional to live in chap. 38, that must mean that the events of chaps. 38-39 occur in ca. 713 B.C., before chaps. 36-37. Why are these chapters not in chronological order? It is simply that chaps. 36-37 close out the Assyrian period, whereas 38-39 introduce the Babylonian period. Furthermore, whereas Hezekiah was seen as totally godly in chaps. 36-37, chaps. 38-39 indicate that, like all human leaders, he was not Immanuel, the promised Messiah. Chap. 38 indicates that Hezekiah does

turn to God in time of crisis; but it also shows that he is mortal. He is going to die soon, without the promises made in chaps. 7-12 fulfilled through him. And chap. 39 shows further that Hezekiah is indeed fallible, and forgets to trust the Lord when there is no apparent major threat (illness or enemy invasion). The hope of Israel could not rest in a mere man, Hezekiah, godly as he was. Israel still looked for another, One who would come only after the utter humiliation of the Babylonian captivity.

Parunak: This Psalm is chiasmic, centered on his cry to the Lord. The structure leads from his preoccupation with his own fate, to his awareness that the Lord is dealing with him, and then to his cry for help.

Formal opening and closing ¹	9 (author, circumstance)	20b (instruments, dedication to temple service)
Hezekiah's Dealings with Men ²	10-12a	18-20a
God's Dealings with Hezekiah	12b-13	15-17
Hezekiah's Petition	14	

Hezekiah's psalm is written after his healing, looking back on the experience. As we move to the center of the chiasm, the three sections appear to reflect a chronological development in his thinking.

- He begins in self-centered despair,
- then recognizes the Lord's hand in his suffering,
- and finally, at the center, casts himself on the Lord.

David E. Thompson:

When a key leader is sick or dies it will affect the entire nation; cf. assassination of Lincoln and Kennedy; greatest loss to any society is when you lose a powerful man of God; Hezekiah was a great king and great man of God; had turned nation back to God; destroyed false worship and idols; “*those days*” = the midst of the Assyrian threat; major dilemma to entire nation as well as ultimate personal problem; turned to the Lord in prayer when threatened; What Hezekiah did personally is what nation should have done

6 main parts:

1) (:1) Bad News Hezekiah receives from Isaiah

Hopelessness and helplessness of situation; death sentence; no hope from doctors or nutrition; God knows the date of our death; not due to some specific sin in his life; God used His prophet to communicate His word to His servant; delegate matters and command people in preparation for death; must get our lives in order and conform them to the Word of God; think in terms of things that matter and don't matter; don't waste life focused on temporal things

2) (:2-4) Prayer of Hezekiah to God

Most people fall apart when they are told they are going to die; he was a man of prayer; turned his face to the wall for privacy purposes; personal business between him and God; didn't get on prayer chain right away; not mad at God or arguing with God; Analyze my life; appeals to God in vs. 3 – remember how I have lived and governed your people; presents accurate, not delusional spirituality; this is real; unbiased testimonial; laid out 3 facts about his life:

- Lived according to truth of God
- Lived with a whole heart – with integrity – not claiming sinless perfection; honestly and openly; not as a hypocrite
- Done what is good in your sight; good conscience – in a good position to move the heart of God; in bad place physically but good place spiritually

Most intimidating enemy is to face our own death

3) (:5-8) The Answer from God to Hezekiah's Prayer

The one who would come from David's line would take sting out of death – 5 messages:

- Lord had heard his prayer – very comforting; this is the basis for our prayers; you have a right to pray about temporal things that pertain to you
- I have seen your tears –
- I am going to add 15 more years to your life – illness takes place in 701 BC; died when he was 54; happening when he is 39 years old;
- I will deliver you and the city from the Assyrian king – prayer is vital to our survival
- I will give you a sign that I will do these things – a sign related to time; God controls time – hours of the day and years of your life; special double set of stairs that formed some type of time device as sun hit various steps; we don't know what God did
 - Reversed earth's rotation
 - Refracted sun's rays[like winding watch backwards]

4) (:9-22) Hezekiah writes about his experiences

After he recovered; 4 facts he cites

- (:9-14) What Hezekiah actually said to God; appears to be more focused on temporal earthly life than eternal life; part of us that is groaning to leave this earth and get home with God; 7 realities he points out to the Lord
 - o I am in the middle of my life – 39 years old; don't expect to die then
 - o I am about to enter sheol (:10) – the abode of the dead; 2 chambers – top chamber is place of comfort = Abraham's bosom; bottom chamber is place of torment
 - o I am to be deprived of the rest of my life
 - o I will not be able to see the Lord or His work in the land of the living in the promised land;
 - o I will not be able to look on man or this earth again – family and friends; do not take your family or friends for granted
 - o I will be relocated (:12) – this world is not our final home; we are dwelling here as in a tent;
 - o I am dying and I turn to God for security (:13-14) My only hope and security is in the Lord; we need this perspective
- (:15-19) What Hezekiah acknowledged about God; 7 acknowledgements:
 - o God does what He wants with everyone (:15) – does not guarantee us tomorrow;
 - o God may cause one's circumstances to be bitter; wants me to draw close to Him
 - o God alone can restore one to life and health (:16)
 - o God's plan is often bitter for our own welfare (:17) – God can bring positive things out of bitter times
 - o God keeps a person's soul from being nothing (:17); gives meaning to this life and keep you from being a zero in eternity
 - o God has cast all my sins behind His back – wise person who is getting ready to die should think seriously about their sin; hospital chaplains – these people don't just need a prayer of comfort; they need their sin problem resolved

- Acknowledges truth about death (:18-19)

5. (:20) What Hezekiah would do in view of God's healing – I want to worship you more; walk by faith; go to the temple more; sing the songs more; learn the Word of God more

6. (:21) Lord tells Hezekiah to seek medical help – pray and go to the doctor and take the medicine

- (:22) Hezekiah asks for a sign – did not make the same mistake as his father

Some negative things happened in these extra 15 years

- His son was wicked king
- Hezekiah had some failings in later years due to pride
- Does this mean Hezekiah was wrong to desire more years??

Martin: Hezekiah was grateful that God restored him to health. After the experience he could see that it was really for his benefit that it happened (v. 17; cf. Rom. 8:28). He sensed for one thing that God's love was with him and that God did not punish him in accord with what his sins deserved. When he said that those who are dead cannot praise the Lord (Isa. 38:18) he was not denying life after death. He was simply noting that in death one's activities on earth are stopped and that one's service on earth for God terminates (Ps. 30:9). However, Hezekiah affirmed that while he was still alive he would proclaim the Lord's faithfulness (Isa. 38:19). Because the Lord healed him, the king said he would sin go the Lord in the temple.

TEXT: Isaiah 39:1-8

TITLE: PITFALLS OF PRIDE

BIG IDEA:
3 PITFALLS OF PRIDE

INTRODUCTION:

The Scriptures clearly indicate that the root problem of Hezekiah here is PRIDE.

2 Chr. 32:24-25 – Hezekiah had wrongly responded in pride to the gift of healing he had received

C. S. Lewis: If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think tell him the first step. The first step is to realize that one is proud . . . If you think you're not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed.

Parunak:

2 Chron. 32:31 – God was testing the heart of King Hezekiah

“Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.”

God knows our every thought without any trial. But that knowledge is private to him. He wants us to live in the constant consciousness of his penetrating knowledge, a posture that the Scriptures describe as “*walking before the Lord*” (Gen 17:11; Ps 56:13; 116:9). When there is some detail of our life that needs correcting, he knows it before the test, but he brings the test to make his private knowledge public, so that we will know that he knows.

When God withdrew his presence, Hezekiah's heart could accomplish nothing. Nor, for that matter, could the heart of anyone else. This passage isn't about Hezekiah; it's about the human heart.

Jer 17:9 *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”*

Rom 7:18 *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”*

Hezekiah's failure in ch. 39 is not the result of any fault that was peculiar to him alone. Any of us would fail in exactly the same way, if deprived of the Lord's presence. As the Lord told his disciples, after commanding them to abide in him, “*without me ye can do nothing*” (Joh 15:5).

God choose for this test the most righteous king of the Old Covenant, one who “clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments” (1 Kings 18:6), in a way unlike any king of Judah before or since. This passage is thus a cornerstone for the teaching of the new covenant. It shows us the limits of the old covenant, and the tremendous power of the new, the linkage between the indwelling Holy Spirit and our ability to walk in God's statutes and keep his commandments.

3 PITFALLS OF PRIDE

I. (:1-2) PRIDE CAUSES US TO LET DOWN OUR GUARD AND ALLOW THE

ENEMY TO GAIN AN ADVANTAGE

A. (:1) Flattering Diplomacy

“At that time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered.”

Literally: the god Marduk has given a son

Should have prayed about the situation

Oswalt: trust must become a way of life and not merely a magic talisman to be rubbed at critical moments

Wiersbe: When Satan cannot defeat us as the "roaring lion" (1 Peter 5:8-9), he comes as the deceiving serpent (2 Cor. 11:3). What Assyria could not do with weapons, Babylon did with gifts.

Parunak: The Chronicler describes his motive this way:

2Ch 32:31 *“to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land”*

The term “wonder” is often associated with “sign,” the name given to the reversal of the shadow on the stairs. Recovery from an illness is not out of the normal course of experience, but the reversal of the shadow was. Like the wise men at the birth of the Lord, these ambassadors are drawn by a celestial sign marking an earthly event.

Rich Cathers: This guy was an interesting character in history. He was a Chaldean prince from the area of the Persian Gulf. While the Assyrians had been ruling the world, he led a revolt against Assyria and captured the city of Babylon and ruled it from 722-710 BC. He was run out of Babylon in 710 when the Assyrians took it back, but was able to briefly recapture it from 705-702 BC, when the Assyrians again kicked him out. It’s now a year later, and he’s on the lookout for allies in his fight against the Assyrians.

Keep in mind, the Babylonian kingdom has yet to become a world empire. This won’t happen until Nebuchadnezzar rises up and defeats the Assyrians for good a hundred years in the future.

B. (:2) Full Disclosure

“And Hezekiah was pleased, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and his whole armory and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah did not show them.”

Constable: Hezekiah's response expressed a desire to share these resources with an ally who might help Judah oppose Assyria. Thus Hezekiah's act demonstrated trust in Babylon and reliance on her for safety.

Oswalt: Here was a ready-made opportunity for Hezekiah to glorify God before the pagan Babylonians, to tell of his greatness and of his grace. Instead, he succumbed to the temptation to glorify himself and to prove to the Chaldeans that he was a worthy partner for any sort of coalition they might have in mind. There is no indication that they were interested in such an alliance, however. Much more likely they simply wished to encourage someone whom they viewed as a petty kinglet without making any commitment on their part."

II. (:3-4) PRIDE BLINDS US TO THE TACTICS OF THE ENEMY AND MASKS THE SHAME THAT WE SHOULD FEEL FOR OUR DEFECTION

A. (:3) First Interchange – Enemy Attempt at Intelligence Gathering

1. Interrogation – Nature of the Threat

“Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, ‘What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?’”

Not looking for information here; but exposing the heart of King Hezekiah and the error of his ways

2. Response – Identification of the Threat

“And Hezekiah said, ‘They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon.’”

Only answers the second of the two questions.

Parunak: Second, note in particular how he picks up Isaiah's “unto thee.” He emphasizes, “They are come ... **unto me.**” He sees himself as the center of their interest, even though the “wonder” about which they came to inquire was done by the Lord. The wonder really “belonged to the Lord,” as the writer of 1 Kings 10:1 says of the fame of Solomon. They would have been primed to hear an explanation in spiritual terms. Yet Hezekiah deflects their interest to himself.

Rich Cathers: Lesson -- Distant things don't seem dangerous.

When Joshua was conquering the Promised Land, he was met by a group of ambassadors claiming to be from a distant land (**Josh 9:9**). They were wearing worn out clothes and carried stale bread. Joshua went ahead and made a treaty with them, only to find out a few days later that they were from just around the corner. The Gibeonites proved to be much trouble for Israel. It all happened because the Israelites relied on what their eyes saw instead of asking God for His advice.

B. (:4) Second Interchange – Extent of Damage to National Security

1. Interrogation – What Have They Seen?

“And he said, ‘What have they seen in your house?’”

2. Response – Everything

“So Hezekiah answered, ‘They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasuries that I have not shown them.’”

III. (:5-8) PRIDE COSTS US MORE THAN WE THINK – BOTH IN TERMS OF KINGDOM OBJECTIVES AND PERSONAL FULFILLMENT

A. (:5-7) Judgment of Babylonian Captivity

“Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, ‘Hear the word of the LORD of hosts, ’”

1. (:6) Confiscation of Kingdom Treasures

“Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,’ says the LORD.”

Constable: This is the first explicit reference to the Babylonian captivity in Isaiah. Many critics of the Bible who do not believe in predictive prophecy have used this reference as evidence of a much later date of writing than Isaiah's day. . . Isaiah's mention of Babylon as the enemy undoubtedly shocked Hezekiah because at this time Assyria was the great threat to Judah. Furthermore, Isaiah had previously predicted the demise of Babylon (ch. 14).

2. (:7) Deportation and Transplanting of Nobility

“And some of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you shall beget, shall be taken away; and they shall become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

Rich Cathers: it's probably because of the historical records that Merodach's ambassadors made of all the treasures that helped Nebuchadnezzar know that he wanted to go to Jerusalem some day.

Constable: Some of Hezekiah's descendants would also be taken (captive) to Babylon. It is very probable that at the time of the events in chapters 36—39 Hezekiah had no children. His son, Manasseh, began reigning when he was 12 years old, and Hezekiah died a year later, in 686 B.C. Thus, Isaiah's announcement here may have sparked a hope—in Hezekiah's mind—for some descendants. As usual, God's promise of judgment contained some hope. This prediction of Hezekiah's descendants became true of the king's physical seed: his son Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:11), King Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:12), and King Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:7). It also became true of many of Hezekiah's people, his children in that sense, when Nebuchadnezzar carried three deportations of Judahites off to Babylon (cf. 2 Kings 24:12-16; 2 Chron. 33:11; Dan. 1:3-4, 6).

B. (:8) Justification of Near Term Expediency

“Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah,”

1. (:8a) Selfish Orientation

“The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good.”

No nobility in Hezekiah's selfish evaluation of God's discipline

2. (:8b) Short Term Gratification

“For he thought, ‘For there will be peace and truth in my days.’”

Parunak: But the Chronicler has a more positive view on what is going on.

2 Ch 32:26 *“Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.”*

Remember our conclusion from 2 Chr 32:31 that God is using Hezekiah as a case study of what happens to Israel's most righteous king when left with only the resources of the flesh. Once this demonstration is accomplished, the Lord tenderly grants him “the spirit of grace and of supplications” (cf. Zech 12:10). His statement, “Good is the word of the Lord,” should be understood as an acknowledgment of his sin, and the recognition of the delay is thanksgiving for the measure of grace that the Lord has bestowed on him.

CONCLUSION:

Illustration: Palm Monday Donkey

The donkey awakened, his mind still savoring the afterglow of the most exciting day of his life. Never before had he felt such a rush of pleasure and pride. He walked into town and found a group of people by the well. "I'll show myself to them" he thought. But they didn't notice him. They went on drawing their water and paid him no mind. "Throw your garments down," he said crossly. "Don't you know who I am?" They just looked at him in amazement. Someone slapped him across the tail and ordered him to move. "Miserable heathens!" he muttered to himself. "I'll just go to the market where the good people are. They will remember me." But the same thing happened. No one paid any attention to the donkey as he strutted down the main street in front of the market place. "The palm branches! Where are the palm branches!" he shouted. "Yesterday, you threw palm branches!" Hurt and confused, the donkey returned home to his mother. "Foolish child," she said gently. "Don't you realize that without him, **you are just an ordinary donkey?**" Edited from *More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* by **Wayne Rice**. Copyright 1995 by Youth Specialties, Inc. – quoted by **Rich Cathers**.

T. A. Hegre: Humility is the displacement of self and the enthronement of Christ. Humility means Christ is all and self is nothing.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does God work in your life to humble you?
- 2) In what ways does pride make you blind?
- 3) How has God demonstrated His compassion and mercy to us despite our pride?
- 4) How can you guard against boasting in self and in personal accomplishments and possessions?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Constable: Merodach-baladan raised Babylon to a position from which it threatened and eventually overthrew Assyrian dominance in the ancient Near East (cf. 21:1-10). He was the first king of Babylon, and he led that nation during two periods: 721-710 B.C. and 703-702 B.C. The historians vary in their dating of the ancient Near Eastern kings' reigns by a few years, but I believe the dates above are fairly accurate. In 710 B.C. Sargon, another Babylonian leader, ousted him, but in 702 B.C. the Assyrians defeated Merodach-baladan. After this defeat, he continued to foment revolt against Assyria in the Fertile Crescent. This seems to have been his motivation for cultivating Hezekiah's friendship by sending letters and a present when he heard of Hezekiah's recovery.

Beall: It is often when we are recovered that we lose our guard against the enemy, and so it is here—the crisis is gone, so Hezekiah thinks, and he is at ease.

Parunak: Passages dealing with the Lord trying his people

Psa 139:23 “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try $\eta\tau\alpha\zeta\omega$ me, and know my thoughts:”

Pro 17:3 “The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth $\eta\tau\alpha\zeta\omega$ the hearts.”

1Ch 28:9 “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth $\psi\eta\tau\alpha\zeta\omega$ all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts:”

1Ch 29:17 “I know also, my God, that thou triest $\eta\tau\alpha\zeta\omega$ the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness.”

Jer 17:10 “I the LORD search the heart, I try $\eta\tau\alpha\zeta\omega$ the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”

1Pe 1:7 “That the trial $\delta\omicron\kappa\iota\mu\iota\omicron\nu$ of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”

Jim Bomkamp: It appears that the king of Babylon had some ulterior motives for sending this delegation to Hezekiah.

- He probably wanted the delegation to work undercover as spies and try to ascertain the military strength as well as the riches of Hezekiah’s kingdom. This knowledge would serve as a help for determining future military actions.

- He probably also wanted to have a diplomatic channel open in case at a future time he could convince Hezekiah and Judah to make a military alliance with Babylon to stand against Assyria.

Gene Brooks:

- In an uncertain world, discretion is protection (**Isaiah 39:1-2**)
- In an uncertain world, accountability is protection (**Isaiah 39:3-7**)
- In an uncertain world, vision is protection (**Isaiah 39:8**)

Nancy Leigh DeMoss: **Seeking Him – Experiencing the Joy of Personal Revival** – comparison between proud man and humble and contrite spirit – list of very practical questions

APPENDIX: 41 Evidences Of Pride – By Nancy Leigh DeMoss
“Seeking Him – Experiencing the Joy of Personal Revival”

1. Do you look down on those who are less educated, less affluent, less refined, or less successful than yourself?
2. Do you think of yourself as more spiritual than your mate, others in your church?
3. Do you have a judgmental spirit toward those who don’t make the same lifestyle choices you do . . . dress standards, how you school your kids, entertainment standards, etc.?

4. Are you quick to find fault with others and to verbalize those thoughts to others? Do you have a sharp, critical tongue?
5. Do you frequently correct or criticize your mate, your pastor, or other people in positions of leadership (teachers, youth director, etc.)?
6. Do you give undue time, attention, and effort to your physical appearance—hair, make-up, clothing, weight, body shape, avoiding appearance of aging?
7. Are you proud of the schedule you keep, how disciplined you are, how much you are able to accomplish?
8. Are you driven to receive approval, praise, or acceptance from others?
9. Are you argumentative?
10. Do you generally think your way is the right way, the only way, or the best way?
11. Do you have a touchy, sensitive spirit? Easily offended? Get your feelings hurt easily?
12. Are you guilty of pretense? Trying to leave a better impression of yourself than is really true? (Would the people at church be shocked if they knew what you were like at home?)
13. Do you have a hard time admitting when you are wrong?
14. Do you have a hard time confessing your sin to God or others? (not just in generalities but specifics)
15. Do you have a hard time sharing your real spiritual needs/struggles with others?
16. Do you have a hard time praying aloud with others?
17. Are you excessively shy?
18. Do you have a hard time reaching out and being friendly to people you don't know at church?
19. Do you resent being asked or expected to serve your family, your parents, or others?
20. Do you become defensive when you are criticized or corrected?
21. Are you a perfectionist? Do you get irked or impatient with people who aren't?
22. Do you tend to be controlling—of your mate, your children, friends, those in your workplace?
23. Do you frequently interrupt people when they are speaking?
24. Does your husband feel intimidated by your "spirituality"?
25. Does your husband feel like he can never measure up to your expectations of what it means to be a good husband, spiritual leader, etc.?

26. Do you often complain—about the weather, your health, your circumstances, your job, your church?
27. Do you talk about yourself too much?
28. Are you more concerned about your problems, needs, burdens than about others' concerns?
29. Do you worry about what others think of you? Too concerned about your reputation or your family's reputation?
30. Do you neglect to express gratitude for "little things"? To God? To others?
31. Do you neglect prayer and intake of the Word?
32. Do you get hurt if your accomplishments/or acts of service are not recognized or rewarded?
33. Do you get hurt if your feelings or opinions are not considered when your mate or your boss is making a decision or if you are not informed when a change or decision is made?
34. Do you react to rules? Do you have a hard time being told what to do?
35. Are you self-conscious because of your lack of education or natural beauty, or your socio-economic status?
36. Do you avoid participating in certain events, for fear of being embarrassed or looking foolish?
37. Do you avoid being around certain people because you feel inferior compared to them/don't feel you measure up?
38. Are you uncomfortable inviting people to your home because you don't think it's nice enough or you can't afford to do lavish entertaining?
39. Is it hard for you to let others know when you need help (practical or spiritual)?
40. When is the last time you said these words to a family member, friend, or co-worker: "I was wrong; would you please forgive me?" (If it's been more than a month, mark it down!)
41. Are you sitting here thinking how many of these questions apply to someone you know? Feeling pretty good that none of these things really apply to you?

TEXT: Isaiah 40:1-11

TITLE: THE PROMISED COMFORT FOR ZION

BIG IDEA:

COMFORT FOR ZION DERIVES FROM THE SALVATION AND GOVERNING BLESSINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROMISED COMING OF MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION:

Overview of Isaiah in Review – handout

Motyer: No sooner the message of disaster (**39:5-7**) than the message of comfort (**40:1-2**)!

You can't appreciate the message of comfort unless you can identify with the depths of darkness of the misery and bondage of the Babylonian Captivity – **2 Chron. 36:15-21**

God's message of comfort comes to a people who had not yet experienced the hardship of the Babylonian Slaughter and Captivity – all of this blessed revelation given in anticipation of the upcoming events

Oswalt: **Chapters 40-48** particularly address the questions concerning God's ability and desire to deliver that the exile would pose. This focus is evident immediately in ch.40. Would not the exile prove that God had either forsaken his people or was not the Lord of history? Would it not mean that he had been unable to defend his people from the pagan nations or that he had been defeated by his people's pernicious sinfulness? Isaiah's answer to both questions is a resounding no! . . . The exile would give God an even greater opportunity to show his sovereignty and his trustworthiness.

COMFORT FOR ZION DERIVES FROM THE SALVATION AND GOVERNING BLESSINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROMISED COMING OF MESSIAH

4 MESSAGES OF COMFORT:

I. (:1-2) THE COMFORT OF SALVATION NOW REPLACES THE WARNINGS OF FUTURE JUDGMENT --

The Heart of the Gospel Message: “the gospel of Isaiah”

A. A Message of Encouragement to God's Covenant People

1. Word of Comfort

“‘Comfort, O comfort My people,’ says your God.”

Young: true comfort consists in setting forth the entire truth concerning the people's tragic condition and in causing them to see God as their only hope. When the heinousness of sin is faced, then the announcement of deliverance may be made. For the reception of these words of grace the people have already been prepared through the earlier announcement of judgment to come. . . The people belong to God, for He has chosen them. Hence, even though they may forsake Him, He will not abandon them. It was necessary that He punish them through the judgment of the exile, for Israel must learn humility. At the same time God does not forsake His own.

Commission service for God's prophets – but contrasted with stern commissioning given to Isaiah in chap. 6

2. Word of Kindness

“Speak kindly to Jerusalem;”

1:1 *“vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem”*

Borgman: tells them how to bring comfort – *“speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call out to her”* – the manner of the preaching and the effects of the preaching; speak in such a way that you persuade the heart; Gen. 50:21; heart to heart talk to them designed to persuade them emotionally; **Hos. 2:14; 2 Cor. 5:11**; mouth opened wide because heart was opened wide; looking for more than a cognitive effect from preaching; should impact the whole person; we need both conviction of God (to keep us from presumption) and comfort of God (to keep us from despair); need both dynamics in balance; passion in preaching; **Spurgeon:** *“I set myself on fire and people come to watch me burn;”*

Should we speak kindly of Jerusalem today?

Constable: This is the language of covenant (37:35; cf. Exod. 6:7; 2 Sam. 10:2; Jer. 16:7). We may imagine a heavenly court scene in which God issued this command (cf. 1 Kings 22:19). The double imperative "Comfort" suggests emotional intensity. "Keeps saying" is a better translation than "says" and stresses the importance of this message.

This message of comfort will have **multiple layers of application** as we have seen in our studies of Isaiah:

- Immediate context: deliverance from bondage in Babylon as the Persian king Cyrus defeats Babylon and Jews are able to return to Promised Land to build the second temple
- The Coming of the Messiah in the future – two comings rolled up into one; but ultimate fulfillment at the second coming when all of Israel will be saved and the blessings of the millennial kingdom introduced and the Lord Jesus seen in His glory

B. A Message of Salvation for God's Covenant People

1. A Message of Peace and Deliverance from Bondage

“And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,”

Young: a period of hardship and misery generally (Num. 4:23; Job 7:1; 14:14; Dan. 10:1).

2. A Message of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

“That her iniquity has been removed,”

If you feel the weight of your sin – how comforting!

No reconciliation possible without removal of sins

No self atonement – no way to pay ourselves for the removal of our own iniquities

Is. 53 will address this issue more fully

Motyer: *“to accept punishment for iniquity.”* The passive, as used in Isaiah, means “the

punishment of their iniquity has been accepted as satisfactory,” i.e. by God, for the passive of the verb is used only of God’s acceptance of the levitical offerings. The only cases of this passive usage are Leviticus 1:4; 7:18; 19:7; 22:23, 25, 27, which are all concerned with the offering of blood sacrifice.

3. A Message of Grace and Blessing

“That she has received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins.”

Abounding measure of the Lord’s grace – grace that is greater than all our sin

Constable: Paying back double may be an expression indicating proportionate payment, making the punishment equivalent to the crime. I tend to believe that the meaning is that Israel will receive twice as much blessing as she had received judgment (cf. Jer. 16:18; Zech. 9:12; Rev. 18:6).

Parunak: Parallels to this mode of expression suggest two possible interpretations.

- 1) “*Double*” may refer to the intensity of Israel’s punishment: Jer. 16:18; Rev. 18:6
- 2) Or it may mean that she has received blessing that more than compensates for her suffering: Job 42:10-12; Is. 61:7; Zec. 9:12

I prefer the latter, for three reasons:

- The only attested meaning earlier than Isaiah is that of Job, which envisions double blessing.
- Isaiah himself clearly uses the double blessing image in 61:7.
- In the context, the other two clauses both emphasize the change in her fortunes, not the intensity of her suffering.

Beall: nice three-fold outline of the rest of the book: 40-48, deliverance from the bondage of captivity; 49-57, salvation from sin by the Servant; 58-66, abundant blessing for Israel in the future.

II. (:3-5) THE COMFORT OF THE COMING OF MESSIAH WHEN THE GLORY OF THE LORD WILL BE REVEALED

A. (:3-4) Forerunner Prepares the Way for the Coming of Messiah

“A voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;

Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low;

And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley;””

A **prophetic voice** is heard calling out; this cannot be the voice of God; the people must make preparation by way of **spiritual repentance** so that God can come unimpeded to His people to deliver them

Beall: In the NT, this voice is clearly seen as John the Baptist (Matt 3:1-4; Mark 1:1-4; Luke 1:76-78; John 1:23). . . cf. “roll out the red carpet” . . . the ultimate fulfillment will be after the tribulation period, at the Second Coming of the Lord

Oswalt: Through the entire segment [:1-11], speech is the prominent element. Eleven words relating to speaking appear. Three times the speech of God is mentioned. Alongside God’s voice are other voices, perhaps those of angels; there is also the voice of the prophet and the

voice of Jerusalem. This good news must be spoken, announced, proclaimed. God has spoken and who can keep silent?

Oswalt: Neither Israel nor any other human agency is the cause of the comfort here extended. It is the coming of God, the revelation of him in human sight.

Parunak: plain:--It is tempting at first to see this as a continuation of 3b. After all, a “highway” is a road that has been straightened out and leveled to make it easy for people to travel. Is this perhaps just a metaphor for the moral change demanded in v. 3?

Perhaps. But note the shift from imperative (command) to indicative. v. 4 is the first of a series of statements, one after another, continuing through v. 5. What is promised includes not only geographical changes, but also the universal revelation of the glory of the Lord.

The idea that the Lord's coming will bring **topological change** is found elsewhere in the OT. Isaiah appears to be the original witness to these events, and we have seen this theme already:

2:2 *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*

[Is. 13:13; Mic 1:3-4; Nah 1:5-6; Hab 3:6; Hag 2:6-7; Zech 14:1-11]

B. (:5a) Program Culmination

“Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together;”

Motyer: *The glory* is the Lord's presence (Ex. 16:10; 40:34f); the Lord revealed in some specific act (Ex. 16:7; Nu. 14:22); his repute and character (Ps. 79:9); or is his exalted state (3:8; Je. 13:16).

Oswalt: The glory of God is the manifestation of his absolute reality. The great sin of humanity is our attempt to arrogate that reality to ourselves without submitting to him.

C. (:5b) Prophetic Certainty

“For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Parunak: Isaiah, and Malachi three centuries later, anticipates a messenger who will introduce the coming of the Lord. John the Baptist, sent by God to introduce the Lord Jesus, is such a messenger. But both texts, and others cited by the evangelists in the same context (Exod 23:20), are not exhausted by John. There will be another coming of the Lord, and aspects of the promise of the messenger are not fulfilled in the Baptist, but look forward to this future coming.

III. (:6-8) THE COMFORT OF THE ETERNAL PERMANENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD – CONTRASTED WITH THE TRANSIENT GLORY OF MANKIND

A. The Transient Glory of Mankind

1. The Principle Stated – The Glory of Mankind Quickly Fades Away

a. Prophetic Voice

“A voice says, ‘Call out.’

- b. Prophetic Content – The Glory of Mankind Quickly Fades Away
“Then he answered, ‘What shall I call out?’ All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.”

- c. Prophetic Judgment
*“The grass withers, the flower fades,
When the breath of the LORD blows upon it;”*

What is so powerful about the breath of the Lord?

Young: In May, before the rainy season, the Hamsin or Sirocco blows over Palestine, having come from the hot, dry desert regions of Arabia. It is a pernicious wind and blows often for several days without intermission, filling the atmosphere with fine dust and rendering it sultry and oppressive. Possibly it is of this wind that the prophet is thinking when he speaks of the breath (*ruah*) of the Lord, for the wind is an elemental manifestation of the Lord’s breath.

2. The Principle Applied – The Glory of Mankind Quickly Fades Away

- a. The Nature of Mankind
“Surely the people are grass.”
- b. The Destiny of Mankind
“The grass withers, the flower fades,”

B. The Eternal Permanence of the Word of God

“But the word of our God stands forever.”

Parunak: Here is the ultimate value proposition for sinners. You are just grass before almighty God. He promises to come, parch you, and burn you up. Nothing can stand against his word. Your only hope is to repent and submit to him.

IV. (:9-11) THE COMFORT OF THE GOVERNING BLESSINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THE COMING OF THE LORD GOD IN GLORY

A. (:9) Announcement of the Coming of the Lord God in Glory

“Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; Lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’”

Beall: The immediate fulfillment may be in the return from Babylon, and even in the first advent of Christ; but the ultimate fulfillment clearly awaits the Second Coming, as **vv. 10-11** make plain.

Message is primarily for Israel here rather than for the Gentile nations – although they will participate in the governing blessings as well

Here is the culmination of all that has been promised to the children of Abraham down through the ages; God did not forget or omit one promise

Truly this is good news

B. (:10-11) Two Images of the Messiah King Bringing Governing Blessings

1. (:10) Governing Like a Mighty Sovereign

a. Ruling With Power

*“Behold, the Lord God will come with might,
With His arm ruling for Him.”*

b. Ruling With Reward – whose reward?? Belongs to God

*“Behold, His reward is with Him,
And His recompense before Him.”*

[**Constable:** These are the fruits of His victory, which He will share with His people (cf. 61:6; 66:12).]

Parunak argues the opposite view:

Invariably in the OT (and often, about 15x) a genitive after “reward” שכר (or “work” פעלה in the sense of payment) indicates the recipient of the payment. So “*his reward*” would not mean the reward that the Lord gives to others, but the one he receives for his own labor, the work described in the previous “behold.”

62:11-12 uses the same expression we have here, but goes on to describe the reward:

Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work pay before him. 12 And they shall call them [that is, the reward], The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

Similarly, in our present text, this understanding merges nicely with his action in **v. 11**. His reward is the flock for which he so tenderly cares.

With this in mind, we can hear an echo of this principle in **53:11**, *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. . .*

3 Metaphors:

The most common metaphor (more than 20 times) is that God's people are **his inheritance** .ִּדְּוִיָּא Literally, an inheritance is something you receive from your ancestors. It has been in the family for a long time. . .

Less often, we are called **God's “peculiar treasure”** נְחִיָּא . Ex. 19:5; Mal. 3:16-17

Isaiah's image is the least common of the three. The picture of **inheritance** emphasizes that our relation to God is permanent. As his **peculiar treasure**, we are especially precious to him. By calling us God's **reward**, Isaiah emphasizes the labor that God has exerted to secure us. He worked hard to deliver us from our sin. Though we belonged to him by ancient decree, he had to

purchase us back, like someone who redeems a foreclosed home. His work may explain why we are so precious to him.

2. (:11) Governing Like a Tender Shepherd

“Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs, And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.”

Motyer: The change from sovereign to shepherd is not as abrupt as it might seem as the latter is a David motif (2 Sa. 5:2; 7:7f; cf. Mi. 5:4; Ezk. 34:2ff., 23f.). This shepherd exercises general care (*tends his flock*), is watchful for particular needs (*gathers the lambs*) and identifies with concerns within the flock (*those that have young*).

CONCLUSION:

As we anticipate all of the blessings associated with the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, our heart should cry out, Even so, come Lord Jesus. But as long as God has determined that we remain in the hardship of this life and the struggles of living by faith, we need to remember the comfort that our God promises. Even when we lose a fellow believer in death we don't sorrow like those who have no comfort.

2 Cor. 1:3-7

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In what circumstances do you find that you especially need a message of comfort from God?
- 2) How can we draw encouragement from the peace and forgiveness and grace that God provides to us?
- 3) How can we orient our priorities to exalt the Word of God which has eternal permanence in contrast to the frailty of human existence?
- 4) Are we looking right now to the Lord to govern us with His kingly power and strength as well as with His tender shepherding care?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: The recurring theme in chs. 7-39 was that God could be trusted in the face of the threats from the surrounding nations. Yet the people of Israel were continually tempted to trust other nations to help them. God's response was to say that those other nations would fail them and the result would be destruction, sometimes from the very nation trusted for help (8:5-8; 30:1-5; etc.). Nevertheless, Isaiah had declared, God's trustworthiness was so great that even after the well-deserved destruction had come, God would not forsake his own, but would deliver them from

what had overtaken them (9:2-7; 30:9-33; etc.). . .

Parunak: Vv. 3-5 and 6-8 are an abc-abc alternation.

- Both begin (a) with “a voice” plus a participle, “crying” or “saying.”
- Both end (c) with assurance of the source of the message, “the mouth of the Lord,” “the word of our God.”
- In the middle (b) is the message.

The two voices differ in their messages. The first proclaims the joyful advent of the Lord, while the second anticipates fiery judgment.

David Thompson: Exposition of Isaiah

Distinction between OT (law and judgments of God and sin) and NT (grace of God and forgiveness); Isaiah has been called the miniature Bible; breaks down into 39 chapters of warning and pending judgment – cause for great concern; final 27 have promises of great comfort and redemption and salvation;

Quotes **Wiersbe**: breaks down the final 27 chapters as follows:

- 1) (40-48) Greatness of God
- 2) (49-57) Graciousness of God
- 3) (58-66) Glory of God

First 2 of 3 sections end with phrase “*there is no peace for the wicked*”; implies that there is peace for the righteous

At the heart of all of these chapters is the promise that there is one who is coming who will reverse all things; the God-Man; the Messiah

Chronology of these chapters – chap. 40 begins with prediction of John the Baptist who is forerunner of Jesus Christ; look at how chap. 66 ends – same chronology as NT

God wants His people comforted; future deliverance is on the way through the God-Man who is coming and will rule and will shepherd His people; God is on the way to come back and take over the world; Comfort is the theme of these final chapters; God wants His people aggressively comforted; He will revenge the wrongs that have been done to them; it is only the people who can expect to be comforted;

God wants us to speak very kindly towards Israel; He has a plan for them that is special

Babylonian Captivity was not a very comforting message; but God wanted the people to know that it was not forever; there aren't a lot of people that speak kindly of Israel these days

4 Comforting Messages:

1) (:1-2) God wants His people comforted knowing **God has forgiven them**; Israel is trouble today because she has rebelled against God; would not receive her Messiah; when the sin and rebellion are gone, Jerusalem will be a marvelous place

- coming a time when your warfare has ended; we have never seen a time when Jerusalem and Israel have not known warfare; look at hostility of Arab world

- national forgiveness – God will set all of the sin of Israel behind her; will give Israel her full possession of the promised land; Israel wants a Savior as long as they don't have to repent of their sins

- coming a day when your punishment is done; this nation has deserved worse punishments; one day Lord will grant her permanent blessing

2) (:3-5) God wants His people comforted knowing that one day **God will rule and change the world**

This prediction connected to John the Baptist; came out of the wilderness and cried out the message that their King was here in the person of Jesus Christ; change in topography of the earth talked about here; Christ will split the Mount of Olives; will turn the promised land into an Eden type of garden; as sovereign Creator He has the power to accomplish this; every eye will behold Him; evil and threatening world until Jesus returns; Christ will straighten out the deranged world;

What can I do to help prepare the world to meet Jesus Christ

- Defend God's Word; it is under attack
- Defend God's Character; being demeaned by man-centered theology; defend the sovereignty of God
- Defend God's Son; there's only one Savior
- Defend God's Church;
- Defend God's Grace –
- Proclaim God's Gospel – you will never be saved by your works

3) (:6-8) God wants His people comforted knowing that **He will fulfill His Word**

Tell people their human life is frail and temporal when compared to God and His Word; Word of God stands forever; it doesn't matter how beautiful or powerful they thought they were; one day you will be gone; you should be motivated to learn what God has said in His Word;

4) (:9-11) God wants His people comforted knowing **they need to seek Him** because He will sovereignly come to care for them

End of tribulation period: get up in the mountains as quick as possible because your Messiah is coming to deliver you; Jesus Christ will take over the world; Jesus Christ is the Lord God who is coming

Dr. Whitcomb: End Times – Isaiah and Israel

40:1 -- O how Israel today needs to hear this message; chosen people have suffered at the hand of their God because they have failed Him; most Christians believe God is finished with Israel forever and has replaced them with His church; God's purpose for them will still be accomplished:

41:8 – God has 3 Servants:

- Lowest level is Persian king Cyrus the Great who didn't even know the Lord; defeated Babylon and freed the Jews to return from captivity and build second temple
- Israel – minority has always believed in the Lord; a remnant; nation is still here; Is. 43:1-4 – why has the nation not been totally destroyed? Don't ever curse Israel – even if they deserve it; 44:1, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:6
- God's own son Jesus; 49:6; 52-53

Brian Borgman: The Great God Brings Great Comfort (:1-2)

Many liberal scholars call this 2nd Book Deutero-Isaiah because it is of a different character and different perspective – claim that it could not have been written by same author; Chap. 39 closes with Babylonian Slaughter and Captivity = worst divine judgment on God’s people in OT; Apostate northern kingdom destroyed by Assyrians in 722 BC; instituted devastating policy of deportation and importation; southern kingdom will be shaken to its foundations by Babylonian Captivity despite their security in Davidic line of kings and capital city of Jerusalem and temple -
- **2 Kings 24-25** severe language – “*the Lord would not forgive;*” **2 Chron. 36** – “*until there was no remedy;*” Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 record the covenantal curses; cycles of adultery and apostasy and repentance; Nebuchadnezzar levels the city and the temple; you need to read the horror Jeremiah records in Lamentations to appreciate the comfort and joy recorded in Isaiah 40-66; “Submit to the hand of God in this” = message of Jeremiah; recognize God is right to judge us in this way;

Prophecies given to give hope to a people not yet afflicted; writing about a future darkness they have not yet experienced; themes of restoration before there is captivity; deliverance before oppression; sovereignty of God; kingdom blessings; inclusion of Gentiles; the gospel according to Isaiah

40:1-2 -- 2 Piel imperatives = intensive stem; used twice for emphasis; God is holding a commissioning service for the prophets He is going to send out to preach to His dispirited people; bring rest and peace to the soul; “You will be my people and I will be your God” = covenant mantra;

“*Call out; proclaim;*” calling for a decisive response; sense of urgency; the message must be proclaimed with commensurate weight to the truth being proclaimed; not telling a few jokes before dealing with the eternal verities of the soul; the manner of proclamation must be consistent with the matter proclaimed;

“*Her warfare has ended*” – Eph. 6 – won’t end until Jesus returns; warfare of hardship and misery and bondage; won’t end until the glory of the Lord is revealed; it is fulfilled, brought to completion; therefore it is over; God determines how long is long enough; puts a cap on our misery; Psalmist does not ask “Why me?” but “How long?”;

You were in captivity because of your iniquity; covenantal curses enacted; **Dan. 9:5** – prayer of Daniel – “*we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances*”; God has received payment for her pardon; Israel not atoning for her own sins;

TEXT: Isaiah 40:12-31

TITLE: *SUSTAINING STRENGTH FROM THE SUPREME SOVEREIGN*

BIG IDEA:

WE CAN PATIENTLY WAIT ON THE LORD FOR SUSTAINING STRENGTH AND PERSEVERANCE BECAUSE OF HIS ULTIMATE SUPREMACY AND SIGNIFICANCE

INTRODUCTION:

Often people like to downplay the relevance of studying theology. They prefer more of a step-by-step manual on how to deal with the practical problems they are facing in everyday life. Doctrine about the attributes of God and His sovereign decrees is viewed as too heavy and not directly relevant to help me live my life today. They couldn't be more wrong. Their focus is more on what can man do to fix his problems rather than reliance on the grace of God.

We live in a God-centered universe (not a man-centered universe where the Trinity consists of Me, Myself and I) because God has created everything and only God sustains everything. Our passage today could not be clearer about the connection between basic theology about **God's Supremacy** and His **Significance** and our practical pathway to **strength** and **perseverance** in the hardships and trials we face.

Constable: The preceding section answered the question that the people of Isaiah's day had about God's *desire* to deliver them. Yes, He *wanted* to deliver them. This section answered their question about whether He *could* save them. Yes, He *could* save them. Isaiah used the doctrine of God to assure the Judahites of their security and of God's faithfulness. He is the sole Creator, and He is infinitely greater than the created world.

WE CAN PATIENTLY WAIT ON THE LORD FOR SUSTAINING STRENGTH AND PERSEVERANCE BECAUSE OF HIS ULTIMATE SUPREMACY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Isaiah focuses our attention on God's Supremacy and His Significance in 3 different sections – but the themes greatly overlap.

He uses some of the most sublime language in the scriptures and walks us through a series of rhetorical questions to drive home his main application. If we understand God correctly, we can make it through the toughest of times – even a 70 year Babylonian Captivity or the terrifying years of the Great Tribulation period.

I. (:12-17) GOD IS UNIQUELY SUPREME AND SIGNIFICANT IN THE UNIVERSE HE CREATED AND CONTROLS – IMAGERY OF MEASURING CUP AND SCALES

A. (:12-14) Uniquely Supreme in the Universe He Created and Controls

1. (:12) Supremacy Demonstrated in Original Creation Design and Execution

a. Determined the Waters and Heavens (Opposites to indicate totality)

“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,”

“And marked off the heavens by the span,”

How immense is God? What type of measuring cup would it take to calculate the amount of water in just the Atlantic Ocean?? The hollow of God's hand is sufficient as a measuring instrument for God – talk about IMMENSE!

Get out your tape measures and try to measure the heavens – good luck; God has no problem making such calculations – He alone knows the end from the beginning; He is the master designer and the one who executed creation of the heavens and the earth – what type of earthly kingdom or wicked ruler can stand up to such a God? Why would we fear man when we should only fear God?

Young: The contemplation of these things should lead the mind directly to the consideration of the greatness and grandeur of the everlasting God, who will come in glory to visit His people.

- b. Determined the Dust [of the flat regions] and Mountains
 - “And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure,”*
 - “And weighed the mountains in a balance, And the hills in a pair of scales?”*

What type of balance or measuring scale is God using here? Remember His promise to Abraham: **Gen. 22:17** *“I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore”* repeated to Jacob – **Gen. 32:12** -- and yet God assures us that He knows and cares for us individually as the sheep of His flock – even the hairs on our head are numbered – more of a challenge for some of us than others ..

2. (:13-14) Supremacy Demonstrated in Ongoing Wisdom and Knowledge

- a. Ultimate Visionary
 - “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,*
 - Or as His counselor has informed Him?”*

Where does God go to figure things out; To whom does He turn for counsel and wisdom? When it comes to the Visionary for the local church – we need to look to our Head – the Lord Jesus Christ – He has the counsel and direction to impart to us. There is no one man that can set himself up as the “Visionary” for the church – that would be presumptuous; God wants us dependent on Him.

- b. Ultimate Decision Maker
 - “With whom did He consult*
 - and who gave Him understanding?”*

We are instructed to seek wise counsel from consulting a multitude of godly counselors; it is not good for us to rely just on our own understanding – but that is not the case with God. He stands in a unique relationship to wisdom; He is our wisdom.

- c. Ultimate Standard for Justice and Knowledge
 - “And who taught Him in the path of justice and*
 - taught Him knowledge, And informed Him of the way of understanding?”*

So man ... why do you complain and say God's way is not right? He is not treating me in

accordance with justice??

Constable: God was not only alone in the work of creation, but He is alone in the wisdom needed to execute it (cf. **Job 38:2—39:30**).

B. (:15-17) Uniquely Significant in the Universe He Created and Controls

1. (:15) Inconsequential Power of the Nations

*“Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales;
Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.”*

2. (:16) Inadequate Resources of the Nations

*“Even Lebanon is not enough to burn,
Nor its beasts enough for a burnt offering.”*

What type of sacrifice is truly worthy of such an immense God? Forget about it! There is not enough wood on the earth to burn or animals to sacrifice on the altar – any man-made attempts to please God and atone for sin are futile; Forgiveness comes only by God’s grace; by the sufficient sacrifice that He has provided; a sacrifice of infinite worth

3. (:17) Insignificant Value of the Nations

*“All the nations are as nothing before Him,
They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.”*

Look at how the tyrants of the world are full of themselves; they inflate the sense of their own importance in the world; they view themselves as untouchable and sovereign; yet God can take proud Nebuchadnezzar and humiliate him to the point of reducing him to a cow grazing in the field

Nations rise and fall – look at the record of the Book of Daniel – starts after the great Assyrian influence

- Babylonian empire
- Medo-Persian empire
- Greece
- Rome all of these nations end up crushed like dust – less than nothing and meaningless – put the US in that category as well
- Exalted kingdom of God with its millennial blessings

Daniel 2:35; 44-45

Cf. **Job 38-39**

Look at Job’s response: **40:4** *“Behold, I am insignificant”*

Matthew Henry: in comparison to God, Job sees himself as nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, vanity and vileness itself

Roy Zuck: Seeing that man is not the world’s master, and that God controls and cares for His creation, Job acknowledged (a) his insignificance (**unworthy** comes from the verb *qalal*, “to be silent, trifling, small, insignificant”)

II. (:18-24) GOD IS UNIQUELY SUPREME AND SIGNIFICANT IN SOVEREIGNTY AND DOMINION – IMAGERY OF IDOLS AND GRASSHOPPERS

A. (:18) Rhetorical Question – No One Can Compare to God

*“To whom then will you liken God?
Or what likeness will you compare with Him?”*

Oswalt: If God’s transcendence is the most fundamental truth of OT theology, its immediate corollary is the next most fundamental: one cannot make an image of God.

B. (:19-20) Superior to Any Idol and Uniquely Significant

1. God is self-existent – not created; eternal – not finite

“As for the idol, a craftsman casts it,”

God is the one who made the craftsman and the materials (wood, etc.)

Two different types of workmanship in view here

- that of the rich who have all the resources of gold and silver at their disposal
- that of the poor who can only use the inexpensive and readily available material of Wood – results are the same

2. God is infinitely more valuable than gold and silver

“A goldsmith plates it with gold, And a silversmith fashions chains of silver.”

3. God is dynamic and living – carrying out His purposes

“He who is too impoverished for such an offering selects a tree that does not rot; He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman to prepare an idol that will not totter.”

Pretty low expectations – just hoping that the idol is balanced enough so that it won’t fall over – didn’t do **Dagon** any good – **1 Sam. 5:1-5** – fell down before the ark of the covenant

Constable: Idols are less impressive than the metals that people use to make them and less strong than the trees from which they fashion them. The best idols are immobile; they will not topple over (cf. 1 Sam. 5:2-5). But the **living God is active in life**, not just a product of the earth.

God is living and dynamic and in control of the universe He has created

C. (:21-22) Transcendent Above All

1. (:21) Theology 101

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?”

Motyer: The arrangement of the four is chiastic. The first and fourth bring together (the fact of knowledge arises from the imparting of discernment) as do the second and third (the fact of hearing the truth arises from the fact of being told the truth).

2. (:22) Absolute Supremacy

- a. Supreme over the Earth

“It is He who sits above the vault of the earth,”

Oswalt: Commentators agree that this probably does not refer to the circular nature of the earth but they do not agree on what it does refer to. It might be the earth itself with its circular horizon (Prov. 8:27; Job 16:10), or it might be the vault of the heavens (Job 22:14), which seems to extend in a half-circle from horizon to horizon.

b. Supreme over Mankind

“And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers,”

c. Supreme over the Heavens

“Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain

And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.”

Constable: He is so great that people are as small as grasshoppers in comparison. The whole of the universe, the heavens and the earth, are as a tent to Him because He is so immense.

God’s house is pretty large – simple to erect like a tent – just lay out the poles and stand it up and anchor it down – simple for some people – for God the universe is just like one huge tent that He dwells in – you cannot contain God in some local temple

D. (:23-24) Exercises Dominion Over World Leaders

1. (:23) Reduces World Leaders to Insignificance

*“He it is who reduces rulers to nothing,
Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless.”*

Talking about the Supreme Court Justices here – the highest form of governing rulers and justices that you can imagine on earth – nothing compared to God

Young: The language is a strong denial of deism. God has created the world but He has not abandoned it. All the created universe is in His hands and under His control.

2. (:24) Exposes World Leaders as Fragile and Temporary

*“Scarcely have they been planted, Scarcely have they been sown, Scarcely has
their stock taken root in the earth,
But He merely blows on them, and they wither, And the storm carries them away
like stubble.”*

Young: A mere breathing on God’s part, in other words, was sufficient to remove them from the scene. No strenuous exertion is required.

III. (:25-31) GOD IS UNIQUELY SUPREME AND SIGNIFICANT IN POWER AND MAJESTY – IMAGERY OF STARS AND EAGLES

A. (:25-26) Don’t Compare God to Anyone Else (in terms of Power and Majesty especially)

1. (:25) Rhetorical Question – No One Can Equal God

*“To whom then will you liken Me That I should be his equal?”
says the Holy One.”*

2. (:26a) Majestic and Powerful Creator of the Universe

*“Lift up your eyes on high And see who has created these stars,
The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name;”*

Constable: The stars were objects of worship and signs of divine activity in Babylonian and Canaanite worship (cf. 2 Kings 17:16; 21:3). But they were only creations. The pagan cults assigned them names, but the Lord summons and directs them using their real names, the names that He as their sovereign assigns them. In the ancient world, to know the name of something was to know its essence and so to have power over it. Innumerable as they may be to humans, the Lord knows and controls each one of the heavenly bodies.

3. (:26b) Majestic and Powerful Sustainer of the Universe

*“Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power
Not one of them is missing.”*

Beall: Four different Hebrew words are used in this verse to indicate God's power.

B. (:27) Don't Complain About God's Wisdom and Justice

1. God Doesn't Understand My Situation = Asleep at the Switch

*“Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel,
‘My way is hidden from the LORD,’”*

Motyer: As Isaiah envisages the message of coming disaster (39:6) taking hold of his people, he addresses himself to the despondency which will inevitably set in.

2. God Is Not Giving Me My Just Due = Acting Unfairly

“And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God?”

C. (:28) Don't Forget Who God Is and How He Works --

Theology Refresher – God is at Work to sovereignly execute His eternal plan

1. Remember Who God Is

“Do you not know? Have you not heard?”

a. *“The Everlasting God,”*

b. *“the LORD,”*

c. *“the Creator of the ends of the earth”*

2. Remember How God Works

a. He's not asleep at the switch

“Does not become weary or tired.”

b. He's not acting unfairly – His ways are inscrutable – don't try to unscrew the inscrutable

“His understanding is inscrutable.”

D. (:29-31) Main Application: Do Wait Upon the Lord for Strength and Perseverance

“He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.”

Problem: most people don't realize they lack power

I want to take my run-down, stumbling people and impart new strength to them;

Wiersbe: The word “wait” does not suggest that we sit around and do nothing. It means “to hope,” to look to God for all that we need (Isa. 26:3; 30:15). This involves meditating on His character and His promises, praying, and seeking to glorify Him.

Oswalt: This expression implies two things: complete dependence on God and a willingness to allow him to decide the terms.

Young: those who fully believe in God's power to deliver, and manifest their confidence in Him by patiently waiting for Him to bring His promise to fulfillment.

Wiersbe: The word “renew” means “to exchange,” as taking off old clothing and putting on new. We exchange our weakness for His power (2 Cor. 12:1-10). As we wait before Him, God enables us to soar when there is a crisis, to run when the challenges are many, and to walk faithfully in the day-by-day demands of life. It is much harder to walk in the ordinary pressures of life than to fly like the eagle in a time of crisis. [quote from **William Carey:** “I can plod”]

Grogan: The three-fold description forms a climax, not its opposite; for the exceptional flying and the occasional running do not require, as does the constant walking, an ever-flowing stream of grace.

Just speaking of steady, forward progress

Young: With apparently no effort the eagle mounts high into the sky; so the people of God will mount up from the depths of their griefs and difficulties.

CONCLUSION:

Think back through the various images we have discussed and you will easily remember this message

- measuring cup and balance
- idol and grasshopper
- stars and eagle

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What types of errors in the church today reflect a lack of proper balance between the truth of God’s Transcendence and the truth of God’s personal love and care for each of the elect?
- 2) Is there anything in my life that undermines the Supremacy of the Lord God?
- 3) How can we both “*work out our salvation with fear and trembling*” and yet trust in the grace of the Lord to enable us to persevere through hard times?
- 4) What practical steps can we take to truly “*Wait on the Lord*” for strength?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Constable: quoting **Dyer** -- Structure –

GOD'S SUPERIORITY TO ALL POSSIBLE OPPOSITION⁴²⁰		
Argument	Question(s)	Conclusion
His superiority to the nations is shown by His creation of the earth.	40:12-14	40:15-17
His superiority to idols is seen in the fact that they are created by craftsmen.	40:18	40:19-20
His superiority to the rulers of the earth is seen in the fact that He is transcendent while they are temporary.	40:21	40:22-24
His superiority over other "deities" is shown by His creation of the heavenly bodies.	40:25	40:26

Parunak: Structure –

	12-17	18-24	25-31
Incomparable God	Who ... Who ... with Whom	To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?	To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.
God is ...	Alone	Without peer on earth	Without peer in heaven
Weak Creation		Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood	Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard
Consequence	Nations ignored	Princes destroyed	Israel strengthened

Motyer: (:12-26) The disputation is in two parts, structurally signaled by questions. Verses 12 and 18-20 divide of the first part, and verses 21 and 25-26 the second. Each part contains four stanzas (A-D) in parallel:

- A. The Creator-God and the lessons of creation
 - A1 The sole Creator (12)
 - A2 Creation and revelation (21)
- B. Self-sufficient in wisdom; supremacy in power
 - B1 Unaided wisdom (13-14)
 - B2 Absolute rule (22-23)
- C. Unique dignity and authority
 - C1 Unique in dignity (15-17)
 - C2 Supreme in authority
- D. The incomparable God
 - D1 Deity, idol and idolater (18-20)
 - D2 God and creation (25-26)

David Thompson: Exposition of Isaiah

The church used to have a high and lofty view of the majesty and sovereignty of God; loss of consciousness of divine presence; no reverence in worship; sovereignty of God gives us comfort and hope when our circumstances are caving in; one day God will deliver and restore us; we have a relationship with a God who can do whatever He wants to do;

Prophet asks series of 8 questions to highlight God's power and sovereignty

1) Who can measure the things that God has created?

We don't even know how much space is out there in the universe; How can we measure all of the particles of dust and sand that God has put into the earth? God has made things man cannot even measure

2) Who is able to direct God's Spirit? To measure, to examine; to weigh

We can't even direct our own spirit; think of how many stupid decisions we have made;

3) Who is able to act as God's counselor? God is The Counselor; all truth stems from Him; Rom. 11 – God's work is unsearchable and unfathomable; the best counseling book in the world is the Word of God

4) Who is able to act as God's Teacher? Who could give God any understanding of anything?

Cf. how we go to experts before making large purchase;

[series of observations about majesty of God]

5) To whom or to what will you liken God? (:18)

What could you make that would be an accurate representation of Almighty God? Idolatry is insane; you have to be out of your mind to look at an idol and worship it as almighty god; cf. temple with created Buddha sitting in it;

6) Have you not known about God from the beginning? (:21)

Pronoun “*You*” repeated 4 times and focuses on Israel; 4 amazing facts of basic theology:

- God’s home is high above the circle of earth (:22) – earth is a sphere (700 BC) – not flat; Columbus still thought earth was flat;
- All the inhabitants are like grasshoppers compared to God; I can direct them, use them or squash them for my purposes; Who are we to talk back to God; it is His universe;
- The vast heavens can house a vast number of people – God lays out the entire universe as easily as we hang up a curtain or tent; you lay it out, stake it out and put it up – pretty simple; **Ps. 119:89** “*your Word is settled in heaven*” – that is what God has with him in heaven
- God can bring political and judicial rulers to nothing – they think they are so sharp and shrewd; He can raise them up and blow them away

7) (:25) To whom will you liken God? God knows every star by name; we have trouble counting the stars;

- naked eye in best conditions: see 3,000;
- 1600 AD Galileo invented telescope: see 30,000;
- improvements to his telescope -- see 640,000,
- 1800 William Herschel invented brand new telescope – 26 million stars;
- Robert Ball upped it to 50 million stars;
- laboratory in CA with a giant telescope – billions of stars and millions of galaxies – we are not sure how many; God says He can name each one

8) (:27) Why does Israel say God doesn’t see or care or treat me fairly?

4 practical lessons:

- Everything we need to know about God can be found in these 66 books of the Bible
- God knows every difficulty that His people go through; don’t whine or complain but focus on greatness of God
- God expects His people to do their part to turn to Him and trust Him and wait on Him
- The best counsel is counseling that comes from God; from His Word – don’t run first to some secular counselor who will prescribe some drugs

Ken Anema – Creator YAHWEH Never Gets Weary

We are a hurting people and we live in the midst of a hurting world; think of lands hit with recent tragedies and how they are trying to deal with it; our country is not exempt from troubles; we have our own anxieties closer to home; that’s exactly the kind of world that Isaiah was living in and speaking to; political unrest; natural catastrophes; disease and suffering; World scoffs at Christians -- your God cannot be both Good and Great; we can be tempted to doubt that God is

with us and for us; this passage builds assurance of faith as we see and know God more clearly

I. Nothing Compares With YAHWEH (:12-17)

A. Because no one can measure like YAHWEH:

- the gallons of water on the earth
- the heavens – we send expeditions out into space to examine and measure – they still have not sensed the edge of creation
- the dust of the earth --
- the mountains and hills – God knows how heavy they are

B. Because no one can advise YAHWEH

Where does God go for advice? Where does He get His information; we have all learned from others

C. Because the Global Riches/Resources are Nothing to YAHWEH (:15-17)

Lifts up the islands as a very little thing;

How would humans build an island in the middle of the sea?

(:16) -- Lebanon's trees would make only a small campfire in God's eyes

II. It's Worthless to Worship Anyone But YAHWEH (:18-26)

Where do we ultimately put our hope and confidence? Not in government and judicial rulers

Acknowledge YAHWEH as the Creator (:25-26)

Lift up your eyes and look at God – He is our help and strength

III. (:27-31) Application: Wait on YAHWEH

Live the Message; Practice the Doctrine

A. Wait On God When the Situation Arises

Remember What You have been Taught – you know better; review session

B. Wait Upon YAHWEH by Relying on the Truth

Don't be duped by philosophy of our times: "If only I were young again, I would be strong"

God is our source of strength – not our youth or ingenuity or political power

C. Wait on YAHWEH by expecting Renewed Strength

TEXT: Isaiah 40:31

TITLE: WAITING FOR THE LORD

BIG IDEA:

THE KEY TO PERSEVERING STRENGTH IS WAITING FOR THE LORD

INTRODUCTION:

Last week at the end of the message we rushed over what is one of the most precious gems in the prophecy of Isaiah – **40:31**. So this week we are going to slow down and catch our breath and just meditate for a short time on the encouraging truth in that closing verse. Especially in this Christmas season which is so often characterized by activity and hustle and bustle and busyness ... we need to slow down and learn what it means to “*Wait for the Lord.*”

Last week: (:12-31)

WE CAN PATIENTLY WAIT FOR THE LORD FOR SUSTAINING STRENGTH AND PERSEVERANCE BECAUSE OF HIS ULTIMATE SUPREMACY AND SIGNIFICANCE

2 Presuppositions already addressed:

“He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly”

[I don’t fall into either of these 2 categories where someone might imagine that they don’t need strength from the Lord – you are in denial if you think you can handle all that life throws at you by yourself]

- **We all need strength** -- We all face hard times and need persevering strength which we do not have in ourselves
- **Only the Lord can provide that strength** -- The Lord is awake and active and reigns supreme; He cares about the difficulties His children are facing; He has the power that is sufficient to grant us persevering strength

Waiting for the **First Coming of the Messiah**

Waiting for the **Second Coming of the Messiah**

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “WAIT FOR THE LORD?”

A. What It Does Not Mean – 3 things

“Yet those who wait for the LORD”

1) **Acts 1:11** – Inactivity – Like waiting for the bus at the bus stop; Instead the reason you need persevering strength is to fulfill the Great Commission of kingdom objectives; not “Let go and Let God”; not sitting around and doing nothing; **Neh 4:9** – understand the threat and both pray and set a guard on the walls --

Wiersbe: God knows how we feel and what we fear, and He is adequate to meet our every need. We can never obey God in our own strength, but we can always trust Him to provide the strength we need (Php 4:13-note). If we trust ourselves, we will faint and fall; but if we wait on the Lord by faith, we will receive strength for the journey. The word “wait” does not suggest that we sit

around and do nothing. It means “to hope,” to look to God for all that we need (Is 26:3; 30:15). This involves meditating on His character and His promises, praying, and seeking to glorify Him.

2) **John 18:10-11** – Fighting in the Flesh – Peter slicing off the ear of the one coming to arrest Jesus – high priest’s slave Malchus; our weapons are not fleshly (**2 Cor. 10:4** “*for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses*”; described as “*weapons of righteousness*” – **2 Cor. 6:7**)

3) Looking for signs – cf. Gideon’s fleece – I will act only after the Lord has clearly demonstrated what course I should take by means of supernatural signs
1 Cor. 1:22-25 “*For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*”

We have the power of God and the wisdom of God available to us right now through the crucified Christ

B. What It Means or What It Involves: 5 Things (from studying same phrase in OT)

wait – *qavah* – wait, hope, expect; to look eagerly for; to lie in wait for; linger for

1) Requires Courage Over Time

Ps. 27:14 “*Wait for the LORD; Be strong, and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.*” – **Sense of Patience** – Waiting requires Time

Understand the delay involved from the human perspective; that is why we need courage and fortitude

We are an instant society – want instant gratification

Look at how we pray – we rush into the Lord’s presence with our list of demands like we are talking to Santa Claus; where is the waiting on the Lord; listening to His voice; worshiping Him; seeking courage from the Lord

Stop rushing into God’s presence with our babbling and our demands – **Eccles. 5:1-2** “*Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few*”

Balance that caution with the exhortation in Hebrews to come boldly before the throne of grace and to make our petitions known

2) Requires Confidence in the Lord’s Promises in His Word

Ps. 130:5 “*I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope.*” – **Sense of Dependence and Faith and Confidence**

Young: those who fully believe in God’s power to deliver, and manifest their confidence in Him by **patiently** waiting for Him to bring His promise to fulfillment.

3) Relinquishes Control to the Sovereign Lord

Prov. 20:22 “Do not say, ‘I will repay evil’; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.” – **Sense of Submission**

The Lord knows what is best in every situation; let Him handle things

Oswalt: This expression implies two things: complete dependence on God and a willingness to allow him to decide the terms.

4) Rewards Consecration in Submitting to the Lord’s Plan and Obeying His Direction

Ps. 37:34 “Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.” – **Commitment to Obedience**

We have not yet received our reward; we live in Hope

5) Rewrites Circumstances from the Perspective of Enjoying the Lord’s Favor

Is. 8:17 “And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.” – **Sense of Expectation**

The words of **William Cowper's** great hymn could have just as well been written to Israel as to modern believers...

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind the frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

Motyer: **Hope** (with its biblical dimension of certainty) is one facet of *qavah*, which also includes ‘**waiting**’ (**patience**) and ‘resting’ (**trusting**). The participial form points to those in whom this relationship (of expectation, patience and trust) with the Lord is unchanging.

C. Scriptural Examples

- **Luke 2:25-35** Simeon – “*looking for the consolation of Israel*”

MacArthur: A messianic title, evidently derived from verses like Is 25:9; 40:1,2; 66:1-11

- Abraham had to wait for the Son whom God had promised
- Noah had to wait for God to bring promised judgment and destruction through the Flood
- Samson –

Dr. Alan Cairns: Source of Samson’s great strength was not natural but supernatural; endowed with strength by the Lord for service; mark of his Nazirite separation unto God was his uncut hair; mark of his compromise with Delilah was his shaven locks; lost the presence and power of

God; Judges 16:20 – thought he could go out as before but did not know that the strength of the Lord had departed from him; became object of derision and ridicule; time in prison for Samson was a time of waiting upon God; the hair growing again with all that it symbolizes

- **Farmer** waits on the Lord for the sunshine and rainfall needed for a fruitful harvest; **James 5:7-8** *“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord is near.”*

Heb. 10:23 *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”*

II. WHAT DOES THIS NEW STRENGTH PROVIDED BY THE LORD LOOK LIKE?

A. Defined as “New Strength”

“Will gain new strength;”

Cf. **Lam. 3:22-23** *“The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.”*

Each day we need new strength; yesterday’s strength does not get us through today

Wiersbe: The word “renew” means “to exchange,” as taking off old clothing and putting on new. We exchange our weakness for His power (2 Cor. 12:1-10). As we wait before Him, God enables us to soar when there is a crisis, to run when the challenges are many, and to walk faithfully in the day-by-day demands of life. It is much harder to walk in the ordinary pressures of life than to fly like the eagle in a time of crisis. [quote from **William Carey:** “I can plod”]

B. Illustrated with 3 Images for Emphasis

Grogan: The three-fold description forms a climax, not its opposite; for the exceptional flying and the occasional running do not require, as does the constant walking, an ever-flowing stream of grace.

Just speaking of steady, forward progress – of victory in the Christian life

- **Supernatural Strength** – these effects are not natural
- **Persevering Strength** – overcoming whatever obstacles or trials or temptations you face in your Christian life so that you can live the Victorious Christian Life – why do most Christians seem to live a defeated life? They have not learned the secret of Waiting for the Lord; they are unwilling to take the time to practice the discipline of Waiting for the Lord

1. Flying -- Soaring Effortlessly Over Obstacles Like Eagles

Answers Challenge of **Degree of Difficulty** – How high is this mountain?

“They will mount up with wings like eagles,”

- Eagles are admired the world over as living symbols of power, freedom, and transcendence.

- Some eagles are built with short wings and long tails enabling them to hunt in the tight confines of a forest, while others are have short tails and broad long wings allowing them to soar high above open plains and water.
- Eagles build their nests on high cliffs or in tall trees.

Young: With apparently no effort the eagle mounts high into the sky; so the people of God will mount up from the depths of their griefs and difficulties.

2. Running -- Running the Marathon of Life's Challenges with Perseverance
 Answers Challenge of Duration – How long is this trial?
“They will run and not get tired,”

In the Gospel of Mark we have studied the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ; He seems to minister non-stop; immediately He goes from one interaction and one crisis confrontation to the next; like the Energizer bunny – unending resources of strength and resilience

Why don't we get burned out in our service to the Lord? Why doesn't our tank run dry?
 I know just how far I can push my car's fuel tank – can go 25 miles below the absolute 0 mark – but then I need to stop and get fuel
 Waiting for the Lord is our spiritual refueling – can't just charge through life without receiving new strength

By God's grace He gives us the ability to run and not get tired; Jesus understood the secret of getting alone with His heavenly Father and spending time waiting for God

3. Walking -- Walking Through the Tedium of Life's Routine With Enthusiasm and Vitality
 Answers Challenge of Dullness – Can I continue to plod along and put one foot in front of another?

“They will walk and not become weary.”

Sometimes this is the most difficult; to keep being faithful plodding along at our daily repetitive tasks

Calvinistic doctrines: The perseverance of the saints; or the perseverance of God on behalf of the saints – His grace is sufficient for all we need

Phil. 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”

CONCLUSION:

Lord communicates the same truth in **Matt. 11:28-30** *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Appropriate verse to help us deal with the busyness and hectic pace of the Christmas season

We are going to make **Is. 40:31** our **year verse for 2015** – giving us a couple of week headstart on the New Year

Ultimately, we are waiting for the Lord's return ... maybe it will be in 2015

Rev. 22:20-21 *“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When do I tend to be presumptuous or self reliant rather than waiting on the Lord?
- 2) How can I adapt my prayer life to wait on the Lord more diligently?
- 3) Am I truly boasting in my areas of weakness as Paul describes in 2 Cor. 10-12?
- 4) What examples can I find of believers I know who seem to soar like eagles?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Preceptaustin.org: The **TWOT** explains that...

Waiting with steadfast endurance is a great expression of faith. It means enduring patiently in confident hope that God will decisively act for the salvation of his people (Ge 49:18). Waiting involves the very essence of a person's being, his soul (nephesh; Ps 130:5). Those who wait in true faith are renewed in strength so that they can continue to serve the Lord while looking for his saving work (Isa 40:31). There will come a time when all that God has promised will be realized and fulfilled (Is 49:23; Ps 37:9 [Ed: When? In the Millennium]). In the meantime the believer survives by means of his integrity and uprightness as he trusts in God's grace and power (Ps 25:21). His faith is strengthened through his testings, and his character is further developed (Ps 27:14). Israel is encouraged to hold fast to love and justice, i.e. they are to follow the law faithfully and maintain consistently the standards of justice, at the same time preserving an attitude of godly love (Ho 12:6; cf. Ps 37:34; Job 4:6). During times of visitation and judgment, the righteous must exercise great faith (Is 26:8; La 3:19-33). Thus Isaiah confidently asserts,

I will wait (chakah) for the LORD, Who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope (put my trust in [Is 8:17NIV]; Lxx = peitho [word study]) in Him (Is 8:17). [(Ed: Note the clear association of waiting and hoping/trusting.)]

When God arrives on the scene with redemptive power, the response of those who have waited will be jubilant joy and great singing (Isa 25:9). (Harris, R L, Archer, G L & Waltke, B K Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Moody Press or Logos software version)

Quoting **Spurgeon** writes that...

Everything comes to the man who can wait. It is only a matter of time. Patience beholds great wonders. In spiritual things, if we watch and wait, we shall see glorious things.

God waits to be gracious, and the gracious wait on God. God, who feeds his ravens, will feed his doves.

Knock at mercy's gate, but wait till it opens to you. Too many prayers are a sort of runaway knock, for they are not attended with expectant waiting upon God.

Fret not in a hurry. Tarry a bit and see what time will do. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it."—James 5:7. In spiritual things we must learn to wait patiently.

"Our husbandmen for harvest wait and stay;
Oh, let not any saint do less than they!"

Patient waiters are no losers. Everything comes to the man who is able to wait for it.

With patience I the storm sustain,
For sunshine still doth follow rain.

Pray and stay are words for every day. Good words and wise. Practice both. Worship and wait. God's answers are not always immediate. His delays are not denials. Erskine rightly says:—

I'm heard when answered soon or late;
And heard when I no answer get:
Yea, kindly answer'd when refused,
And treated well when harshly us'd.

FOUR WAYS OF WAITING ON THE LORD:

(1) First, waiting on the Lord means to long for the Lord. Look at **Psalm 62:1**. "*My soul waits upon God; from Him cometh my salvation.*"

(2) Not only does waiting mean to long for the Lord, but it means to listen to the Lord. Here's a great verse. This is one for the refrigerator door. **Proverbs 8:34**: "*Blessed is the man that hears Me [now underscore that, that hears me], watching daily at my gates, waiting, waiting at the posts of my doors.*"

(3) Waiting on the Lord means to look to the Lord. In **Psalm 104:27**: "*These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their food in due season.*"

(4) And here is the clincher...Waiting on the Lord means to live for the Lord. Let me give you the verse that points that out and makes that true. **Proverbs 27:18**: "*Whoso keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof; so he that waits on his master shall be honored.*"

Dr. Alan Cairns: Waiting on the Lord – the Source of Unfailing Strength

1) We wait as **sons** upon the **Father** -- We come to God as sons; having received the spirit of adoption;

2) We wait as **servants** upon the **Master** – until He has mercy upon us; turn our eyes upon Him; crucify and deny self; looking for provision as well; outside of what the Lord gives us we have nothing; the arm of flesh will always fail you; What do you need this morning? We are not coming to an idol;

3) We wait as **supplicants** upon our **Advocate and Mediator** – widow constantly appealing to

the unjust judge; prayer is waiting upon the Lord;

- involves silence; cf. **41:1** “*Keep silence*”; involves my shutting up long enough to hear what God has to say to me; don’t be a babbler; must understand something of the greatness of God, His Holiness and Majesty;

- involves patience; we always want the Lord to be in a hurry; the only people who have to be in a hurry are those who don’t have everything under control; can’t give your children everything they ask for when they ask for it or they will be spoiled monsters; “*I waited patiently for my God*;”

- involves dependence; even for our next breath; no self-made man; commitment of trust;
- involves confidence; my expectation is from Him; my hope is from Him; **Ps. 130:5**; we may in a dark night but the morning is coming;

Renewing = exchanging old fallen strength for new spiritual strength

- Spiritual victory – overcomes the course of nature; not natural for man to mount up as eagles; Why do so many Christians live defeated lives? Because they are not waiting upon the Lord! The key to growing as a Christian; “*Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh*;” If I have time to drink, I have time to wait on the Lord in prayer for victory
- Spiritual vigor – we are not victims of our circumstances or upbringing; sanctification is real; not by strength of character or will that we are sanctified; **2 Cor. 12:9** “*My grace is sufficient for you*.” **Phil. 4:13**

How is this strength manifested? **Job 39:27**; 3 things about the eagle who dwells securely on high:

- Its vigor
- Its vision
- Its victory over all its enemies

We need to learn to dwell on high; Eph. 1 – all spiritual blessings; we should be soaring but we are chained down by our sins; need to wait upon the Lord; we need to exchange human strength for divine

May God make us Waiters upon the Lord

Alistair Begg: The Discovery of Strength

Who is the Lord upon whom we are called upon the Wait?

- Creator
- Conqueror
- Controller
- Comforter

What does it mean to wait upon the Lord?

- Life of unfaltering obedience
- Unwavering trust
- Uninterrupted communion

What is involved in the renewal of strength?

Very practical verse; How is it possible for strength to be renewed

I. The Problems we Encounter = Self Reliance

- We fail to recognize the finite limitations of our own capacities; **40:7** – we are as frail as the summer flowers;

- We are willing to worship tottering idols; **28:15b** – we have made lies our refuge and

taken falsehoods as our hiding place; some of the lies that confront us so that we fail to discover the renewal of our strength:

- mankind can work things out for himself; **Is. 2:22; Jer. 17:5**
- mankind possesses the weapons to do the job; **Is. 31:1**
- riches solve the riddles of our lives; **Ps. 52:7**; dependence factor is revealed here; **Prov. 18:11; Hos. 10:13; Jer. 9:23** – brains, bodies and bucks
- flimsy walls – **Ezek. 13:10**; shaky foundations – **Matt. 7:26**; short beds and narrow blankets – **Is. 28:20**

II. The Process we Experience – We die in order to live; embrace weakness to gain strength

- NT illustration – **2 Cor. 11:30** *boast of the things that show my weakness*; **12:9ff**; God's power is made perfect in weakness; must acknowledge our helplessness before God to discover the renewal of our strength; our self reliance prevents us from seeking renewal of strength
- Contrasting messages: Tough Times Don't Last but Tough People Do vs. Tough Times Do Last but Tough People Don't – society set up like big, tough Goliath; church set up like David; **Ps. 44:6; 1 Sam. 17**;
- Don't pump yourself up but deny yourself

III. The Promise we Enjoy

- **Ps. 84:7** -- growing in strength
 - **Ps. 119:28** – renewal of strength is by God's Spirit through God's Word
- “Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus”

TEXT: Isaiah 41:1-7

TITLE: *GOD CALLS ALL THE SHOTS*

BIG IDEA:

THE QUESTION OF ULTIMATE CONTROL BEGINS AND ENDS WITH THE SUPREME “I AM”

INTRODUCTION:

Max Lucado: The House of God

Every time Satan sets out to score for evil, he ends up scoring a point for good. Consider Paul. Satan hoped prison would silence his pulpit, and it did, but it also unleashed his pen. The letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians were all written in a jail cell.

Satan is the **Colonel Klink** of the Bible. Remember Klink? He was the fall guy for Hogan on the television series, Hogan’s Heroes. Klink supposedly ran a German POW camp during World War 2. Those inside the camp, however, knew better. They knew who really ran the camp: the prisoners. They listened to Klink’s calls and read his mail. They even gave Klink ideas, all the while using him for their own cause.

Over and over the Bible makes it clear who really runs the earth. Satan may strut and prance, but it is **God who calls the shots**.

The people of Judah were about to enter into a period of 70 years of Captivity under the oppression of the pagan Babylonians. They would be tempted to doubt the covenant love of the God of Israel. They would be tempted to doubt the promises of God’s providential care and future blessing. Pagan gods would be paraded before them and extolled while the one true God was mocked and despised.

But Isaiah wanted to encourage God’s people ahead of time not to panic or fear. Remember who it is that is in ultimate control. *GOD CALLS ALL THE SHOTS*

THE QUESTION OF ULTIMATE CONTROL BEGINS AND ENDS WITH THE SUPREME “I AM”

Wiersbe: This section speaking of **the Greatness of God**

1. God is Greater Than Our Circumstances (40:1-31)

(:1-11) COMFORT FOR ZION DERIVES FROM THE SALVATION AND GOVERNING BLESSINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROMISED COMING OF MESSIAH

(:12-31) WE CAN PATIENTLY WAIT ON THE LORD FOR SUSTAINING STRENGTH AND PERSEVERANCE BECAUSE OF HIS ULTIMATE SUPREMACY AND SIGNIFICANCE

2. God is Greater Than Our Fears (41:1-44:28)

3. God is Greater Than Our Enemies (45:1-48:22)

4 Acts in This Courtroom Drama – Ultimate Showdown between the One True God and the Pagan Nations with their False Idols

**I. (:1) COURTROOM SETTING –
CALLING ALL NATIONS TO ACCOUNTABILITY – DIVINE INTIMIDATION**

Courtroom setting where Judgment will be rendered

A. Pagan Nations Need to Listen to God in Silence

“Coastlands, listen to Me in silence,”

“Coastlands” -- Speaks of the ends of the earth – those locations farthest away from the land of Israel – thereby signifying the whole earth

Guzik: The Hebrew word translated *coastlands* is also translated islands or isles in other passages, such as **Isaiah 11:11; Isa 40:15**. It is also translated with broader words like territory in passages like **Isaiah 20:6**. The idea is probably best expressed as *“distant lands.”*

Don't try to argue your case before the Lord until you first listen to Him in silence; God has something significant to say

Job learned this lesson – cover my mouth and remain quiet before you

Big showdown coming

Grogan: Although in form this verse is an address to the nations, the message of the chapter is of course intended for Israel. The discomfiture of the nations and the demonstration that their gods are impotent is intended to encourage God's people to trust in him.

Young: God addresses the isles with the **voice of absolute authority**; He commands them to turn unto Him in silence. They are to listen to Him and not to the verdict of some third party. Before His words there can be no answer. . . Let the Nations renew their strength to plead their cause before Me, it will be of no avail.

Oswalt: Thus the nations are called to approach in awed silence, listen to God's evidence, and then gather what strength they can to make a response.

B. Pagan Nations Need to Rally Their Strength

“And let the peoples gain new strength;”

Have already seen in verses above that only the Lord can renew our strength

Beall: here, the term is used in an **ironic manner**, as a deliberate contrast to those who truly would renew their strength in the Lord.

Where will they turn for strength?

C. Pagan Nations Need to Make Their Case Before God

“Let them come forward, then let them speak;”

Now is the time for the nations to make their case; Can they tell the future; can they prophesy of events yet to come? Can they control their own destiny as a kingdom?

D. The Evidence Must Be Examined and a Verdict Delivered

“Let us come together for judgment.”

Is. 1:18 – let us reason together; what can we conclude from this showdown?

II. (:2-4a) CENTRAL QUESTION THE NATIONS NEED TO ASK – WHO IS IN CONTROL? – DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

A. (:2a) Question of Control

*“Who has aroused one from the east
Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet?”*

The future is here prophetically represented as present or past.

Nations must learn from history the lesson of the **Succession of Kingdoms**; no kingdom lasts forever; no kingdom is invincible; You see the seed of that lesson in the Succession of Kings – no one lives forever; they all die

The Babylonians will take the southern kingdom of Judah into captivity in 586 B.C. for a period of 70 years; but God will rise up Cyrus and the Persian Empire will supplant the great Babylonian Empire

Oswalt: a movement from general to specific is apparent. For instance, a very general reference to the deliverer in ch. 41 (vv. 2-4, 25) is made much more specific in 44:23-45:8. In the same way, the references to the futility of idols in 41:6-7 are greatly amplified in 44:9-20 (and also 46:5-6).

Motyer: conquests of Cyrus well known for their ease, speed and the panic they created

Constable: The four Mesopotamian kings who invaded Canaan in Abraham's day and took Lot captive were the prototype of this invader, as were Sargon, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar. Jesus Christ will be the ultimate fulfillment when He returns to the earth east of Jerusalem (on the Mount of Olives), and overcomes His enemies, who will have assembled in Palestine. Cyrus came from Persia (modern Iran), which was east of Mesopotamia. This invader would proceed safely over previously unused routes.

Beall: Cyrus was the Persian ruler who first conquered the Median empire in 550 B.C., then the empire of Croesus of Lydia in the west (Asia Minor) in 547, and finally crossing the Tigris and entering Babylon from the east, subdued Babylon without a struggle in 539 B.C. He then issued an edict which permitted the Jews to return to their homeland.

Parunak: The usage of the noun צדק "righteousness" elsewhere in Isaiah strongly suggests that "righteousness" here is a personified attribute of the Lord, not a title for the coming invader . . . **Righteousness will call him to his foot.** -- Here is the answer to the previous question. Who has raised up Cyrus? God's righteousness has. Cyrus is not righteous. But God, to accomplish his

righteous purposes, summons Cyrus, who comes as a servant to his foot. Compare **1 Sam 25:42**, describing Abigail's handmaidens as “*going at her feet*,” following her every step to be ready to attend to her commands. Even today we say that a dog “heels” its master.

Delitzsch: Righteousness was always raised up from the East. Paradise was east of Eden. The cherubim were at the east of the garden. Abraham was called from the East. Judea, the birthplace of Messiah, was in the East.

B. (:2b-3) Evidence of Control

1. Conquering Powerful Nations

*“He delivers up nations before him,
And subdues kings.”*

2. Carving Them Up With Weapons of Mass Destruction – His Sword and His Bow

*“He makes them like dust with his sword,
As the wind-driven chaff with his bow.”*

Primary characteristic of this individual is that he is a conquering warrior-king (could not be an appropriate reference to Abraham)

3. Chasing Them With Speed and Impunity

*“He pursues them,
Passing on in safety, by a way he had not been traversing with his feet.”*

Oswalt: although pursuit may involve many dangers for the pursuer, there will be none in this case

Motyer: refers to the serenity and satisfaction of the conqueror compared with the havoc he has left behind

Parunak: The idiom probably refers to the speed of his advance. Compare the image of Alexander as a he-goat in Dan 8:5, moving so rapidly that “he touched not the ground.”

C. (:4a) Question of Control

*“Who has performed and accomplished it,
Calling forth the generations from the beginning?”*

God is the Author and Finisher of this delivering work of righteousness

God is the one who can accurately predict the future because He controls the future

God calls all nations into existence – this has been true from the beginning of time; no nation exists apart from God

Guzik: This is always a relevant question. Is there a point, a direction to human history? Is it just a random, meaningless combination of undirected events? Is it a cycle, fated to repeat itself endlessly? Or, is there a God in heaven who directs human events, always moving to a final resolution and fulfillment? Our answer to this question influences almost everything in our lives.

The issue of **predictive prophecy** seals the case for the Lord God – He controls all things so He alone is able to call all the shots

S. Lewis Johnson: Now, before we look at this prophecy, remember. Isaiah is writing from about 740 to 700 B.C. These prophecies are probably given during the reign of King Hezekiah and so of course they are given somewhere around 700 BC. Now he is going to prophesy the rise of Cyrus, the Persian. Now Cyrus came on the scene in the middle of the 5th century before our Lord. It was in 549 B.C. that Cyrus made his first great conquest when he overcame Croesus, the king of Lydia. So the Prophet Isaiah is, by the spirit of God, looking into the distant future, approximately **150 years** from his own time and he is going to prophesy the rise of Cyrus, the king of Persia. . .

Cf. My trying to call the outcome of a Ravens game – “putting the hay in the barn” – didn’t work so well in the San Diego game

Who Besides The Lord Can Bring Into Being What Does Not Exist And Foretell The Future?

III. (:4b) COMPREHENSIVE ANSWER THE LORD PROVIDES – DIVINE ETERNAL SELF-EXISTENCE

A. Comprehensive Answer When Viewed From the Perspective of Time

“I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last.” Rev 1:17; Rev 22:13

Jim Bomkamp: He is outside of time and in all points of time at once.

S. Lewis Johnson: Moses one day saw a bush that was burning and not consumed, that’s an illustration of God of course. And so he took off his shoes from off his feet for that ground was Holy and he was told “I am who I am.” That’s God. That is, it’s impossible for man to define God because He is the absolute being. Once we define God then we limit God. That’s what definition means. So there is no way to define God. He is God, that’s all. So when your children say, who made God or who was there before God was, there is no answer you can give to that. Don’t rush to your preacher and ask for the answer, there is no answer to that. He is the great uncaused being. There is no one behind Him. So an absolute definition of God is impossible. Now we may have a relational definition and Moses remember was given a relational definition. When he said, “who shall I say sent me when I go,” He said, “tell them I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.” That’s a relational definition, that’s the definition of God in his covenant relationship to Israel.

B. Comprehensive Answer When Viewed From the Perspective of Causation

“I am He.”

Outside of Isaiah, only other OT usage:

Deu 32:37-39 “And he shall say, Where *are* their gods, *their* rock in whom they trusted, 38 Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, *and* drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, *and* be your protection. 39 See now that I, *even I, am he*, and *there is* no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither *is there any* that can deliver out of my hand.”

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

Young: God is the first in that He antedates all these idols and gods that are being condemned; inasmuch as He is the director of human history, He antedates all history. God, therefore, is the first in the sense that before all human history began to run its course, He IS. The language stresses His independence of human history and movements. He is above history; He is above His creation.

IV. (:5-7) COOPERATIVE REACTION OF THE NATIONS – DIVINE SUBSTITUTION

A. (:5) Fear That Intensifies Their Ecumenical Cooperation (Human Solidarity)

1. Universal Fear

“The coastlands have seen and are afraid; The ends of the earth tremble;”

It looks like we might be making progress here; But fear needs to lead to the right type of action

Beall: [note the word play in Hebrew between רָאוּ (“they saw”) and יִירָאוּ (“they feared”)]

2. Universal Ecumenical Cooperation

“They have drawn near and have come.”

Not drawing near to the Lord God . . . but drawing near to one another to try to reinforce one another in a defensive posture

The destiny of the mission of the United Nations

Oswalt: Unfortunately, their terror moves them to turn not to God but to the gods. But before the gods can help them they have been made! What a tragedy! To respond to the activity of the Creator in history, these humans must create gods in history to protect them.

Brian Borgman: Unbelievers are never argued into the kingdom by simple weight of the evidence; the heart of man is at enmity with God and he suppresses the truth in unrighteousness; not all fear and trembling leads to repentance; can lead to a hardening; they draw near to one another – not to God;

B. (:6-7) False Courage of Fleshly Partnership with Futile Efforts

1. (:6) False Courage

*“Each one helps his neighbor,
And says to his brother, ‘Be strong!’”*

World offers all types of encouragement with messages of False Courage and Self Confidence:

Nike: “Just do it”

Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.”

Norman Vincent Peale: “What the mind can conceive and believe, and the heart desire, you can achieve.”

“Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be successful or happy.”

Joel Osteen: “I believe that God has put gifts and talents and ability on the inside of every one of us. When you develop that and you believe in yourself and you believe that you're a person of influence and a person of purpose, I believe you can rise up out of any situation.”

Miley Cyrus: (I decided every sermon needs a Miley Cyrus reference) “If you believe in yourself anything is possible.”

My favorite is Home Depot: “You can do it; we can help”

Cf. defensive mechanism of Israel in the face of hard times – let’s make a **golden calf**

Scott Grant: Idolatry-dependence on gods other than the Lord is a fear-based attempt to meet needs and defend against threats, such as the appearance of “*one from the east*.” What do you do when one from the east shows up and it looks as if he might destroy your world? Sometimes, we crank up the idol-making machine. We hope that the gods we trust in—power, money, success, sex, nature, food and drink, intellectualism, whatever—will stand up to the inevitable invasion. In that we constantly strengthen ourselves; invest more effort in our idols; attempt to convince ourselves with words such as, “It is good”; worry whether our idols will totter and crash to the earth, we demonstrate the insecurity we feel in our idolatry. Better to worship a God who meets actual needs and truly defends us.

2. (“7a) Fleshly Partnership

*“So the craftsman encourages the smelter,
And he who smooths metal with the hammer encourages him who beats the anvil,
Saying of the soldering, ‘It is good’;”*

Oswalt: **Pieper** seems to be correct when he sees a chiasmic arrangement of the terms for the craftsmen in v. 7. The outer terms (i.e., the first and last) apply to the rougher work, while the inner ones (the second and third) refer to the finer. The first, the molder, casts the rough form of the idol; the second, the smelter, prepares the precious metals with which the idol will be plated; the third, hammers the gold leaf or silver plate into place; the fourth fashions the nails that will hold the idol in place.

3. (:7b) Futile Efforts

“And he fastens it with nails, That it should not totter.”

Oswalt: The purpose of all this detail is not clear, but the prophet may want to heighten the ironic effect by showing what a complex and arduous task idol making is. Thus he is implicitly asking his hearers if simply trusting the sovereign Lord is not a great deal easier. Another purpose may be to point out how dependent the gods are. They cannot be created by just one person; it takes a whole host of people to keep them going.

Guzik: People still see something of God’s power and glory, reject it, and then make their own god. This is Paul’s whole message in **Romans 1:18-25**.

CONCLUSION:

The Jews in Captivity in Babylon would function much like the prisoners in Colonel Klink's stalag in Hogan's Heroes. Despite their weakness, God would work through them to glorify Himself. The enemy were the ones who should be in panic and fear. They would find out that their confidence in their man-made idols had been futile and vain. They would ultimately stand before God to give an account of their sins and would learn the lesson that **God calls all the shots**. We can take courage and fear not, because God is ultimately in control and working out everything for his glory.

THE QUESTION OF ULTIMATE CONTROL BEGINS AND ENDS WITH THE SUPREME "I AM"

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where do we take refuge when we are under pressure or faced with fear?
- 2) Do we need to try to prove the existence of God in our witnessing efforts?
- 3) Why would we ever fear those that should themselves be in fear and trembling before the God who loves us and cares for us?
- 4) What type of idols attract you?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: The first section, 41:1-20, aims chiefly at reassuring fearful Israel. Following on the themes introduced in ch. 40, it makes two points:

(1) Israel need not fear the nations, who will be terrified by what God will do in their history (vv. 1-7, 21-29).

(2) God has not rejected his people but will in fact use them to accomplish his purposes in the world (vv. 8-20).

Constable: (41:1 – 44:22)

There is an emphasis on the uniqueness of the Lord compared to other gods in this section, a theme that Isaiah introduced earlier (ch. 40 especially). The prophet particularly stressed Yahweh's ability to control history in this connection. He did this to assure Israel that God loved her and had a future for her beyond the Exile, specifically to serve Him by demonstrating to the world that He is sovereign over history. These emphases become increasingly apparent as the section unfolds. Calls to praise form bridges from one section to the next (42:10-13; cf. 44:23; 45:8).

David E. Thompson: Chap. 41

Intro: All of the nations of the world headed for a big showdown with the Sovereign Lord; God is in sovereign charge of everything; eventually He will topple all kingdoms and bless His

people;

3 main realizations of sovereignty

1. (:1-7) God will sovereignly confront the nations

It is time for all of you nations to face God; there is a big showdown coming; you will lose; Haiti is known for its Voodoo religion; earthquake they experiences is nothing compared to what they will experience in end times; God raises political leaders up to power and when God is done with them He blows them away like chaff; you can make whatever alliances you want and invent all the idols you want, but it will not escape God calling you to accountability; Cyrus thought he was acting independently but controlled by hand of God

2. (:8-20) God will sovereignly comfort Israel

Israel has had a dream to be free in her land; experiencing wonderful blessings from God; Who can make that happen in the war torn Middle East? God is a powerful God and a personal God; we have nothing to fear; God is still on the side of His people; 8 reasons why they don't need to be afraid

3. (:21-29) God will sovereignly control the future

David Silversides: Panic and Despair are for Pagans not Believers (:1-9)

The Lord has rebuked the low views of God that are behind defeatist views of God;

1. The Impossibility of Prevailing against the Lord (:1)

Confronts the heathen nations who did not wait on the Lord and trust in Him; let them renew their own strength in their self confidence and false gods and see how they fare when called into account by God; can they prevail against God? See if you can make a case for yourself before the judge of all; exposes false confidence – end in disaster; you are doomed; we either have a well-grounded hope according to the Scriptures or we live in delusion day by day; God will not prosper the false hope of unbelieving men; wishful thinking will do you no good

2. The Sovereign God of Heaven (:2-4)

Asking a rhetorical question; some say this is a reference to Abraham; but that is premature because the description of military victory is too grand; “who raised up righteousness from the east” – abstract; a man who is an instrument of God's providential righteousness; refers to Cyrus; introduced by stages with increasing clarity as the book goes on; call him to be his servant and to fulfill his glorious purpose; the victories of Cyrus described; he would pursue but would not be pursued; all is ordained by God; God glorified in their captivity;

3. The Failure to Learn (:5-7)

The reaction of the nations to conquering approach of Cyrus;

- clubbing together; panic-stricken; tried to reassure one another that they could cope against vast army of Cyrus; meaningless solidarity in face of adversity; we say we can handle it; we can cope;
- intensified idolatry – craftsmen working together; without saving grace, man comes up with the same banal stupidity of human effort; saying all will be well;

4. The Comforts and Difference of the Lord's People (:8-9)

Brian Borgman: The Reassurance of Grace (:1-8a)

Context of this section (chaps. 41-46): God's controversy with the idols, with the false gods; very important element in giving hope to His people; gods of this age paraded around while true

God is ignored; temptation is to begin to trust in the gods of this age; God shows their impotence and irrelevance; God's people need strong promises and a sure foundation while in captivity; number of themes that converge in this chapter; weak as we are, God will continue to use us for His glory;

(:1-7) God makes a case before the nations – Gentile world, listen to me in silence; shut your mouth; more quiet in the courtroom than in the library; sense of dignity and gravity; creature coming into the presence of the holy Creator; Job had a lot to say thru chap. 38; then he listened when God spoke and did not interrupt Him; I put my hand over my mouth; **Rom. 3** – “*every mouth will be stopped.*” Then let them exchange their strength – rally somehow – then they can come forward and speak; Where will they turn for this strength? Is. 1:18 – let's reason together to come to a decision; God using divine intimidation; When you are under the thumb of oppression remember that one day they will stand accountable to God; Cyrus will accomplish this feat of conquering the Babylonians swiftly, unscathed and look as if his feet had not even touched the ground; When this comes to pass, the nations should ask Who performed and accomplished all this? Look at how God identifies Himself; uses His covenant name Yahweh; in and of Himself possesses unqualified existence; all the gods of the pagans have a beginning and an end; now you would think that in the face of such overwhelming evidence the nations would bow in homage;

What basis do they have to say to one another, “Be strong.” You have to encourage people with something that is based in truth; there is an emptiness here – based in futility; conglomerate idol factory propping each other up; you need strength and courage and hope in the midst of trembling; an idol is the product of human fear; of the event that causes the fear; become part of defensive arrangements against difficulties of life; life is full of fear and uncertainty; people get very religious when confronted with natural disasters; revelation should bring people into submission to the true God; turn to their idols or try to numb themselves with a lifestyle that helps them ignore their accountability

Man ends up being a paradox; still an image bearer of God even though he is worshiping idols of sticks and wood; his reasoning has become darkened; man does not abandon rationality or the ability to use his mind but those powers are darkened; all cultures have a concept of worship of deity; but they do not submit to the true light of the living God; man is model of both dignity and depravity;

Vs. 8 is the exciting part; God reassures His people of Grace; Is. 41:10 should be mandatory for memorization

TEXT: Isaiah 41:8-10

TITLE: NEW STRENGTH AND NEW COURAGE FOR A NEW YEAR

INTRODUCTION:

A new year always brings new challenges. But we can lean on the age-old promises of God for **NEW STRENGTH AND NEW COURAGE FOR A NEW YEAR**. It is time to focus on our Year Verse for 2015 – actually, based on where we are providentially in the Book of Isaiah, I have chosen 2 verses for our church – we already preached on 40:31 – **NEW STRENGTH**; today we will add 41:10 as we cover verses 8-10 of chapter 41 – **NEW COURAGE**.

At Solid Rock Community Church, we emphasize the solid foundation of our Lord Jesus Christ. But there are a number of fundamental certainties built upon this solid foundation. We appreciate the importance of **certainties** in life – certainties that include much more than death and taxes. Often our immediate physical circumstances and the pressures of our trials seem **more real** than the spiritual truths about who we are in Jesus Christ.

Sometimes you feel that nothing is going your way; everything seems to be attacking you; this can be overwhelming; Fear and Anxiety mount until life seems paralyzing.

BIG IDEA:

5 FOUNDATIONAL CERTAINTIES FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

- | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| - affect our mind – | enlightening certainties – | Should change how we think |
| - affect our emotions -- | encouraging certainties – | Should change how we feel |
| - affect our will -- | empowering certainties -- | Should change how we act |

We all need to memorize these verses; pray over them

But is it even right to **apply these verses to ourselves** in any sense? We know that Isaiah was prophesying about the nation of Israel – his message particularly directed to the southern kingdom of Judah – warning them of their coming Babylonian captivity because of their sin. Yet he looked forward to deliverance under Cyrus the king of Persia and even further down the road to the ministry of the coming Messiah.

What does this have to do with Christians today?

We like to emphasize the **distinctiveness** of God's program for the nation Israel. He still will keep His covenant promises to the nation regarding their land and a physical kingdom on earth. But we must maintain as well the **continuity** of how God deals with His people down through the ages. We are all children of Abraham by faith. When it comes to the spiritual blessings of the kingdom, we fully participate right now. The truths of this passage, while they have immediate interpretation to Judah's historical situation, have definite application to us as the people of God.

I. CHOSEN TO BE SECURE IN GOD'S LOVE – KEY TO FAMILY IDENTITY **3 IDENTIFICATIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

Who doesn't want the love and security of being treasured in the family of God?

A. Servant Relationship – Privileged with Great Expectations for Future Blessing

“But you, Israel, My servant,”

Contrast with the nations from the remote lands with their reliance on false idols (vv.1-7)

Stedman: The title *“My servant”* is an honorable one: it was given to great leaders like Moses (Num. 12:7), David (2 Sam. 3:18), the prophets (Jer. 7:25), and Messiah (Isa. 42:1).

Young: In her there must be inculcated the truth that although the promises had been hers, she was nevertheless but a servant, who must do not her own will but the will of her covenant and electing God. To learn this lesson she must pass through the humiliation of the exile, from which she would be delivered only by God’s grace and His appointed instrument Cyrus. She must also learn that from the bondage of sin, which was the root of her misfortunes, she could be delivered only by One who, in a far truer sense than she herself, was a Servant of the Lord, to whom no other could be compared.

Do you view yourself as a Servant of God?

- In attitude, a willing and cheerful servant – dedicated to the will of God
- In deed, faithful and diligent

No room for pride; at the end of the day we still look back on whatever we have done and testify that we are but a servant who has not merit in ourselves or even in our accomplishments

B. Covenantal Relationship – Completely Unworthy but shown Unimaginable Favor

“Jacob whom I have chosen,”

Grogan: The name *Israel* suggests what God is determined to make of his people (**Gen 32:28**), while the name *Jacob* indicates that God loves them and has chosen them despite their demerit.

Name change – from “heel-catcher” or “deceiver” to “he struggles with God”
“you have striven with God and prevailed”

You remember the reputation of Jacob – a deceiver – that is what his name means, a conniver --

You have been chosen by God for salvation. What does that mean to you? Doctrine of election should be precious to God’s people. We only chose Him because He first chose us.

Speaks to the Grace of God

Speaks to our value to God as His precious possession

Speaks to our security in the relationship – no one can take us out of the Father’s hand

Maybe someone might want to argue that they are not a believer because they feel that God has not chosen them. They try to use this as an excuse not to obey the universal command to respond to the gospel invitation with repentance and faith. Friends, you can never blame God. He says the door is open. He puts the invitation out there. This doctrine of Election isn’t for unbelievers to wrestle with. It is intended as an encouragement for believers. If you are not yet in the family of God you cannot use this as an excuse. Are you more wicked and impossible to save than the people of Nineveh? They could have used that same argument – we are not the chosen people of God like Jonah. Yet they repented at the preaching of Jonah. You have the opportunity to repent as well.

C. Friendship Relationship

“descendant of Abraham My friend,”

Even in the Middle East today, Abraham still known by this expression *“friend of God”*

Vine: Three times Abraham is called the *friend of God*: in **2 Chron. 20:7** (*“Abraham, your friend forever”*), in the prayer of Jehoshaphat; here, in the Divine confirmation of this; and in **Jas. 2:23**, which combines God’s dealings with Abraham with this passage in Isaiah. The word rendered “friend” denotes one who is loving and beloved, an object of desire, and one who enjoys the utmost intimacy.

John 15:12-17

K&D: Every word here breathes the deepest affection. . . Inasmuch then as, on looking back to its past history, it could not fail to perceive that it was so thoroughly a creation of divine power and grace, it ought not to be fearful, and look about with timidity and anxiety; for He who had presented Himself at the very beginning as its God, was still always near.

Are you secure in God’s Love? Confident of your identity in the family of God?

- Live each day as a servant of God
- Rest in the security of having been chosen by God before the foundation of the world
- Develop your intimate relationship of friendship with the Living God – what a privilege

“What a Friend We Have In Jesus”

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear; what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

II. CALLED TO FOLLOW GOD’S GUIDING HAND = KEY TO DISCIPLESHIP

Who doesn’t want to Follow the Lord Jesus Christ along the pathway to maturity and fruitfulness?

*“You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth,”
“And called from its remotest parts”*

Look at the different levels of reference in God’s dealings with His people – one foreshadows the other until you get to ultimate fulfillment

- **calling of Abraham from Ur** – great distance – must walk by faith into the unknown
- **regathering of Israel after the Babylonian Captivity**
- **ultimate regathering of Israel in the end times**

For Abraham to follow God’s calling, he had to leave something behind = his former life; everything that was comfortable and familiar; set out on a journey of faith and submission; maybe you reject the calling of God because you are scared of the unknown – What is Jesus going to ask of me? Just remember that Satan wants you as a disciple as well. If you continue on that road, nothing awaits but eternal separation from God in hell. The pathway of discipleship is part of our humbling ourselves to admit that God knows better what is best for us.

Vine: God’s calling is always **effectual**. We may remind ourselves of this in our own experience in connection with the sphere of service allotted to us. If it has not been a matter simply of our

choice and decision, it is ours by reason of His plan and appointment and the directing power of the Holy Spirit.

Ephes. 2:11-13 *“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands -- remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you **who formerly were far off** have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”*

Surprising and dramatic elevation of our status from remote nobodies to disciples being personally led by the Master Himself

We have been **called to Follow the Lord Jesus Christ** ... what does that mean? 4 Things:

- It means that we should have the same **character and value system** – putting an emphasis on internal righteousness and love for others as we see in the Sermon on the Mount; Paul exhorts believers to *“Imitate me as I imitate Jesus Christ”*

- It means that we should strive for the same type of **commitment and priority** on doing the will of God – the pathway of discipleship – *“Follow Me”* – *“Seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”*

- It means that we should have the same **compassion for evangelism** and seeking after the salvation of the lost – *“Follow Me and I will make you Fishers of men”* – *“I came to seek and to save those who are lost”*

- It means that we must be willing to **join in the sufferings of Christ**, to deny ourselves and to daily take up our cross and follow Jesus

So our calling is not to some free ticket to get out of Hell; our calling is to a life of holiness; our calling is a heavenly calling to *“keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God”* (**Col. 3:1**); Described as a *high calling* (**Phil. 3:14**)

But we don't determine our own course through life; we have the providential **guiding** of the Holy Spirit who indwells us; Are we confident in His guiding or do we think that as we have trusted Him with our lives, He has somehow messed things up and put us into a situation where He has left us on our own? Abraham thought that at times when trials like famine came to him and He turned His back on His calling and fled to Egypt for help; **Never lose confidence in your calling**; Jesus still wants to direct your life today; Follow Him; turn to Him for help and deliverance

Eternal Security – **Rom. 11:29** *“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”*

Perseverance is needed – **2 Pet. 1:10** *“Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you;”*

III. COMMISSIONED TO SERVE GOD = KEY TO PURPOSE IN LIFE

Who doesn't want to live with a passion and a purpose?

Nothing wrong with living a “Purpose driven life” – as long as it is oriented towards glorifying God and being His faithful servant

Here, Isaiah puts the focus on **the same three areas** that he spoke of in Point #1 back at the

beginning of vs. 8

A. Servant Relationship

“And said to you, You are My servant,”

B. Covenantal Relationship

“I have chosen you”

C. Friendship Relationship – Additional emphasis here – point that we will try to drive home
“and not rejected you.”

How do you know that someone is truly your friend? When they never reject you; never turn their back on you

Fitch: Israel must not think that the exile implies any absolute rejection of the chosen race. This is discipline and not abandonment by their God.

This expression lies at the heart of why I am a dispensationalist and not an amill, covenant theologian. There must still be the literal fulfillment of God’s promises to the nation of Israel. Despite all of their sin, He promises that He has not utterly rejected them. He will keep His unconditional promises. **Romans 11**

What does that mean for us today in the Church Age? Christ has promised never to reject His own; never to leave us or forsake. He reiterates that in His Great Commission charge – we know what we have been commissioned to pursue; we must be driven by the purpose of being instruments of our Lord Jesus Christ in the building of His church. If that means that now He wants to send us to the remotest parts of the world ... so be it. If He wants to keep us in this area, so be it. All of our decisions in life must revolve around this sense of our divine commissioning.

What is your purpose for living today? If you are tempted to lose heart and feel that God is not paying attention to your troubles, turn to this verse. He has not rejected you. Even when you sin, He calls you back to Himself.

IV. COMFORTED BY THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF GOD TO COMBAT FEAR WITH FAITH AND COURAGE = KEY TO EXPERIENCING GOD’S PEACE

Who doesn’t want to be free from their fears and anxieties?

Who doesn’t want the Good Shepherd to cause us to lie down in green pastures; to lead us beside the quiet waters, to restore my soul, to guide me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake, to comfort me with His rod and staff, to prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, to anoint my head with oil, to cause my cup to overflow, to surround me with His goodness and lovingkindness all the day of my life and to cause me to dwell in the house of the Lord forever! (Ps. 23)

Christ says He came so that we might experience His peace – that type of peace where when the storms rage about us, we can sleep peacefully even as He demonstrated on the boat in the Sea of Galilee

A. Antidote for Fear = Presence of God – in the context of a personal relationship

“Do not fear, for I am with you” – Believe this

Stedman: 41:1 – 44:28 In this section of the book the Lord seven times says, *“Fear not!”* to His people (41:10, 13, 14; 43:1, 5; 44:2, 8). As the Jewish remnant faced the challenge of the long journey home and the difficult task of rebuilding, they could think of many causes for fear. But there was one big reason not to be afraid: The Lord was with them and would give them success. . . In contrast to the fear experienced by the Gentile nations is the confidence shown by Israel, God’s chosen servant (41:8-13), because God was working on their behalf. **In spite of their past rebellion, Israel was not cast away by the Lord.**

Charles Stanley: **Nature of Fear** -- Why is fear so damaging? Because it is as though we constantly have a message playing in our mind, telling us to be afraid. We are programmed early in life by others to be anxious concerning relationships or certain situations, and that fear continually torments and punishes us—paralyzing us from doing God’s will. Our worries dominate all our goals and desires, blocking our spiritual growth and preventing us from building our faith. This does not honor God in the least; in fact, our anxiety is a way of saying we do not think God is powerful enough to protect us. We become increasingly doubtful of the Lord’s powerful promises. Since we don’t trust God, we begin to assess and respond to His circumstances in our own strength and reasoning power. The result is that we come up empty in life. Fear simply does not fit the life of a child of God. We may have moments of fear, but we should handle them quickly, remembering God’s promise that He will use all things for our benefit and His glory.

B. Antidote for Anxiety = Power of God – in the context of a personal relationship

“Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.” – Take courage ... God is on your side

Look in dismay; gaze about in anxiety

Young: The verb has reference to those who are fearful and hence look about in all directions to see whether there is anything that can harm them. This is not for Israel, for God is with her.

If He is not your God ... you should fear ... you should anxiously look about you ... you are on dangerous ground; the guillotine of God’s wrath could fall at any moment; you have resource for deliverance from the power of sin; no enablement for victorious living

There is no power over sin apart from Christ; There can be external window dressing ... but nothing that fools God

Don’t forget God’s charge to Joshua as he took over the mantle of leadership from Moses:
Joshua 1:1-9 still true for us today

V. CONFIRMED BY THE ENABLING GRACE OF GOD = KEY TO VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING

Who doesn’t want to live the victorious Christian life?

A. Strength / Power in your weakness – Weakness is no excuse for Fear or Anxiety

“I will strengthen you,”

Vine: fortifying in weakness, difficulty and opposition

Is. 40:31 “Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”

Psalm 80:17 “Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.”

B. Sufficiency / Enablement to accomplish the will of God – **Inability is not excuse for Fear or Anxiety**

“surely I will help you,”

Vine: assistance – giving guidance, direction and protection

Isaiah 41:13-14 "For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you. Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will **help you**,' declares the LORD, "and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel."

C. Sustenance / Support to persevere – **Weariness is no excuse for Fear or Anxiety**

“Surely I will **uphold you** with My righteous right hand.”

Psalm 41:12 “As for me, You **uphold me** in my integrity, And You set me in Your presence forever.”

Grogan: The threefold affirmation of strength comes to its consummation in a reference to the *righteous right hand* of God, a reminder possibly of the tender strength of the Shepherd-King in **40:9-11**.

Vine: right hand is associated with the idea of power and success, and suggests prosperity.

Young: To Israel this righteousness will be a blessing; but to the nations who know Him not, the righteousness will appear in the punitive and retributive justice meted out for their wickedness.

CONCLUSION:

Never be moved or shaken

5 BEDROCK CERTAINTIES FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

- Chosen
- Called
- Commissioned
- Comforted
- Confirmed

“How Firm a Foundation”

*Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.*

*I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do you deal with feelings of insecurity?
- 2) Does your life reflect a servant mentality where you are seeking first God's kingdom objectives?
- 3) What have you given up to Follow Jesus in the pathway of discipleship?
- 4) What types of things make you fear and anxiously look around as if God has left you on your own to face some impossible challenge?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Charles Stanley: The Landmine of Fear

Have you ever considered how your emotions affect your life?

Love, for example, influences your feelings, behavior, and even your looks. The same is true of fear. It can affect your thoughts, conduct, and even your physical health. Apprehensions have the power to hold you back from all that God wants to accomplish in your life.

Satan uses the emotion of fear to prevent you from enjoying what the Lord has planned for you. You may think that you don't have any fears, but the truth is that nearly everyone is afraid of something. Your fears may be hidden, and that makes them even more dangerous.

Almighty God is greater than any terror your mind can imagine, and He wants you to walk in courage and faith. In **Isaiah 41:10**, He says, "*Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*"

Key Passage: Isaiah 41:8-14

Supporting Scripture: Joshua 1:6-9; Proverbs 17:22; Isaiah 64:4; John 14:18; Acts 18:9; Ephesians 1:3-4; Philippians 4:19; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 13:5

Scriptural Principles:

1. Six basic fears.

There are six basic things that all of us are anxious about at one point or another. They are the fears of poverty, death, sickness, old age, criticism, and the loss of a loved one. The human reaction of fear is not a sin; in fact, there are some fears which are useful or even wise. Protective fear, for example, usually helps keep us safe. There is also the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. This means that we are to reserve reverence, honor, and exaltation for the holy God we worship. The negative type of fear, which becomes a landmine, is the kind of anxiety that damages and enslaves us. God told Joshua, "*Be strong and courageous! Do not*

tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

Fear is a normal part of life, but not one that should hold us constantly in its grip. Our heavenly Father gives us promises to hold on to so that we never have to be dominated by fear.

2. The nature of fear.

3. The sources of fear.

Where does this terrible landmine come from? Fear can be the product of sin because anxiety and guilt are a natural result of our transgressions. Fear can also result from things we have been taught or from our own imaginations. Doubt of God, poor self-image, and ignorance of God’s Word are other sources of our worries. We must have our hearts fortified by God’s promises so that we won’t be so susceptible to the enemy’s weapon. The more we dwell on God’s Word, the more courageous we will be.

4. The consequences of fear.

There are terrible results for those who give in to the tyranny of fear. The anxious person is afraid to take risks and, as a result, will be incapable of launching out on the great adventures God has prepared for him. He will be indecisive and procrastinate on important projects, because he will be fearful of making the wrong decision. By not acting in a timely manner, he will thwart his own efforts. In time, his self-confidence will be undermined and he’ll give in to an irrational course of action because of the torment he’s feeling within. Ultimately, fear will dominate his entire life. He’ll long to be free from his anxieties, but to be free he will have to give in to what he’s most terrified of—lack of control. He’ll only experience true freedom when he gives control of his life to God.

5. The way to be healed of enslaving fear.

Do you really want to be free of fear? The answer should come easily, since no one wants to suffer; however, being free from fear requires you to step out in faith. You must recognize and admit that the basic cause of your fear is your failure to trust in the sovereignty of God. You must also make a choice to be courageous—to take your eyes off the cause of your apprehension, and gaze upon God instead. He will liberate you from those powerful emotions if you will resolve to trust and obey Him. **Isaiah 64:4** instructs, *“From days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, nor has the eye seen a God besides You, who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.”* Only God can free you from this devastating landmine. Seek Him through His Word and in prayer, and trust Him to set you free. Reprogram your mind with His truth, and trust Him to fill your every need.

6. Why there is no need to fear.

The Lord is with you. He is not out of reach in some distant place, but is there beside you at every moment. He is your God, and He loves you more than anyone else ever could. He promises, *“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).* God will strengthen you and help you, no matter what happens. These are solid promises from His Word, and He’s never broken a single pledge He’s ever made. You can expect Him to fill your every need, no matter what obstacle or challenge you face in life. This is your wonderful heritage as a child of God—so embrace Him and the wonderful victory that’s yours through Him.

Jim Bomkamp: Though the people had failed the Lord miserably and it was because of their

great sin that they were now in Babylonian captivity, God reminds this future generation there in captivity that He has indeed chosen and called them to be His servants, and that He has not rejected them.

Alan Carr: Precious Promises for Your Journey

I. THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE

- A. His Presence Is Powerful – His presence has the power to drive away fear – 2 Tim. 1:7.
- B. His Presence Is Personal – Matt. 28:20. (Ill. Not an angel, but the Lord Himself – John 6:20 – the "I AM.") Ill. New Chinese believer named Lo who found Matt. 28:20 and took it personally.
- C. His Presence Is Perpetual – Heb. 13:5 – Ill. Where life can lead, still never alone!

II. THE PROMISE OF HIS PERSON

- A. There Is A Relationship – (Thy) This is personal. (Ill. I need to know what He can do for me.)
- B. There Is A Realization – He is GOD! He can do anything! (Ill. Eph. 3:20; Job 42:2; Luke 1:37; Psa. 115:3**)
- C. There Is A Reality – (Ill. "Dismayed" – To look anxiously about.) If God is my God, and He is an able God, then why do need to fear, fret or faint? My God is on the throne! (Ill. His mighty deeds. He hasn't changed! – Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8) (Ill. We need to remember just who He is!)

III. THE PROMISE OF HIS POWER

(God's promise here is three-fold. Ill. Yea = "Surely" There are three aspects of His power that we can count on.)

- A. He Will Strengthen Us – He will give us the power to see every duty and every day to its conclusion. There will be grace and strength for every need – 2 Cor. 12:9; Isa. 40:13.
- B. He Will Support Us – He will give us what we need, when we need it, in the exact proportions that we require it – Phil. 4:19. (Ill. Psalm 23:1-6 – The statement of verse 1 is explained.)
- C. He Will Sustain Us – God will keep us and get us safely through the journey until we all reach Heaven, Ill. Vrs. 9, 17. God did not save us to abandon us along the way – 1 Pet. 1:5, (Ill. Present, Passive, Participle) (Ill. The Egyptian in 1 Sam. 30:11-13 – God doesn't operate like that! Ill. Phil. 1:6; 1 Thes. 5:23) Ill. That's my kind of guarantee!

Constable: The Lord turned from addressing the nations to speaking to Israel. God had chosen the Israelites for special blessing because He chose to love them more than other peoples. Election rests on love (cf. Deut. 7:7-8). The reference to Jacob recalls the unworthiness of the Israelites, and the mention of Abraham the fact that Abraham loved God (Gen. 18:17-19), the proper response to electing love (cf. 1 John 4:19). Both references also connect to God's covenant with the patriarchs. God had called Israel to be His servant.

God reminded His people that He had called them from the remotest part of the earth to be His servant. He did this in Abraham's case when He called him out of Ur into the Promised Land, and He did it in Jacob's case when He brought him back into the land from his sojourn near Haran. God had determined not to reject His people. Israel had nothing to fear (cf. John 15:14-15).

Moreover, the Israelites did not need to fear because God was with them, and He had committed Himself to them (cf. Matt. 28:20). They need not look one way and then another trying to find safety (cf. vv. 5-6). Furthermore their God promised to help them in every way with His powerful right hand, a symbol of strength, and to do what was right (cf. 40:10-11).

Guzik: Jehoshaphat knew that Abraham was the friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7). James knew that Abraham was the friend of God (James 2:23). We are also the friends of God, not because of

our relation to Abraham, but because of our relation to the Son of God, Jesus. *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.* (John 15:14-15).

Greg Allen: What do you trust in at a time of trial? Where do you turn in a time of helplessness? Think of that trial that you're going through right now, and be honest with yourself: what is it that you trust in to get you through it? Is it the God of Israel? Or is it, perhaps, some man-made resource that is likely to topple just when you need it the most? Have you ever considered that the trial you're in is intended by God to help you see what it is you really trust in? What does this trial tell you about your ultimate trust?

The first word of our passage this morning - the word "But" - is intended to emphasize a contrast between the weak, unreliable trust of this world, and the confidence we can have in one true God of Israel. He is the almighty, sovereign God who calls conquering kings forth by name, long before they are even born. God Himself speaks to His frightened, distressed people . . .

These words were spoken some twenty-seven centuries ago to the people of Israel. It's a wonderful word of encouragement and promise. But what right - if any - do we Christians, living in our day and age, have a claim this word of encouragement as our own and apply it to ourselves? Is it legitimate for us to do so?

I want to encourage you that it is absolutely right for you and me, as believers in Jesus Christ, to claim this as God's word of encouragement to us in a time of trial. The Bible tells us that there indeed was a time when we were "strangers and foreigners" to the promises of God; being "Gentiles in the flesh";

... without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone ... (Eph. 2:11-20).

We believing Gentiles, "being a wild olive tree", have been "grafted in" among the natural branches of God's covenant people; "and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree ..." (Romans 11:17). In Christ, we enjoy today full claim to the "exceedingly great and precious promises" of the God of Israel (2 Peter 1:4).

Granted, it would be unwise to indiscriminately interpret everything in the Old Testament as if it applied to us today. We have to use sanctified common sense in how we interpret and apply the Bible to our lives. But dear brother or sister in Christ; don't be afraid to lay full claim to this

word of promise as God's own word of encouragement to you. In Christ, you have been brought under the promises of God to His covenant people. Whatever problem you may be facing today, whatever difficult situation you're in, whatever trouble or trial overwhelms you, the almighty God of Israel says to you as He said to her; "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." . . .

God identified Israel as precious to Himself because He "chose" her for Himself. His choice of Israel was an unmerited one; it was not based on anything worthy in Israel, but only on the basis of His divine grace. Moses once told the people of Israel, "*The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt* (Deut. 7:7-8)."

<http://www.bethanybible.org/archive/2002/092902.htm>

Irfon Hughes: The Servant of God -- Great Privilege to being a Servant of God

Theme of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah. 4 servant songs -- fulfilled in person of Christ; other times as here the servant is nation of Israel. Sometimes Isaiah, sometimes King Cyrus referred to as servant of God. Everyone who professes the name of Christ is a servant of God.

1. Chosen by God – belong to God intimately and personally; can't think that it doesn't matter how we live; doctrine of Election; can't say you have been chosen to be something else; all believers chosen on the same level; He's our Master; a doctrine of greatest security and greatest humiliation of duty; chosen to do a task; should fill us with awe, not pride

2. Totally Unworthy and Undeserving to be Servants of God -- we are the most unlikely of servants

3. Given Status of Servants by God – He guarantees our safety and our security; all by God's Grace; should not be any arrogance about us; no self-centered attitudes; Cannot ever be separated from God; remember We are invincible, invulnerable; we may die or suffer but we will not cease being His servants; Must have attitude of a cheerful servant; person who is good servant is best qualification for leadership

<http://www.hillcrestpresbyterian.org/audio/20070128-hughes-mw.mp3>

Alistair Begg: Facing the Future With God (:1-10)

This world has climate of Tension; moral disintegration; increasing fragmentation of family life; enter new year with sense of great foreboding; what does the Scripture say about facing the future with God? An old promise for a new year (vs. 10)

TEXT: Isaiah 41:8-20

TITLE: RECOVERY OF WORM THEOLOGY -- FACING HOSTILITY AND WEAKNESS WITH COURAGE, STRENGTH AND REJOICING

BIG IDEA:

DESPITE OPPOSITION AND WEAKNESS, GOD’S COVENANT PEOPLE HAVE NO NEED TO FEAR AND MUCH CAUSE FOR REJOICING

INTRODUCTION:

We are talking this morning about the recovery of **Worm Theology**. The great theologians and hymn writers of centuries past understood the doctrine of **Total Depravity**. They could sing with great conviction: “*Would you devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?*” A worm is the lowest of God’s creatures. Certainly not attractive – not powerful – not desirable (unless you need bait for your fishing poles). Yet our modern day advocates of self esteem would have us change the lines of such hymns to try to put a more positive spin on the condition of man.

Piper: Satan has master-minded a phenomenal victory in the American church. By teaching us through a thousand lectures and articles and books that we are too valuable to be called worms, he has made it impossible for us to sing "Amazing Grace" with truly amazed hearts. The more beautiful and valuable man is made to appear, the less amazing it is that God should love him and help him. The gospel of self-esteem is healing our wounds very lightly. The wings of self-worth that carry us briefly out of fear will quickly weary and drop us in despair some day. For, as John Newton said in his hymn, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved." Where the glory of God's free and sovereign grace pales in the shadow of human self-esteem, there will one day be a great shudder of fear.

DESPITE OPPOSITION AND WEAKNESS, GOD’S COVENANT PEOPLE HAVE NO NEED TO FEAR AND MUCH CAUSE FOR REJOICING

The nation of Israel had much to fear as it faced the prospect of entering into the 70 year Babylonian captivity – talk about oppressive opposition and harsh hostility; nowhere would their weakness be more evident

I. (:8-14) NO NEED TO FEAR (DESPITE OPPRESSIVE OPPOSITION AND APPARENT WEAKNESS) – TAKE COURAGE

How can you effectively deal with Fear apart from the recovery of Worm Theology?

Dennis Davidson: In his first INAUGURAL SPEECH in 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the newly elected president of the US, addressed a nation that was still reeling from the Great Depression. Hoping to ignite a more optimistic outlook regarding that economic crisis, he declared, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself!"

Fear often shows up in our lives when we are at risk of losing something-our wealth, health, reputation, position, safety, family, friends. It reveals our natural desire to protect the things in life that are important to us, rather than super-naturally entrusting them to God's care and control. When fear takes over, it cripples us emotionally and saps us spiritually. We're afraid to tell others

about Christ, to extend our lives and resources for the benefit of others, or to venture into new territory. A fearful spirit is more vulnerable to the enemy, who tempts us to compromise biblical convictions and to take matters into our own hands.

The remedy for fear, of course, is trust in our Creator. Only when we trust the reality of God's presence, power, protection, and provision for our lives can we share the joy God intends for us. Trust in the Lord is the cure for a fearful spirit.

A. (:8-10) SECURITY / STRENGTH -- Divine Security and Strength for God's Servant People to Persevere – Based on Their Privileged Relationship To Their Covenant God

[Last week's message]

1. Chosen to Be Secure in God's Love – Key to Family Identity

- a. Servant Relationship – Privileged with Great Expectations for Future Blessing
“But you, Israel, My servant,”
- b. Covenantal Relationship – Completely Unworthy - but Unimaginable Favor
“Jacob whom I have chosen,”
- c. Friendship Relationship
“descendant of Abraham My friend,”

2. Called to Follow God's Guiding Hand – Key to Discipleship

- “You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth,”*
“And called from its remotest parts”

3. Commissioned to Serve God – Key to Purpose in Life

- a. Servant Relationship
“And said to you, You are My servant,”
- b. Covenantal Relationship
“I have chosen you”
- c. Friendship Relationship – Additional emphasis here
“and not rejected you.”

4. Comforted by the Abiding Presence of God – Key to Experiencing God's Peace

- a. Antidote for Fear = Presence of God – in the context of a personal relationship
“Do not fear, for I am with you” – Believe this
- b. Antidote for Anxiety = Power of God – in the context of personal relationship
“Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.” – Take courage

5. Confirmed by the Enabling Grace of God – Key to Victorious Living

- a. **Strength / Power** in your weakness – Weakness no excuse
“I will strengthen you,”
- b. **Sufficiency / Enablement** to accomplish the will of God – Inability no excuse
“surely I will help you,”
- c. **Sustenance / Support** to persevere – Weariness no excuse
“Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

B. (:11-12) SAFETY -- Divine Devastation and Judgment Upon the Oppressing Opponents

1. (:11a) Angry Opponents Dishonored

- “Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored;”*

Parunak: The most general line emphasizes their inner attitude.

2. (:11b) Contentious Opponents Defeated

“Those who contend with you will be as nothing, and will perish.”

Parunak: “Striving” is the Hebrew word ריב that refers to a lawsuit, a legal complaint.

3. (:12a) Fighting Opponents Dispatched

“You will seek those who quarrel with you, but will not find them,”

Parunak: The noun describing the adversaries appears only here in the OT, but the verb from which it is derived describes a physical brawl, and is used of the two Israelites whom Moses attempted to separate in Egypt (Ex 2:13).

4. (:12b) Warring Opponents Destroyed

“Those who war with you will be as nothing, and non-existent.”

Constable: The anger of Israel's enemies against her would prove to shame them. Their claims against Israel would come to nothing, their opponents would vanish, and their enemies would cease to exist. Increasing opposition would become increasingly ineffective. Those nations that would meddle with this servant would have to contend with an all-powerful Master.

Motyer: verses 11-12 consist of four balanced lines, musical Hebrew of true Isaianic quality. In contrast to the surrounding theme of the servant who seems to have every reason to be afraid, it is rather the enemies whose hopes are disappointed (11ab), who come to nothing (11cd, 12cd) and who cannot be found (12ab). . . There is an a-b-a-b arrangement: the opponent's experience (11a); utter disappearance (11b); the servant's experience (12a); utter disappearance (12b).

C. (:13-14) SUPPORT / SUFFICIENCY -- Divine Support and Sufficiency for God's People – Despite Wormlike Weakness

Repetition of comforting promises of vs. 10 -- now in chiastic reverse order

1. Sustenance / Support to persevere – Don't Give Up

“For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand,”

Beall: The three verbs which have been prominent in this section are all used in this verse: qz;x', “strengthen,” arey", “fear,” and rz:[', “help.” The nations are afraid: they try to help one another and strengthen one another by strengthening their idols; but God tells Israel not to fear, for He will strengthen their right hand, and He will help them! What a glorious end for those whose hope is in the Lord! (see 40:31)

strengthen – 'amats – to be strong, alert, courageous, brave, bold, solid; make firm, assure

help – `azar – to help, succour, support

uphold – tamak – to grasp, hold, support, lay hold of, hold fast; to hold up

2. Sufficiency / Enablement to accomplish the will of God – Don't Fear

“Who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.

Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you, ' declares the LORD,"

Beall: God is going to help the lowly worm Jacob (compare Job 25:6 and Ps 22:6 where it is used of the Messiah).

Scott Grant: The Lord now calls Israel a "worm," another term evoking **weakness**. Israel itself will feel humiliated, like a worm, in exile. Again, the Lord tells Israel not to fear, because he will help her. Whereas in the first image the Lord was Israel's righteous king, here he is her redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. A redeemer is one who comes to the aid of next-of-kin. Israel, which feels as if it's a worm, is nonetheless the next-of-kin of the Lord himself. . .

Motyer: The transformed worm – this picture of comfort is of one essentially feeble who becomes dominant.

Francis Quarles: *Feast for Wormes* (1620) [Excerpt from Meditation 2]

Good God! how poor a thing is wretched man?
So frail, that let him strive the best he can,
With every little blast he's overdone;
If mighty Cedars of great Lebanon
Cannot the danger of the axe withstand,
Lord! how shall we, that are but bushes, stand?
How fond, corrupt, how senseless is mankind?
How feigning deaf is he? how wilful blind?
He stops his ears, and sins; he shuts his eyes,
And, blindfold, in the lap of danger flies:
He sins, despairs; and then to calm his strife
He chuseth death, to baulk the God of life.
Poor wretched sinner! travel where thou wilt,
Thy travel shall be burthen'd with thy guilt:
Climb tops of hills, that prospects may delight thee,
There will thy sins like wolves and bears affright thee,
Fly to the valleys, that those frights may shun thee,
And there, like mountains, they will fall upon thee:
Or to the raging seas, with Jonah, go;
There will thy sins like stormy Neptune flow.
Poore shiftless man, what shall become of thee?
Where-e'er thou fly'st, thy griping sin will flee.

3. Strength / Power from the Only Savior – Don't Look Anywhere Else
"and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel."

Oswalt: Here the focus changes from defense to offense. Not only will God defend his people against those who trouble them, but he will make them the very tool in his hand to tear down any obstacle that would thwart his plans for them. . .

What these connections serve to indicate is that God is able to carry out the tasks of the redeemer. He is strong enough, creative enough, and compassionate enough that no other being in the universe will be able to prevent him from carrying out his plan.

Redeemer: 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16 – one who delivers from bondage by payment of a ransom; also used of kinsman-redeemer

Holy One of Israel: 43:14; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5

II. (:15-20) MUCH CAUSE FOR REJOICING -- BOAST IN THE LORD

A. (:15-16a) Two Images of Power Over Your Enemies

1. Image of Threshing

“Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges; You will thresh the mountains, and pulverize them, And will make the hills like chaff.”

Constable: The Lord would transform the helpless worm, a tiny thresher of the soil, into a powerful threshing sledge—by giving her His power. Threshing sledges were heavy wooden platforms fitted with sharp stones and pieces of metal underneath. Farmers dragged them over straw to cut it up in preparation for winnowing. The sledge that Yahweh would make of Israel, however, would be so good that it could chop down mountains and hills, not just straw. The modern equivalent would be giant earth-moving equipment.

Scott Grant: A threshing sledge was used to drag fields to chop straw in preparation for being separated from the grain by the winnowing process. The chopped straw, or chaff, and the grain would be tossed into the air with a winnowing fork, and the chaff would be blown away, leaving the grain. Israel, transformed from a worm into a threshing sledge by the Lord, will thresh not just fields but mountains, pulverizing them, and the hills will be like chaff-effects that could be achieved by no normal threshing sledge.

Grogan: The hills are not now the location of the threshing floor but are themselves threshed! In this way the prophet stresses the powerful instrument God would make of this apparently insignificant people.

2. Image of Winnowing

“You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, And the storm will scatter them;”

Elimination of Israel’s enemies

B. (:16b-20) Central Image of the Lord’s Abundant Provision of Water and Shade in Parched Desert Conditions – Boast in the Lord

1. (:16b) Mindset of Victorious Rejoicing

“But you will rejoice in the LORD, You will glory in the Holy One of Israel.”

Is this our mindset this morning?

2. (:17) Mercy of the Lord to Provide Relief from Affliction

a. Seeking Relief

*“The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none,
And their tongue is parched with thirst;”*

b. Providing Relief

*“I, the LORD, will answer them Myself,
As the God of Israel I will not forsake them.”*

Oswalt: Perhaps, the greatest curse of well-being, whether physical, material, emotional, or spiritual, is that it lures us into believing we are self-sufficient, especially in matters of the spirit. . . It is when our neediness, in whatever realm, has taught us that the cosmic Lord, on whom we depend absolutely, longs to bless those who bring their needs to him, that we have learned the greatest lesson of life.

3. (:18-19) Miracle of Transforming the Desert Into a Lush Paradise

a. Miraculous Transformation by Providing **Water**

1) On the Hills and Valleys

*“I will open rivers on the bare heights,
And springs in the midst of the valleys;”*

2) On the Dry Desert Plains

*“I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
And the dry land fountains of water.”*

Grogan: It may be understood as three different but connected fulfillments. In relation to the return from exile, it will be figurative, indicating simply that God would supply all that his people needed. In relation to the eschatological future, it may represent a literal transformation of the environment of God’s people (cf. Rom 8:18-22). In the light of the NT, it may also relate symbolically to the complete fulfillment of very spiritual need in Christ.

b. Miraculous Transformation by Providing **Shade Trees**

*“I will put the cedar in the wilderness,
The acacia, and the myrtle, and the olive tree;
I will place the juniper in the desert,
Together with the box tree and the cypress,”*

Constable: He would also provide the other necessity in the wilderness of life's experiences beside water, namely: shade. All the trees mentioned (seven in all) were shade trees, but they did not normally grow together. This enhances the picture of God working wonders to provide for His people. Seven may symbolize the complete perfection of God's work in this connection. The emphasis on water and trees also marks Genesis 2:10- 17, suggesting a return to Edenic conditions.

4. (:20) Message of God’s Power and Character Communicated

a. Enhanced Perception

“That they may see and recognize, and consider and gain insight as well,”

Parunak: Note the sequence of awareness that they experience:

- **see.**--First, they will sense the change. Their thirst will make them all the more aware of what God is doing. Sometimes he lets us suffer so that when his blessings come, we will notice them. Isa 26:9 when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.
- **know.**--Their experience of the change will lead to the knowledge that God is in control.
- **consider.**--The single word וישמו is an abbreviation for the full phrase לב שימ , which means literally “set one's heart on,” and thus “pay attention.” We don't think deeply about all the knowledge that we have, but through the experience that God gives them, his people are led to such meditation on the fact of his deliverance.
- **understand.**--The verb describes insight that leads to success. In Gen 3:6, this is what the woman saw that the tree was able to do: “a tree to be desired to make one wise.”

Scott Grant: The supernatural provision is designed so that the people may "see," "recognize," "consider" and "gain insight" into something. For different words are used to convey the exercise of perceptive faculties. The people are supposed to understand that "the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it." What the Lord will have done is created an entirely different kind of land, transforming an uninhabitable desert into a lush paradise. The description of the land is reminiscent of the garden in Eden (Genesis 2:8-14) and the promised land (Exodus 3:8). This imagery promises that the Lord will continue providing for Israel as its journey continues.

Young: Those who see will not be like the blind and ignorant who seek to explain the regenerating work of God upon naturalistic presuppositions of one kind or another. Rather, their own blindness and ignorance will be removed, and they will understand this supernatural regeneration for what it actually is, a manifestation of the power of Israel's God.

b. Effectual Providence – Revealing Power and Character of God

*“That the hand of the LORD has done this,
And the Holy One of Israel has created it.”*

Oswalt: Here God's purpose in electing and delivering his people is stated as directly as it is anywhere in the book. It is in order that people may recognize who God is by reflecting on his creative, miracle-working power in Israel.

CONCLUSION:

We are worms indeed – make no mistake. We have demonstrated the sinful nature passed down to us since Adam by our willful rebellion and selfish choices. We have experienced the weakness of being unable to redeem ourselves or live a victorious life on our own. We understand our lowly condition. We have no merit or ability of our own to commend ourselves.

But we have no need to fear because God in His sovereign grace has chosen to deliver us and redeem us so that we now experience His strength and security and safety and support and sustaining power. We face the future with **Confidence ... not Fear**. We **make our boast** in the God who wants to demonstrate His power and character to the world by making us trophies of His grace. Let's embrace with thankful hearts the biblical **theology of worms**.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What will be the destiny of those nations that fight and contend against Israel?
- 2) What practical steps do we take to combat fear that would paralyze our Christian walk?
- 3) How bold are we in making our boast in the Lord?
- 4) Do we always strive to make it clear that when men see our good works they need to glorify the God who has empowered us?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: (:17-20) God's care for the needy

Now the Lord shifts from the singular pronouns (describing the Servant) to the plural (describing the people). The last verse here (v. 20) uses the same two titles for God as the last verse of the Servant portion (v. 16), and both verses refer to the attitude of the Servant/people to the Lord.

This passage offers some very close parallels to ch. 35.

	Isa 35	Isa 41
Miserable state of the people	3-6 ... weak hands, ... feeble knees. 4 ... a fearful heart ... 5 ... the blind ... the deaf ... 6 ... the lame ... the dumb	17 <i>When</i> the poor and needy seek water, and <i>there is</i> none, and their tongue faileth for thirst,
Rejuvenation of the wilderness	1 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. 2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, <i>and</i> the excellency of our God. ... 6 for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, <i>shall be</i> grass with reeds and rushes.	18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. 19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, <i>and</i> the pine, and the box tree together:
Response of people to the Lord	2 they shall see the glory of the LORD, <i>and</i> the excellency of our God.	20 That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

Chapter 35 is, together with 34, the conclusion to 28-33. Chapter 34 summarized the woes with gruesome images of hell. But chapter 35 looked forward to the blessing to come on the people of God. So here, after the Servant's victory over his adversaries in vv. 10-16, we focus on the

blessing of the people of God.

But there is an important difference in emphasis. In ch. 35, the wilderness changes, but the Lord's role is in the background. Here, the Lord directly claims responsibility, emphasizing his role as the creator, in contrast to the false gods.

Scott Grant: In contrast to the nations, Israel is told not to fear and anxiously look about, because the Lord is with her and the Lord is her God. As opposed to the nations, which had to help each other to strengthen themselves, Israel will be helped and strengthened by the Lord. As a righteous king, he will uphold her with his righteous right hand, a symbol of his justice and power; he will vindicate her, as he vindicated his servant Moses and the Israelites who he liberated from Egypt. Verse 10, then, speaks of divine presence and divine aid. The Lord is present to help. The result, in verses 11 and 12, will be the vanquishing of Israel's enemies, the Gentile nations, particularly Babylon, Israel's captor. The nations, being angered at Israel, contend with her, quarrel with her and finally war with her, but their efforts will come to nothing. The Lord, who upholds Israel with his right hand, now upholds Israel's right hand; he gives Israel his power. It's foolish to war with the servant of the Lord.

Wikipedia: Worm Theology is a term used for the conviction in Christian culture that in light of God's holiness and power an appropriate emotion is a low view of self. Some might suggest that because of this view God is more likely to show mercy and compassion. The name may be attributed to a line in the Isaac Watts hymn *Alas! and Did My Saviour Bleed* (Pub 1707) [1], which says "Would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?" This thinking was prevalent in the days when this hymn was originally written, perhaps because there was also a higher view of God. Furthermore, worm theology can be attributed to a recognition of the ugliness of sin, resulting in contrition. . .

C.S. Lewis expresses the view, "Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel that we are good-above all, that we are better than someone else-I think we may be sure that we are being acted on, not by God, but by the devil. The real test of being in the presence of God is that you either forget about yourself altogether or see yourself as a small, dirty object." (Mere Christianity 1952, P.124)

John Weaver: The theology of worms -- First, I believe worms can teach us that whatever we do for lust, covetousness, greed, and selfishness is doomed for failure, destruction, and putrefaction. When the Israelites hoarded and became selfish, all of their "supposed wealth" (the extra manna) failed them and became a source of corruption. Look closely at I Tim. 6:7-10 and James 5:1-6. . .

Second, worms can teach us that disobedience brings death and destruction. What happened to the extra manna that was gathered in disobedience? It stank and became putrid. What happens to all who disobey? They incur the wrath and condemnation of the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. . .

Third, worms can teach us that obedience brings blessings no matter how little we have. Ex. 16:16-18. Those who obey will always have a sufficiency. God will not be any man's debtor. God can take a small cruse of oil and a little meal and make it last a long time as He did for the widow woman and Elisha in I Kings 17:14. Those who obey Him shall not suffer from want.

In Job 25:6, Bildad is comparing the greatness of God to the lowliness and worthlessness of man. God is so great, so pure, and so holy, what is mankind in comparison to Him – Bildad cannot

come up with a comparison, only a contrast – man is a worm. However, he is not just any worm but a special kind – he is a maggot. The Hebrew word is rimmah rim-maw'which refers to a maggot, worm (as cause and sign of decay). That description should take the wind out of our sails. Proud, arrogant, haughty, self-made man is nothing but a maggot. . .

The doctrine of worms demonstrates all too clearly the origination, obfuscation, degradation, and destination of fallen man. If we understand the Bible teaching of worms, we understand the corruption and depravity of man.

<http://www.biblicalexaminer.org/Unpublished/Worms.html>

David Thompson: (:8-20) God sovereignly comforts Israel

God was the one sovereignly controlling Cyrus; Israel had a dream to be free in her land; one day experiencing wonderful blessings from God; who can make that happen? God says, I can; I am almighty God; God is both a powerful and personal God; you have nothing to fear; I am on your side;

8 reasons Israel does not need to be afraid:

- 1) God has chosen Israel as His nation – not based on their worth or obedience or faithfulness; you are My Servant and you are My Friend
- 2) God is with Israel – preposition expresses nearness;
- 3) God will strengthen, help and uphold Israel – what amazing grace; Israel’s survival and existence today is proof of God’s care; we are a bunch of feeble worms

Illustration: Martin Luther – usually very positive person; in depression; had to get away from his home and ministry – but even when he came back was still depressed; found his wife sitting on chair in living room in mourning clothes – What’s wrong? “I am so sad that God is dead.” Caused them both to laugh and put things in perspective

- 4) (:11) I will eliminate all of Israel’s enemies – one day Israel will be in the land and flourish and enjoy full promised borders and all other nations will respect her;
- 5) (:13) God is Israel’s Redeemer – one of the best prayers = “Lord, help me” – Jesus Christ is going to make this happen
- 6) (:15-16) God will completely transform Israel; will become the dominating power in the world for the glory of God;
- 7) (:17-18) God will physically provide for Israel; water today is scarce in the Middle East; God knows what his people need to survive; God delights in helping his people; He loves it;
- 8) (:19-20) God will physically bless the land of Israel; redo the promised land; supposed to look like a beautiful blossoming garden instead of a desert; one bring Garden of Eden; 7 trees – biblical number of completion; lush and productive garden land; you will realize my hand has accomplished it; instead of barren unproductive and dry like lives of so many Christians – plant the Word of God in our lives

Brian Borgman: Reassurance of Grace

God is reassuring His people of His grace in the face of hostility and weakness and affliction (:8-13) – in the face of hostility; we need to be grounded in certain truths
Problem today: church doesn’t upset anybody; we are not that different from the world
We should be facing hostility; we don’t go looking for it; we don’t put targets on our back;

3 assurances of truth in face of hostility:

- 1) Grace that God gives us because of our special relationship with us (:8-9)
- 2) Grace of the promise of His presence and power (:10) – we don't need to be afraid
- 3) Grace of His triumph over His enemies

a) (:11-13) – assures us of grace in the face of hostile world -- as we live in a hostile world and face opposition we need to know that God will triumph over our enemies – either by bringing them to faith or executing judgment; those who persecuted God's people become deeply ashamed; persecuting God's people = persecuting God (cf. Lord's question to Saul on road to Damascus?; He will shame them, destroy them, remove them; God repeats His words of reassurance – “*Do Not Fear*”; we need to hear that again and again; Who are my enemies? Whoever is opposed to Christ; in the spiritual realm; “*Don't be surprised when the world hates you*,” we don't view our enemies in the same way as physical battleground enemies; Jesus came to bring a sword within our own household; contrast between those of the light and those of darkness (Ephes. 5); grace of God undergirds my ability to love my enemies; Luke 6:35 – great kingdom ethic; we were born enemies of the Most High God (Rom. 5) – but He saved us = proof of His kindness and love toward His enemies; God will take care of all of our enemies either in final judgment (which should make us feel pity for them) or at the cross (and they will become our brothers and sisters) – I don't have to repay evil for evil; therefore we can do good to those who hate us; Not “avoid your enemies”;

b) (:14-16) Assures us of grace in the face of weakness – worm is the lowliest of all creatures; not a term designed to build our self esteem; points out our own weakness, lowliness and frailty so we won't be deceived into thinking we are sufficient for the task; modern theology minimizes worm theology – changes the words of hymns – “wretch, worm” – we should never feel we are good enough for salvation; sacred head devoted Himself for such a worm as I; any gospel that exalts man is not a gospel at all;

TEXT: Isaiah 41:21-29

TITLE: FALSE GODS ARE POWERLESS TO CALL THE SHOTS –
FALSE GODS ON TRIAL

BIG IDEA:
REQUIRE ANY SO-CALLED GOD TO PROVE HIS WORTH

INTRODUCTION:

Our culture loves to try to predict the future. Look at the sports world. Every day there is an entire gambling industry built around the prospect of being able to pick which team will win – and even more importantly – the overall point spread. As if that does not provide enough of a challenge, when it comes to the upcoming Super Bowl there will be all sorts of exotic side bets: Not just the normal under-over in terms of overall point total, but just about anything you can imagine – here is just a sampling from last year’s Super Bowl:

- Will Richard Sherman get a taunting penalty? (4/1 on yes)
- Coin toss: Heads or tails?
- Peyton Manning total passing yards over/under 289
- Will the player who scores the first touchdown have a jersey number above or below 79.5? (Even)
- Who will be seen on TV first Pam Oliver (46%) or Erin Andrews (54%)

This lust for predicting extends to many other realms as well:

- In the field of Economics, the arrival of the New Year means that one must demonstrate their crystal ball proficiency in predicting the performance of the Dow Jones and the stocks that will be the best picks
- Politics is a never-ending game of using the polls to predict the outcome of every race
- When it comes to Entertainment, the experts weigh in ahead of time on who will win every imaginable coveted award

There is something magical about demonstrating the wisdom and insight and even gut feel to be able to call the shots ahead of time. And yet nobody but God would claim to be able to control the future to such an extent that they could be right all of the time.

We learned earlier in the chapter that *GOD CALLS ALL THE SHOTS*. Now the courtroom drama is revisited (after the interlude of verses 8-20) and the corollary truth is driven home: *FALSE GODS / IDOLS ARE POWERLESS TO CALL THE SHOTS*.

**REQUIRE ANY SO-CALLED GOD TO PROVE HIS WORTH --
IS MY GOD THE TRUE GOD?**

God goes on the **offensive** here against idolatry and false gods – He demands that they man up and prove their claim to be worthy of worship.

Young: This verse illustrates the true method of Christian apologetics. Falsehood is here placed upon the defensive; it is commanded in the name of the God of Israel to defend its cause and to point out its justification for existence. There are difficulties in the acceptance of Christianity, but the Christian need not be expected to answer every difficulty. Rather, he must challenge the very right of unbelief to a hearing.

Idolatry is not just an OT topic – remember, an idol is anything that would try to rival God in your affections – anything that you would substitute for the worship of the true God as revealed in Scripture

- **Romans 1:22-23**
- **I Corinthians 10:6-20**

I. (:21-24) THE CASE FOR IDOL-GODS FALLS FLAT

A. (:21) Courtroom Call to Present Evidence

“Present your case,’ the LORD says.

‘Bring forward your strong arguments,’ The King of Jacob says.”

Constable: The court case with the nations—began in verses 1-4, but interrupted with comfort for the Lord's servant Israel in verses 5-20—now resumes.

All of the false gods are closely associated with specific nations – the rise and fall of that nation's fortunes are tied to the power of their respective god

Here the Lord God identifies Himself as *the King of Jacob* – the people of Israel – though they be but worms in terms of their innate wisdom and power, they have become invincible by reason of their sovereign King

Here the idol-gods are challenged to marshal their best arguments – present the strongest case possible for their legitimacy and worthiness; bring forward your witnesses; this is your opportunity to prove your point

Court is in session – not just the Supreme Court ... but the **Celestial Court**

Like a **showdown at the OK Corral** in the Wild West – the two sides are going to stage a duel; only one will be left standing

B. (:22-23) 3 Challenges to Demonstrate Supernatural Insight and Sovereign Control

This confrontation will focus around 3 key tests – either you can perform and you are legitimate or you can't perform and you are a fraud --

1. Interpret Recent History

As for the former events, declare what they were,

That we may consider them, and know their outcome;”

Creation – what is your belief system about Origins ... and how that leads to your belief system about where things are headed and the ultimate meaning in life

Parunak: The third person refers to the gods in whom the summoned nations trust. Then he addresses the false gods directly. *“Shew the former things”* is imperative, not jussive. He presents the false gods with three challenges, each followed by a purpose clause. In fairy tales, an adversary often poses three challenges to the hero. That is what the Lord does to the false gods. . . Before asking for a prediction, he invites an explanation of the true nature of what has already happened. . . Explanation is difficult because men can't say what would have happened

if the past event had not occurred . . . Assessing the true impact of things requires knowing counterfactuals, and without a repetitive experimental environment, these are inaccessible.

Constable: Can they explain history? Are they able to explain how past events will unfold in the future? Can they predict the future and bring it to pass? In a word, are they transcendent? This would prove that they were really gods.

Motyer: Can they look with discernment at an event and say where it will lead? Can they foretell the future by understanding the past?

Oswalt: What separates God from the gods is this concept of absolute transcendence that allows him to act independently of the system and to predict what the system will do in new and as yet unexperienced situations.

2. Predict the Future Accurately

*“Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place . . .
Or announce to us what is coming. Declare the things that are going to come
afterward,
That we may know that you are gods;”*

Parunak: Many false gods pretend to make prophecies, but their prophecies are **ambiguous riddles**. Croesus, king of Lydia (western Turkey), consulted the oracle at Delphi in Greece about whether he should make war with Cyrus of Persia. The Delphi replied with a prophecy: “If you attack, you will destroy a mighty kingdom.” Croesus did attack, but the kingdom that was destroyed was his own, not that of Cyrus. Pagan prophecies are nothing like God's promise that a deliverer named Cyrus will set free captive Israel and send them home from Babylon. That is a specific, testable prediction, so much so that humanistic scholars are forced to conclude that it was given after the event.

Are you familiar with the modern day error of **Open Theism**?

Definition from **CARM** (Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry): Open Theism is a theological position dealing with human free will and its relationship to God and the nature of the future. It is the teaching that God has granted to humanity free will and that in order for the free will to be truly free, the future free will choices of individuals cannot be known ahead of time by God. They hold that if God knows what we are going to choose, then how can we be truly free when it is time to make those choices--since a counter choice cannot then be made by us, because it is already "known" what we are going to do.

So God is in a position of reacting to the free will choices of man . . . God might have Plan A . . . but then He is quick on His feet to adjust to man's decisions and go with Plan B or Plan C, etc. These theologians still want to maintain that somehow God could inspire the Old Testament writers to prophesy certain events, and then He could simply ensure that those events occurred at the right time. But if God is not in control of every detail . . . how can He be in control of any detail?? The bottom line is that this movement undermines the sovereignty, majesty, infinitude, knowledge, existence, and glory of God and exalts the nature and condition of man's own free will.

Passages like this one in Isaiah are the clear refutation of this position of Open Theism.

3. Initiate Activity That Demonstrates Sovereign Control

*“Indeed, do good or evil,
That we may anxiously look about us and fear together.”*

Put forth your best effort to strike terror in my heart – make me fear you.
So works of either deliverance or judgment that demonstrate your deity

Oswalt: here Isaiah is alluding to the argument that the true God can do something that is a radical break with what has happened before (e.g. 42:9). He is not locked into endless repetition of what he has done before. He is free. Are the so-called gods free?

Illustration: Numbers 16:30 -- example of how the true God does something completely new and dynamic; 1 Kings 18:27 – Elijah mocking the prophets of Baal

C. (:24) Conclusion \ Verdict – Idols are Worthless / Worshippers are Detestable

*“Behold, you are of no account, And your work amounts to nothing;
He who chooses you is an abomination.”*

“Behold” ends this section and ends next section as well (:29)

Parunak: *“Abomination”* is an extremely strong word for the things that the Lord hates. It's used in the OT to describe such activities as idolatry, witchcraft, and sexual perversion, and reflects a deep emotional revulsion. Those who follow after idols make themselves detestable to him.

Deut. 7:25-26 What does the Lord find to be an *abomination*?

1 Cor. 8:4-6 – Idols are nothing says the Apostle Paul

Not a very **politically correct** evaluation – Can you imagine how that would go over in today's world if you described any other religion in those terms ... not exactly showing respect to Islam or Judaism or ...

Quotes about showing respect for the religion of others

II. (:25) THE CASE FOR THE KING OF JACOB RINGS TRUE – THE DEMONSTRATION OF SUPERNATURAL INSIGHT AND SOVEREIGN CONTROL – THE TRUE GOD MEETS THE 3 CHALLENGES

A. Interpret Recent History

“I have aroused one from the north, and he has come;”

Parunak: In vv. 2-3, Cyrus is said to be “from the east,” but here he is also “from the north.” Cyrus was head of the Medio- Persian empire, which extended from eastern Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) to Afghanistan. It thus lay both to the north and to the east of Israel.

Matthew Henry: Cyrus' father considered a Mede and his mother a Persian;

B. Predict the Future Accurately – Carrying out Specific Prophecies that Proclaim the Name of the Lord

“From the rising of the sun he will call on My name;”

Grogan: From the standpoint of Palestine, Cyrus originated in the east and carried out major conquests in the north

It was from the North that invaders would enter the land of Israel and attempt to conquer them

Parunak: *“shall he call upon my name”* -- At first glance this statement seems peculiar. It seems to say that Cyrus relies on the Lord for help, though in **Isa 45:4, 5** God twice says to Cyrus, *“thou hast not known me.”*

The action, *“call upon the name of the Lord,”* is elsewhere done by godly people: Abraham (Gen 12:8), Isaac (Gen 26:25), Elijah (1 Kings 18:24), and the restored nation in Isa 12:4. We naturally take it to indicate trust in the Lord. But that's not its primary meaning. When we studied this expression in Gen 4, we saw that its distinctive meaning is “making proclamation with the name of the Lord,” uttering the Lord's name in a loud and public way. In fact, Cyrus did this.

Ezr 1:1-2 *Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.*

This is clearly a public proclamation, and he clearly names YHWH, the God of Israel. The Lord's prediction is not that Cyrus himself will consciously rely on the Lord for help, but that he will magnify and exalt the God of Israel. . .

The point of the image combines the lowly nature of the conquered (nothing more than mud or clay) and the absolute superiority of the coming conqueror (bringing them completely underfoot).

Beall: Cyrus will *“call on My name”* in the sense that he will do the Lord's will, in essence authenticating the Lord's prediction and in such a way to proclaim the Lord's name (so **Motyer**, 317; there is no evidence that Cyrus was a believer, and 45:4 seems to indicate that he did not know the Lord).

Motyer: because the rise and career of the conqueror matches foregoing predictions, he will by his actions proclaim the name of the Lord

C. Initiate Activity That Demonstrates Sovereign Control

*“And he will come upon rulers as upon mortar,
Even as the potter treads clay.”*

Young: Just as the potter is able to trample upon the clay with which he works, so will this conqueror trample under foot his enemies.

Characteristics of this Conqueror:

- Ruthless
- Taking advantage of every vulnerability – what if your whole wall was composed of mortar?? It would not be very strong – the mortar just fills in the cracks and makes the connection between the blocks or stones or bricks
- Dominating
- Invincible

Constable: The Lord, in contrast to the idols, claimed that He would do something in the future and predicted what it would be. He would arouse a conqueror from the north, one who was presently dormant, as if sleeping. This individual proved to be Cyrus the Persian (44:28; 45:1), who originated in the East and the North in reference to Palestine. He would call on the Lord's name in that he would proclaim the reputation of the Lord by fulfilling His prophecy (cf. Ezra 1:2-4), not by worshipping Yahweh exclusively. He would thoroughly defeat his enemies.

III. (:26-29) THE FINAL ANALYSIS = THE BRIEF OF THE COURT

Similar to a **Supreme Court brief** - a written legal document used in various legal adversarial systems that is presented to a court arguing why one party to a particular case should prevail.

A. (:26) Only God Predicts the Future

1. Where is the One Predicting the Future?

*“Who has declared this from the beginning, that we might know?
Or from former times, that we may say, ‘He is right!’?”*

2. Nowhere to Be Found

*“Surely there was no one who declared,
Surely there was no one who proclaimed,
Surely there was no one who heard your words.”*

Cf. vague prophecies like Chinese fortune cookies

B. (:27-28) Only God Can Interpret the Events of History

1. (:27) Where is the One Interpreting the Events of History

*“Formerly I said to Zion, ‘Behold, here they are.’
And to Jerusalem, ‘I will give a messenger of good news.’”*

Liberal scholars approach to dating of Daniel and Isaiah:

Presupposition: It is predictive and specific so it can't have been written ahead of time

2. (:28) Nowhere to Be Found

*“But when I look, there is no one,
And there is no counselor among them Who, if I ask, can give an answer.”*

C. (:29) Conclusion / Verdict – Idols are Useless

1. False vs. Genuine

“Behold, all of them are false;”

2. Worthless vs. Productive

“Their works are worthless,”

3. Lacking Substance vs. Substantive

“Their molten images are wind and emptiness.”

Constable: Cyrus would be a messenger of good news in two senses: his coming would validate the truthfulness of Isaiah's prediction of his coming, and his coming would mean return from captivity for the Jewish exiles (cf. Ezra 1:2-4).

CONCLUSION:

One of last NT books = John's first letter ends: *“My little children keep from idols”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we go on the offensive (without being unnecessarily offensive) when confronting people about their false gods and unbiblical world view?
- 2) What aspects of idolatry seem to be causing the most temptation for the church culture today?
- 3) Am I being too politically correct when it comes to discussing other religions?
- 4) What specific predictive prophecies have been made by other religions?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John Schortmann: The Uselessness of Idolatry

1 Cor. 10:1-20; God of America is sexual immorality; lust; their bellies; etc.

- 1) The Challenged – the false gods or idols themselves; God issuing a challenge right to the idols themselves; these false gods need to come before the true God and prove that they are true gods – that they have the power to damn and to save; the figment of man's fallen imagination; the stick or stone or piece of metal only represents the god the people would argue;
- 2) The Challenger -- God speaking of Himself as Sovereign God; *“King of Jacob”* – covenant king for these people who belong to Him; coming to the defense of His subjugated people – you

are not just dealing with these Jews You are dealing with Me; closely identifies Himself with His people when they are being abused; **Ps. 44:4-8**;

3) The Essence of the Challenge = (:22-23)

a) Speak -- Tell us the future with some type of certainty; if that is too difficult for you, at least explain the past to us; challenge is issued twice; exhibit some type of cognition; just challenging them to speak is enough to discredit them – open your wooden mouth and from your inanimate wooden mind speak forth; God is mocking the idols; mocking the people that think they are gods and are worshipping them;

b) Do something – either good or evil – let’s see some movement; some action
They remain silent and motionless; Amaze us since you are gods; these gods can’t help you; lifeless;

4) Conclusion to the Challenge – (:24) God is the one issuing this verdict; His estimation

a) Addresses the idols – they are of no account; all others worship demons and we alone worship the true God

b) Addresses those that worship the idols – most people don’t think that God does not speak this way; calls them an Abomination! “I worship the god of my own choosing the way that I want ... “ – not saying: “I hate your sin but love the sinner” – saying that “You are an abomination” – you are vile in my presence; we should fear God; apart from God’s regenerating grace, fallen man’s will chooses idols and false gods every time; **Deut. 7:25-26**; God is considering both the false god and the worshipper of the false god as one and the same;

5) Condemnation Issued by God – (:25) **Is. 45:1-2** identifies this leader as Cyrus; no contradiction here – does he come from the east or north; raising up another pagan; he will call on God’s name in one sense? Does this mean he became a true believer? No; but God so moves a pagan that the pagan recognizes that God is God in some way; Darius the Mede – no one can talk against Daniel’s God because He is a true God; **Ezra 1:1-4**; one group of idolaters (Persians) called to judge another group of idolaters (Babylonians); death penalty hangs over their heads; we all need redemption so as not to be executed by God’s wrath

Bruce Parnell: Declare the Future: Isaiah's God vs. Open Theism

In the old western guys, the good guy would challenge the bad guy to a duel; good guy would win when they would shoot it out; challenge arises around the ability to declare the future; if you think you are gods, go ahead and prove it; tell us what will happen and then make it happen like I have done throughout history; in our age there are questions about God’s ability to declare the future; movement that says that God does not know what the future holds = Open Theism – he goes on to quote

Duncan: defines this movement = the belief that God’s sovereignty is self-limited; God’s power stops where human will begins; God cannot know the future actions of free agents; God is quick on His feet to respond to changing circumstances;

God declares that He knows all things before they happen; sovereignly ordains all things that come to pass;

I. The Challenge that God gives – (:21-23) King of the worm = Jacob; coming to fight on behalf of the one who is lowly and powerless in himself; the particular challenge is remarkable; cf. how Elijah challenged prophets of Baal; Who is really God? Set your gods up so that they may answer; how good is a god that you have to carry in on your back and set up? Let them explain both the good things that have happened as well as the bad things; idolatry approaches history from standpoint of superstition = bad things happen when you have been bad and good things when you have been good; you need to make the god of the harvest happy – it doesn’t take long in examining history to see how unsatisfying that approach is; bad things do happen to good

people and vice versa; cf. suffering that Jews have faced; look at your own lives; tell the meaning of what you have gone through; Answer of Open Theism = God did not know what was going to happen and did not have anything to do with determining it – they think they are preserving God’s goodness in saying this; “This caught God by surprise . . . sometimes God’s Plan B can be just as good as His Plan A . . .” – this type of counsel is not very comforting;

II. The Verdict – (:24)

-- God has Irresistible power and infallible foresight (:25) --

III. The Judgment – (:28-29)

- These idols are nothing
- The converse must also be true; those who call on these idols are nothing as well

Motyer: The idol-gods are exposed and the plight of the world becomes apparent:

The parties come to court

The summons to court:	The Lord before the court
The Lord challenges the idol-gods (21)	his claim (25)

The point to be tested at law

Can the idol-gods predict or not? (22-23)	The Lord alone can predict (26-27)
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The judge’s summary

The non-entity of idols;	Idols useless in word and deed;
The plight of idolaters (24)	The plight of idolaters (28-29)

See you are of non-existence.	See they all are a delusion.
Your acts are evanescence.	Their works are nothingness.
An abhorrence chooses you.	Wind and meaninglessness their molten images.

Phil Pockras: More On Idols

If you say this title fast = “moron idols”

Why are we looking at idolatry again? Had this already in chap 40 and then chap. 41

The moron thing can’t make itself and can’t even keep itself from falling over;

God’s people at all times must have big problems with idolatry;

An idol is anything that is as important or more important to you than the living and true God as

He is revealed in Scripture; some thought that the piece of wood itself was a god; others were

more sophisticated and understood that the object only represented the god they worshiped;

Our ideas or cultural influences can become idols; our hobby can be an idol; our work;

respectability; sexual attraction; an entire belief system (atheism is an idolatry, a religion);

Idolatry is the way of death – Prov. 8;

Vs. 27 – all of the promises of coming redemption and the Redeemer to bring about that redemption – look in your very ears, these things are being fulfilled; looking at the coming of Jesus; the one who brings good tidings that the kingdom of heaven is at hand

Vs. 28 – the Gentile nations have no light in them; have nothing to offer; provide no help; life is hopeless and vain without the living God; what is left is false religion; may give temporary satisfaction or enjoyment but no real deliverance

David Thompson: did the Voodoo practices of Haiti help them out when the earthquake hit?

Who can tell the future and make it happen? Your works mean nothing to me; you have made your choices; God knows the end from the beginning and can do anything He chooses; God couldn't find anyone who could tell the truth about Him; so God had to provide the revelation; there is only one true righteous God; only one way you can be right with this God;

Brian Borgman: Babylonian Captivity = lowest depths of Jewish history; running parallel with pattern of judgment and destruction is pattern of salvation and deliverance; In our pluralistic culture of many gods, Christianity alone is not tolerated; we claim exclusivity for our God and our way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ; we will be the object of persecution from the world of religion as long as we maintain there is only one true living God; let's put the gods on trial and we will see who is god; let's see how your truth stacks up against our truth;

John Milton: "let truth and falsehood grapple; for whoever knew truth to be put to the worse in a free and open exchange"

We do not need to fear the religious philosophies of our age; give us a consistent and logical understanding of history; do something to prove that you are deity; **Ps. 115:8** – those that worship idols become just like them;

There are a number of views of what history is all about:

- some choose to ignore it; claiming we never learn from our mistakes so just forget history
- history is just a subjective interpretation of things past; things need to be deconstructed so that then they can be reconstructed; people write history with their own structure in view so we never get the whole story; break it down so we can rebuild it according to our ism; feminist reconstruction – support your own philosophy; they try to make Eve out to be the heroine;
- we think history rests on objective facts; has coherence, purpose and direction according to God's purposes; interpreted in light of God's divine providence; gives Christianity unique view on history; paganism or secularism cannot interpret history consistently – same chaotic world view; a kidney stone the size of a grain of sand changed the entire course of English history (Cromwell);

Track record of the false gods is very clear – no specific prophecies or declarations similar to what God has done with Cyrus; "My God is bigger than your God" – Mt. Carmel confrontation; their oracles were vague like Chinese fortune cookies

TEXT: Isaiah 42:1-9

TITLE: *SERVANT SONG #1 – JUSTICE ON EARTH IS COMING*

BIG IDEA:

THE PREDICTED SUCCESSFUL MISSION OF THE IDEAL SERVANT OF THE LORD REINFORCES THE PROVEN SUPERIORITY OF THE TRUE GOD TO IDOLS

INTRODUCTION:

Remember the Messianic prophecy that Isaiah had delivered in **9:1-7, chap. 11**. What a tremendous prospect to look forward to: the advent of a Messiah who would rule on the earth in **justice** and righteousness . . . Who would deliver God's chosen people from their oppression and affliction.

In order to comfort Israel as they face the approaching hardship of the Babylonian Captivity, Isaiah focuses their hopes back on this same promise. No matter how bleak things get, no matter how much injustice reigns around you, God will ultimately send His servant Messiah to triumphantly usher in this reign of justice on earth.

Look at current events that cause us to cry out for justice on earth:

- ISIS beheading of Japanese hostage
- Yemen coup
- Etc.

The false idols exposed in chapter 41 are powerless to call the shots. But God always calls the shots and He will fulfill all of His promises as He intervenes in history to accomplish something totally new and wonderful.

David Thompson:

GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE COMFORTED BY KNOWING THAT EVEN THOUGH ISRAEL WAS SUPPOSED TO BE GOD'S SERVANT, WHO FAILED TO BRING TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND WORSHIP OF GOD TO THIS WORLD, GOD WILL SEND HIS MESSIAH/SAVIOR/SERVANT INTO THIS WORLD WHO WILL ACCOMPLISH EVERYTHING GOD HAS PLANNED FOR ISRAEL AND THE WORLD.

Servant Songs: Isa 42:1-7; 49:1-9a; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12; [61:1-4 ??] -- the appointment and empowerment of God's Servant; His characteristics; His mission; His suffering; His victorious accomplishment

Parunak: **Vv. 1-4** speak of the servant in the third person, while in **5-7**, the Lord addresses him directly. This passage is quoted of our Lord in the NT, and also understood Messianically in Jewish tradition.

Constable: Earlier (41:8-16) the servant was Israel, so the readers would naturally assume that Israel is the servant here too. Other references to Israel as the servant of the Lord are verse 19; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4; and 48:20. Only later does it become clear that this Servant must be an individual, namely: Messiah. The context and the characteristics ascribed to the servant in each reference to him dictate his identity. That the Servant is not Cyrus is clear from the contrasts between them. He will be the ideal representative of Israel who will

accomplish for the Lord what Israel did not regarding the world (cf. Gen. 12:3). Matthew quoted 42:1-4 as finding fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Matt. 12:18-21).

THE PREDICTED SUCCESSFUL MISSION OF THE IDEAL SERVANT OF THE LORD REINFORCES THE PROVEN SUPERIORITY OF THE TRUE GOD TO IDOLS

F. Duane Lindsey: The emphasis of the passage is on the introduction of the servant and the outcome of His completed task. The servant is called to accomplish His work. The poem thus predicts the servant's faithfulness in fulfilling the mission for which He was designated.

I. (:1-4) THE PREDICTED SUCCESSFUL MISSION OF THE CHOSEN SERVANT OF THE LORD

5 Reasons for the Successful Mission of Bringing Justice to Earth

A. (:1a) Divinely Appointed with Approbation

*“Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.”*

Approbation: commendation, praise

Emphasizing more the mission of God’s Servant rather than His identity at this point

Young: turn their thoughts away from the idols of vanity to the One who can bring salvation to His people

“uphold” - grasp by the hand, grasping securely e.g., **Exod. 17:12** (Aaron and Hur supporting the hands of Moses during the battle with the Amalekites)

God delights in His chosen servant – **Matt. 3:17; 17:5** – testimony of the Father at His baptism and on the mountain of Transfiguration

F. Duane Lindsey: Election by Yahweh made a person His servant (cf. 1 Kings 11:13, 32-34; Ps. 105:26; Hag. 2:23). The servant's task cannot be performed by just anyone—it can be accomplished only by Yahweh's “chosen one.” Election and service go hand in hand (43:10-12, 21; cf. 41:8-9). The expression “my servant” is not only a title of honor, but also, since Yahweh is viewed as the King of Israel in the immediate context (41:21; cf. 43:15; 44:6), a description implying royal characteristics. . . Not only is the literary genre of the passage similar to a royal designation oracle (as already indicated), but the task of establishing (“a just order”) is a characteristically royal responsibility. . . The entire expression (“my servant whom I uphold”) is tantamount to saying, “He's mine— no power can overcome Him!”²³ How can He not succeed in His task of causing a just order to prevail in the earth?

[Source: BIBLIOTHECA SACRA 139 (553) (Jan. 1982): 12-31.]

Scott Grant: Verse 1 contains echoes of 1 Samuel 16:13, where David was anointed by Samuel and the Spirit came upon him. The links to David in verse 1 show that when Isaiah speaks of the Servant of the Lord, he's also speaking of a king.

B. (:1b) Divinely Anointed to Execute Justice

*“I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations.”*

Young: To endue the servant for his work, God has placed His Spirit upon him. The Spirit is a divine force and supernatural power who equips the recipient to perform his task.

Spirit descended upon Jesus at His baptism in the form of a dove
(cf. **11:2-4**; Num. 11:16-25; 1 Sam. 16:13; Ps. 33:6; 139:7; Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:18-19, 21).

Cf. 61:1-3

Does He primarily proclaim judgment or execute judgment?

Matt. 12:18ff this passage is quoted in the NT – sense of **proclaiming** justice

Calvin: Christ was sent in order to bring the whole world under the authority of God and under obedience to him.

The primary meaning of the noun “*justice*” is that of a judicial decision or sentence

Motyer -- “*Justice*” – *mispat* -- In the light of the foregoing court scene it must retain its meaning of “judgment at law” .. also a righting of wrongs, the establishment of a just order – a prospect associated with the Lord’s own coming to reign (Pss. 96:11-13; 98:7-9).

Constable: connotes societal order as well as legal equity.

Oswalt: This is that life-giving order which exists when the creation is functioning in accordance with the design of its Lord. . . It is through the Servant that the lordship of God will be made effectively available to everyone.

Parunak: In the most common idiom, bringing “*judgment*” refers to the statute itself, rather than the resulting action, and the idea is that God provides his righteous laws to people. This meaning fits the context well. The Psalmist recognized that the knowledge of God's judgments was a privilege for Israel, not originally accessible to the Gentiles:

Psa 147:19f *He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and **as for his judgments, they have not known them.***

The Servant extends this knowledge to all nations, as prophesied in the Messianic vision of ch. 11,

Isa 11:9 *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

F. Duane Lindsey: The servant's task is to make right within history all aspects and phases of human existence -whether moral, religious, spiritual, political, social, economic, and so forth -so that the prayer will be fulfilled, “*Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” (**Matt. 6:10**). . . the kind of life that will prevail on earth when all nations are brought under God's rule, to be accomplished through the instrumentality of God's servant

Fits best with a premill interpretation where there is a millennial kingdom on earth

C. (:2) Divinely Dependent with Meekness and Humility

*“He will not cry out or raise His voice,
Nor make His voice heard in the street.”*

Young: He stands in sharp contrast to the loud worldly conqueror who proclaims to all his deeds.

Motyer: Such service is first unostentatious and unself-advertising.

Parunak: This verse explains why *“he ... charged them that they should not make him known.”* The Savior did not promote himself, or try to generate “buzz.” He did not come to promote himself:

David Thompson: God’s Servant came an entirely different way than the world’s political leaders. He had no pomp or circumstance to His first coming. Think of how opposite this is to our world. When some major political leader goes anywhere, they travel in a fleet of limousines and in a caravan that announce their presence to the whole world. Even actors and actresses love the limelight of red carpet treatment. Here was God in the world and what a contrast. Jesus Christ would not initially come as some boisterous world conqueror the first time, which is what Israel wanted, instead He came quietly and unobtrusively. He did not try to make a public spectacle of himself. He did not seek notoriety or prominence. He was not here to make a big name for Himself, even though this was the greatest Person to ever walk on the face of this earth. He was here to save sinners.

* * * * *

Illustration: Harry Ironsides: Personally I was so under the power of legality that I felt guilty if I rode in a street car without immediately rising to give my testimony.

As soon as we left the corner I would get to my feet and say, “Friends, I want to give my testimony for Jesus Christ, and I want to tell you how God saved me.”

The conductor would come and say, “Sit down. We didn’t ask you to come in here to conduct a church service.”

Then I was rather rude to him. I said, “Well, I’ll sit down if you say so, but you’ll have to answer at the judgment-bar of God for preventing these people from hearing the gospel.”

I would do the same thing in a railroad train. As soon as we got away from the station, I faced the passengers and began to give my testimony. I felt I had to do it, or be responsible for their souls. I did not realize that this was rude. . .

The devil either tries to keep you quiet or makes you think you must do what is unreasonable. What delivered me at last and showed me there was a golden mean between indifference and rudeness was this very passage.

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F. Duane Lindsey: The more probable interpretation of these verbs indicates that the servant will not seek publicity (v. 2) or promote violence toward the oppressed (v. 3a). An alternate view that the servant will not utter lamentation in His distress is a definite possibility and merits some attention. . . the statements may simply be the figure of speech called litotes (a negative, minimizing statement used to emphasize its opposite), thus indicating the meek, humble, gentle character of the servant (cf. Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:5).

He not only shall come quietly but he shall deal gently.

D. (:3a) Divinely Compassionate with Gentleness and Mercy

*“A bruised reed He will not break,
And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;”*

Young: refers to broken men, whose hope is extinguished because of outward oppression and perhaps also because of inward disillusionment with the life of this world.

Alan Carr: When Jesus comes, His faithful people will be weak and their flame nearly extinguished. He will not break them down or snuff them out. He will heal their weaknesses. He will bind them up and restore their usefulness. He will rekindle their flame so their light shines bright again. The Messiah will not fail in His mission to redeem and restore His people. . . flax threads were used as wicks in oil lamps. A piece of thread would be placed in the oil. After the thread had been thoroughly soaked with the oil, it would be lit and would serve as a wick, drawing the oil from the lamp, producing light. . . The *“bruised reed”* has lost its *strength*, its *stability* and its *soundness*. A *“bruised reed”* is unreliable and unusable. . . The *“smoking flax”* has lost its *light* and its *glory*. A *“smoking flax”* has become *unusable*. . . The Lord sees the weakness and the uselessness of the *“bruised reed”* but He does not reach out in anger to finish it off. He does not come to the *“bruised reed”* to destroy it, but to mend it, to repair it, reinforce it and to restore it. . . The Lord does not snuff out that smoldering wick. He does not finish it off without a care. Instead, He comes to rekindle its weak flame. He comes to make it useful again. He comes cause it to shine its light one more time.

Brian Bell: They used a simple oil lamp to light their homes. It was a small clay vessel with the front end pinched together to form an opening. A piece of flax, serving as the wick, was inserted through the small hole until part of it was submerged in the oil. When the flax was saturated, it could be lighted. It would then burn with a soft, warm glow. But when the oil in the lamp was consumed, the flax would dry out. If it was ignited again, it would give off an acrid, dirty smoke, making the vessel offensive and useless.

Oswalt: God’s answer to the oppressors of the world is not more oppression, nor is his answer to arrogance more arrogance; rather, in quietness, humility, and simplicity, he will take all of the evil into himself and return only grace. That is power.

E. (:3b-4) Divinely Focused on Executing Justice – Persevering Through Difficulty

*“He will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not be disheartened or crushed, Until He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.”*

Parunak: In a derivative meaning of bringing judgment **to** somebody, the recipient is often a poor or oppressed person. Bringing judgment to such a one means to exercise the law on their behalf, to vindicate them.

Ps 103:6 *The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.*

II. (:5-9) THE PROVEN SUPERIORITY OF THE TRUE GOD TO IDOLS

Motyer: the Lord confirms the world-wide task of his servant and pledges its outcome
3 stanzas – each introduced by a statement of self-identification

A. (:5) Superior as the Creator of Heaven and Earth and Mankind

“Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk in it,”

B. (:6-7) Superior as the Faithful Promise Keeper and Savior of All

1. Sovereign

“I am the LORD,”

2. Righteous

“I have called you in righteousness,”

3. Powerful

“I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you,”

F. Duane Lindsey: Yahweh's action on behalf of the servant emphasizes strengthening guidance and securing protection. The language and concepts are similar to that promised to the servant Israel in 41:9-10, especially the clauses “I took you..., I called you..., I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

4. Purposeful

a. Faithful Promise Keeper to Israel

“And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people,”

Young: He in whose hands lies the origin, formation, and sovereign dispensation of the covenant has also called the servant through whom the bestowal of the gracious provisions of the covenant will be administered and in whom the covenant will realize its full and true embodiment.

Motyer: The *covenant* was Israel’s distinctive privilege, from its inception in Abram (Gn. 15, 17) to its climax in Moses (Ex. 2:24; 24:7-8). It is God’s free decision to take and keep a people for his own possession, drawing them to himself (Ex. 6:2-7), constituting himself as their God and Redeemer (Ex. 20:1-2) and bringing them into a life of freedom and obedience (Ex. 20:3ff).

F. Duane Lindsey: He is the mediator of the New covenant with Israel, elaborated in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and referred to in numerous other prophetic texts (cf. Isa. 54:10; 55:3; 59:20-21; 61:8; Ezek. 16:60-63).

Scott Grant: Jesus became the "mediator of a better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6), a new covenant that offers God's salvation to all people. In essence, Jesus himself is the covenant, with his body and blood being central (Matthew 26:26-30). We relate to God through Jesus Christ, but Jesus is himself God (John 1:1).

b. Light of All Gentile Nations (**Acts 26:17-18**)

"As a light to the nations,"

Parunak: Usually, when Isaiah associates "*people*" with "*nations*" or "*Gentiles*", both are plural, and refer to all of the world's population, with "*people*" emphasizing their cultural and ethnic identities and "*nations*" their political organization.

This passage is one of only three places where Isaiah uses singular "*people*" alongside plural "*nations*." When this happens, it is reasonable to understand "*people*" of an individual nation, in contrast with the rest of the nations.

Noting this contrast, we recognize this prophecy behind the words of righteous Simeon in the temple, when he saw the infant Messiah,

Luk 2:28-32 *Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: 30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; 32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

Simeon understands the singular "*people*" to refer specifically to the covenant nation, in contrast to the Gentiles. Based on Isaiah's prophecy, he realizes that the Messiah comes for both.

c. Savior of Both Jews and Gentiles

"to open blind eyes,

To bring out prisoners from the dungeon,

And those who dwell in darkness from the prison."

C. (:8-9) Superior as the Only One Worthy of Worship – the Predictor/Controller of the Future

1. Majestic by Virtue of Who He Is

"I am the LORD, that is My name;"

Parunak: We may paraphrase:

"I am the Lord. That was the name by which I brought Abraham out of Ur to the land (**Gen. 15:7**). That was the name by which I brought Jacob home from Haran (**Gen. 28:13**). That was the name by which I brought Israel out of Egypt (**Ex. 6:2-8**), and that is the name by which I shall bring you back from dispersion."

2. Majestic by Virtue of What He Demands

“I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.”

F. Duane Lindsey: Yahweh first directs glory to Himself by asserting His uniqueness. He affirms His name—“I am the LORD; that is my name!” Then He asserts His refusal to share His glory—“I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols” (cf. 48:9-11). Yahweh's intolerance of all rivals is absolute. He will put an end to all idolatry.⁶⁸ The glory of which Yahweh is so jealous is that of being recognized and worshiped as sovereign Ruler and righteous Deliverer.

3. Predictor/Controller of the Future

*“Behold, the former things have come to pass, Now I declare new things;
Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you.”*

Constable: *“Behold”* concludes this passage as it began it, forming an *inclusion*

Remember the bona fides of deity that had been put forth earlier

“former things” = prophecies related to God’s judgment and captivity in Babylon

“new things” = prophecies related to deliverance from Babylonian Captivity and return to the Promised Land in the near term with the ultimate fulfillment in the salvation the Messiah will bring and ultimate restoration in the millennial kingdom

CONCLUSION:

Oswalt: These two verses (8-9) confirm that this “Servant song” is intended to be read in the context of the previous two chapters. God’s *glory* lies in his capacity to do all the things the *idols* cannot. Because he alone transcends the cosmos he alone can explain the course of history; he alone can turn that course in a whole new direction and tell the world in advance that he is going to do it. Whatever and whoever this Servant is, his ministry will be a confirmation that God, whose character is epitomized in the name Yahweh, is the only God and only Savior.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What characteristics of the ideal Servant of the Lord should be true of us in our service to the Lord?
- 2) What types of injustices do we see in the world around us today that are frustrating and create a greater longing for the type of world order which the Messiah will ultimately bring to earth?
- 3) Are there any circumstances where we are not giving God all of the glory due His Name?
- 4) How can we bring light to those in darkness around us by bringing to their attention the predictive prophecies which point to the validity of the one true God?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: Vv 8-9 close the section much as it began, with an emphasis on the uniqueness and power of the Lord (as contrasted with the weak idols—41:29). God's ability to predict, not only the work of Cyrus in releasing the Jews from captivity in Babylon, but more importantly, the work of the Servant in releasing the world from darkness and sin, was something that no idol could ever hope to accomplish. The Lord is unique; His glory is not transferrable (see 40:5 on the glory of the Lord). Just as He predicted other events which had come to pass, so the Lord was able to declare more future things, such as the work of the servant, before they happened.

S. Lewis Johnson: And so, he is a king and he is a sufferer. That's what God was saying at the baptism. And so when Jesus went down into the water and came up out of the water, that was a visible representation of what He would do. He would be a king, and he was destined to suffer. He was destined go the cross and even as early as the baptism that was God's way of saying, this is what he is. And so our Lord, as he heard a voice from heaven he would know, that though he was inaugurated into his Messianic office as the king, he was destined to suffer.

Redpath: Jesus wants us to have His heart towards the lowly, broken, and hurting. It's easy to pass them by just as quickly as the priest and the Levite passed the man on the road to Jericho. "The superficial Christian worker ignores that kind of situation. He wants a sphere to serve where it will be worthy of his talent, if you please. A task where his abilities will be recognized and used, something that is big enough to justify all the training he has undergone. In the eyes of the Lord, the test of the real servant is, does he bend with the humility of Jesus Christ over a bruised reed and smoking flax?"

TEXT: Isaiah 42:10-17

TITLE: SING TO THE LORD A NEW SONG

BIG IDEA:

NEW UNIVERSAL SONGS OF PRAISE SHOULD ARISE WHENEVER GOD SPRINGS INTO ACTION TO DELIVER ON HIS PROMISES

INTRODUCTION:

What is the **mission of the church**? Some would point to **worldwide evangelism** as the goal – and that is certainly an important part of the equation. But remember that the Great Commission calls us to *make disciples* of all the nations. That goes beyond seeking conversions. Ultimately Almighty God is seeking for those who will “*worship Him in spirit and truth*” (**John 4:23**). Satan has a similar goal. In the Temptation of Jesus, “*the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me’*” (**Matt. 4: 8-9**).

Brian Borgman: The church has been called to “*declare the excellencies of His name*” **1 Pet. 2:9**; (“*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*”) God is infinitely worthy of our admiration and praise; God doesn’t want lifeless, half-hearted, mumbled, dull worship – that minimizes the work of the Lord Jesus and the power of the gospel; **C. S. Lewis** “The Word About Praising” quote from his Reflections on the Psalms; “whatever we value, esteem, love – we praise it, delight in it; share it exuberantly with others;” look at all the people and things we praise; the praise completes the enjoyment; the delight is incomplete until it is expressed; what we value we automatically praise; we seek to convert others to what we delight in; doctrinally sound churches can be dead and boring; “doctrinally as straight as a gun’s barrel, but emotionally just as empty” (**Tozer**); In another unbalanced extreme, the church shouldn’t take worship and turn it into some form of palatable entertainment to try to reach the world; instead our worship should be so transcendent that it overpowers the unbeliever; They come into our worship services and can tell that these people love God; they take God seriously with an attitude of reverence and joy.

How are we doing in our worship and praise? Today we will be celebrating the Lord’s Supper. Are we just going through the motions or are we emotionally excited to participate in remembering and praising our Savior until He returns? Our songs of praise are a key element of worship. The bible has a lot to say about music and singing. Until the Reformation, the church went through a very constrained period in its form of worship where the only allowable songs were the recorded psalms from Scripture. Look at the rich hymnology that has developed since that time. We are going to see in our passage today that the Lord calls for us to sing new songs of praise.

NEW UNIVERSAL SONGS OF PRAISE SHOULD ARISE WHENEVER GOD SPRINGS INTO ACTION TO DELIVER ON HIS PROMISES

The fact is that God is daily delivering on His promises to us and we should be constantly singing new songs of praise because He is worthy – in His person and because of His mighty works.

I. (:10-12) CRANK UP THE GLOBAL WORSHIP

Context: Isaiah has just introduced the first of the **Servant Songs** (42:1-9) where he extols the one who would come to ultimately establish **justice on the earth**. The deliverance from the Babylonian Captivity through Cyrus would just be a foretaste of the final deliverance for the nation of Israel after the purging of the Tribulation Period as the Messiah comes to establish His kingdom on earth. Isaiah wants the people of God to be confident that God will faithfully deliver on all of His promises. So it is time to turn up that volume dial on our worship; time to crank it up and truly worship God as we should. This is not a time for Presbyterian restraint and inhibitions. This is the time for the Holy Spirit to cut loose within us so that we “*speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father*” (**Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16**).

A. (:10a) Entreaty for All Nations to Praise the Lord

*“Sing to the LORD a new song,
Sing His praise from the end of the earth!”*

Rich Catthers: When God does a “*new thing*” (**vs. 9**), it is time to sing a “*new song*”.

Cf. instances when Satan tries to squelch praise and worship:

- **King David** was *dancing before the Lord with all his might* as the ark is brought into Jerusalem – **2 Sam. 6:16**
- **Triumphal Entry** – tell your disciples to crank it down – **Luke 19:39**

Illustration: “A New Song Now Shall Be Begun” – Composed by **Martin Luther 1523**

From Martin Luther: Hymns, Ballads, Chants, Truth page 8-13:

On July 1, 1523, the infant Reformation saw executed in the Brussels market place Heinrich Voes and Johann Esch, two Belgian Augustinian monks and followers of Luther. Since wandering minstrels and their ballads served as the mass media of the day, Luther wrote this first hymn of the Reformation as a ballad recounting the martyrdom of these witnesses. First appearing in 1523 in broadsheet form, it, along with Luther’s tune, was published in Johann Walter’s 1524 Wittenberg hymnal. [first verse of many below]

1. A **new song** now shall be begun,
Lord, help us raise the banner
Of praise for all the Goad has done,
For which we give Him honor.
At Brussels in the Netherlands
God proved himself most truthful
And poured his gifts from open hands
On two lads, martyrs youthful
Through who He showed His power.

(**Ps. 33:1-5; 96:1-13; 98:1-6**)

Motyer: Always a *new song* responds to a fresh realization or a fresh display of the goodness of God.

Oswalt: It is because God's Servant will make God's salvation available to the whole earth that the prophet is caught up in a whirlwind of joy and praise and calls on earth's inhabitants to join him.

Constable: A new song arises in Scripture when someone has learned of something powerful and good that God has done or will do (cf. ch. 12; Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; Rev. 5:9; 14:3). Here it is **salvation through the Servant** that prompts this song of praise (cf. 6:3).

The scope of this new song of praise is defined as the "*end of the earth*" – Isaiah goes on to expand on that universal scope

B. (:10b-12) Expansion of the Scope of Praise = The Ends of the Earth Illustrated

We do not serve a limited, territorial God; God even in OT times had a **global mission** in view; He wanted His people Israel to be a centralized testimony to His glory and power and might that would shine the light of blessing to the Gentile nations But the Jews become elitists instead and thought that they could hoard God's blessings and look down with contempt on the Gentile dogs instead of having a heart of compassion for the world.

God has always had His methods to thwart man's instincts to huddle in place. Remember the Tower of Babel incident in Genesis 11. Whenever the church has struggled with its commission to GO to the ends of the earth, God has sent persecution to disperse His saints and reach out to the unreached.

Look at the extent of this praise that Isaiah prophesies of in response to the work of the Servant of the Lord:

1. Western Mediterranean Region

*"You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it.
You islands and those who dwell on them."*

Parunak: Isaiah looks west (to the coasts of the Mediterranean) and south (to the Red Sea), two channels of commerce through which Israel saw evidence of other cultures. By land she had contact with Egypt (to the south) and the empires of Mesopotamia (to the north), but nations much farther away were accessible by sea.

2. Eastern Desert Wilderness

*"Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices,
The settlements where Kedar inhabits."*

Parunak: Kedar was Ishmael's second son (Gen 25:13), and became the name for a coalition of tribes of the Arabian desert. So Isaiah turns his attention from the western watery sea to the eastern desert wastes.

Cf. Is. 21:16

Constable: Isaiah called on everyone to praise the Lord because the Servant's ministry would benefit the whole earth. People living on the farthest seacoasts and in the desert lands should praise Him. Kedar, a son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13), was also the name of a town in the Arabian Desert (cf. 21:16-17; 60:7). Sela was near modern Petra and was the mountain fortress city of Edom (cf. 16:1). These people in various places represent **diverse sources** from which universal

praise should come to the Lord.

3. Southern Mountain Fortresses

*“Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud,
Let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains.”*

Parunak: Now Isaiah turns south. “The rock” is probably Petra, the Nabatean city in **Edom**. Living secure in their fortress canyon, they are to climb to the top of their cliffs to praise the Lord. Interestingly, the sanctuary at Petra is a long climb up out of the valley; the Lord now replaces their earlier gods.

David Thompson: I find it intriguing that in verse 11, Isaiah names “*Kedar*” and “*Sela*” which are both Arab territories. Kedar was the second son of Ishmael (Genesis 25:13) and came to be a term used for Arab nomadic tribes. Sela was an Arab city (Judges 1:36). God specifically singles out the Arab world, both city Arabs and wilderness Arabs, and He says there is coming a day when the Arabs will be worshipping the true God and Jesus Christ and celebrating the fact that He is reigning and has given Israel her land. They will be worshipping God when that Dome of the Rock idol is gone and the true Temple is standing in Israel to the glory of God.

4. Northern Remote Nations

*“Let them give glory to the LORD,
And declare His praise in the coastlands.”*

II. (:13-16) PREVIEW THE LORD’S UPCOMING PERFORMANCE

I went to the movie theater in Owings Mills with my son Stephen yesterday afternoon ... you rush to get there on time and then they force you to sit through 20 minutes of coming attractions. Some are rated R for violence – lots of violence in what the Lord will do in the end times.

Then there are the many award shows – the Oscars, the Academy Awards ... that recognize stars for the roles they played

A. (:13-14) Two Dynamic Roles Performed by the Lord

1. (:13) Role of a Conquering Warrior

a. **Zeal** of the Conquering Warrior

*“The LORD will go forth like a warrior,
He will arouse His zeal like a man of war.”*

Imagery: **Ex. 15:1-18** Song of Moses and **Judges 5** Song of Deborah and Barak picture God as a warrior

David Thompson: Most people don’t like this side to God. They want a God who is gracious and kind and tolerant; they do not want a God who is a warrior. Most people don’t want a God of wrath; but one day all people in the world will praise Him because He is a God of wrath.

Oswalt: The immediate cause of the praise is the recognition that although God may often appear to be silent and inactive, he is not truly so. At the right time and in the right circumstances, God will burst forth on behalf of his own, and no difficulty, neither the power of his foes (v. 13) nor the weakness of his people (v. 16), will present the slightest hindrance to his action.

b. **Outcry** of the Conquering Warrior

*“He will utter a shout,
yes, He will raise a war cry.”*

David Guzik: The difference between *He shall cry out, yes shout aloud* and *He will not cry out, nor raise His voice* (**Isaiah 42:2**) shows the difference between the first and Second Coming of Jesus. The first coming was meek and lowly; the Second Coming will be loud and demonstrative!

Vs. 13 is to be grouped with the verse 14 instead of with vv.10-12 because of the common auditory themes

Oswalt: He stirs up anger, putting himself in the right frame of mind by thinking of the wrongs that the enemy has done to him and those he loves. Then at the moment of attack he lets out a blood-curdling scream, both to fortify himself and cow the defenders. The famed “rebel yell” of the American Civil War is a more recent example of this phenomenon.

Illustration: Cf. in tennis the **shrieks** of Serena Williams and Maria Sharapova (6-3, 7-6 to win the Australian Open)

c. **Victory** of the Conquering Warrior

“He will prevail against His enemies.”

Constable: This verse gives the reason for the praise just called for. Isaiah gloried in the fact that Yahweh would one day arise as a mighty warrior to overcome His enemies. He did this when He moved Cyrus to allow the Israelites to return to their land. He did it more mightily when He sent Messiah to accomplish redemption. And He will do it most dramatically when Messiah comes back to the earth to defeat His enemies at Armageddon (Rev. 14:14-20; 19:17-19).

Parunak: He is not just noise and fury, but overwhelms them with his might.

2. (:14) Role of a Mother in Giving Birth

a. **Silence** of Gestation Period

*“I have kept silent for a long time,
I have kept still and restrained Myself.”*

Cf. 400 silent years before the First Advent – then” in the fullness of time God sent forth His son, born of a woman born under the law, so that He might redeem them who were under the Law” – **Gal. 4:4**

As Satan goes about now like a roaring lion seeking whom He may devour, Jesus Christ is restraining Himself – but will return in dramatic fashion:

Ps. 45:1-5

Rev. 19:11

Rich Cathers: Some people will ask you the question, "If God is so loving and so powerful, then why does He allow evil to exist in the world?" Well the truth is, there will be time when God will no longer put up with it. For now He is being patient and "holding His tongue" because He wants to give people a chance to repent.

b. **Outcry** of the Agonizing Birth Process

*"Now like a woman in labor I will groan,
I will both gasp and pant."*

Oswalt: The common factor in each is the outcry at the climactic moment. All the apparent inactivity in lengthy preparation for battle, and in the nine months of gestation, comes to a crashing end in the cry of attack and of birth. So it is with God. We may feel that nothing is happening, that he has forgotten all about our situation.

Parunak: The whole line builds on the analogy of a woman with child. In human experience, we see very little while the child forms, but when the time comes, suddenly, with great turmoil, a new person enters the world. So will be the Lord's judgment. It is building, almost invisibly, but when it comes, it will be sudden and fierce. **Delitzsch** captures the point more directly, but not more forcefully than Isaiah: "something great, with which Jehovah was long pregnant, is to be born."

B. (:15-16) Two Dramatic Results Accomplished by the Lord

1. Transforming the Terrain – The function of a Conquering Warrior

a. Devastating the Mountains

*"I will lay waste the mountains and hills,
And wither all their vegetation;"*

b. Drying up the Waterways

*"I will make the rivers into coastlands,
And dry up the ponds."*

Cosmic reversals; nature affected by the way God acts

Motyer: The contrast between uplands and river valleys; between food (*vegetation*) and water; and between *rivers* (water bounded by land) and islands (land bounded by water) makes up a picture of totality.

2. Helping the Helpless – The function of a Nurturing Mother

a. Providing Leadership and Guidance

*"And I will lead the blind by a way they do not know,
In paths they do not know I will guide them."*

Constable: However, He would lead His own people, those unable to find their way through the blinding storm of His judgment, to safety (cf. **Rev. 12:14**). The people of Israel were blind and could not bring the Gentiles into the light, but God would lead His blind servants (cf. **v. 7**). He promised definitely to do this.

Blindness not of rebellious sinners but of weak and helpless people

- b. Providing Light and Access
*“I will make darkness into light before them
And rugged places into plains.”*

3. Promise of Performance

*“These are the things I will do,
And I will not leave them undone.”*

God promises that He will deliver on all of His promises

(;17) CLOSING WARNING: FOLLY AND SHAME OF TRUSTING IN IDOLS

*“They shall be turned back and be utterly put to shame, Who trust in idols,
Who say to molten images, ‘You are our gods.’”*

Cf. 41:24, 29

CONCLUSION:

Rev. 5:11-14 – a glimpse into heavenly realm where we are going; we will spend eternity speaking a **new song**

We should be practicing and preparing for eternity – for singing new songs based on God’s mighty works in delivering on His promises

Let’s Crank Up the Worship and recognize God for faithfully Delivering on all of His promises every day in our own experience

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is the connection between truth and worship?
- 2) What types of restrictions do various denominations place on the music and the instruments they feel are appropriate for worship services?
- 3) How can we be more exuberant and less inhibited in our worship?
- 4) What new mighty works has the Lord performed for you that should elicit new songs of praise?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: The Lord Himself speaks in **vv. 14-20**. Though He had long been silent and restrained Himself despite His people’s suffering (the verb is the same one used of Joseph’s restraint before his brothers in Egypt, in 43:31; 45:1), it was now time to intervene. As a woman in labor, God

would give birth to the redemption of His people. Again referring to the time of the millennium in vv. 15-16, the Lord would dry up the rivers and straighten out the hills in order that the people might return to their land (though **Motyer** takes v. 15 to refer to the world's destruction [p. 324]—if so, it would be the Tribulation preceding the millennium). He will lead the blind (note again this theme, as in 42:7) and guide them, in essence as a second “exodus” from bondage into the promised land. He will make the crooked places straight (see 40:4) so that travel could be easier. Those who trust in idols and molten images, however, would not participate in this march to freedom, but would be turned back (v 17). Again, there is almost certainly here an allusion to Exodus, in this case the making of the golden calf in Exodus 32.

Parunak: The “*new song*” is a very distinctive phrase in the Bible. Elsewhere it appears in only two books: the Psalms (6x), and Revelation. In most of these passages, there is a clear emphasis on the Lord's dominion over the Gentiles, as in Isaiah's context. We have often seen how Isaiah draws freely from the Psalms.

Compare in particular the opening to **Ps 96**, which is probably Davidic (as 1 Chr 16 suggests):

1 Psa 96:1-5 O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.

2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.

3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all peoples.

4 For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.

5 For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

The references to his superiority over the idols fit beautifully in the present context.

The newness of this song is that it brings the Gentiles into the circle of divine worship. No longer is Israel alone to glorify the Lord. Now all nations are to bow before him.

Borgman: Universal Praise for the Lord's Battle and Birth

Emphasis on universal nature and scope of the Servant's work in vv.1-9; very rich, Christ-saturated passage regarding the work of the Servant as it relates to the nations;

I. (:10-12) Call for Universal Praise for the deeds of the Servant

A. Call for a *new song*; **Ps. 33:1** “*praise is becoming to the upright ... sing to Him a new song ...*”; Something fresh and vigorous that befits work of God on behalf of His people; **Ps. 40:1ff** “*Waiting, I waited for the Lord*” – new work that God had just done in delivering him from miry clay; ultimate expression for the Lord's ultimate new work of revelation of Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel; **Ps. 96:1ff** – scope here is all the earth proclaiming His praises; salvation comes not just to Israel but to all the nations; **Rev.** – people from every nation, tribe, tongue and people sang a new song;

B. There is always warrant for God's people to be singing new songs; some believe you should only sing the Psalms; exclusive psalmody position; defenders of the Scottish covenant in this camp; But God always elicits new songs for new works He has accomplished; Isaac Watts wrote about 7,000 hymns; started to paraphrase the psalms; this started a major controversy in the church of Christ; there is always controversy over music; this almost split Jonathan Edwards' church – he was in favor of these new hymns; then they got real risky and started writing songs with new lyrics entirely; we should be singing Christ-centered hymns; we don't canonize any particular century of hymnology; we are not opposed to new songs

C. Picture of extremes of the earth – a universal, global song; tents of Ishmael as well as tents of Israel; even the Edomites; historic enemies of God will be singing His praises; Rev. 5:9; 7:9 – pictures universal praise; not talking about everybody without exception; not universalism = everybody will go to heaven (cf. Origen – believed hell was remedial);

D. OT saw Israel as God's appointed messenger to bring blessing to all the world; by time of Christ this had been perverted to seeing themselves as elite people, clustered together, hoarding the blessings of God; God uses persecution to spread His people and His testimony throughout the world; Goal of missions is to make worshippers of King Jesus; this mission always pointed to something bigger than just Israel

II. (:13-17) Twofold Description of what God has done (prophetically speaking) – vivid images of battle and birth

A. Picture of God as Fierce Warrior --

Isaiah looked forward to First Coming; we look forward to Second Coming; both of us living between the times; **Ex. 15:1-18**; “*a mighty warrior*”; **Zeph. 3:17**; Ps. 78; this language and imagery is abundant throughout OT; yet there would be many that would like to strip away this concept of God; means He has enemies; means that He fights for His people; the battle belongs to the Lord; Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord; zealous in His warfare; goes forth with battle cry; Cf. Confederate rebel yell in Civil War – terrified the citified Yankees; He will prevail against His enemies – sums up both first and second advent; destroys our rebellion and sins and makes us into His servants through His own death; will crush rebellion and sin through the death and judgment of sinners; today is the day when pardon is offered to rebels; there is coming a day when it will be too late

B. Picture of God as Tender Mother –

Contrasting image; **Jonathan Edwards**: “The Excellencies of Christ” (lamb of God vs lion of Judah, etc. – many contrasts); God labors to bring forth the redemption of His people; going to shout out like a woman in labor; when it seems like God is silent, redemptive history is simply gestating; 400 years when there was no prophet in the land ... just silence;

David Bissett: Worship and the Reformation

Chap. 40 – begins new section where attention shifts to this Servant of the Lord;

I. Why Sing a New Song

A. In Isaiah's day – speaking of deliverance from Babylonian Captivity through a deliverer; God would do new and great things; called for a fresh response;

B. In a future day – Isaiah pointing ultimately to the Messiah; a Servant like no other; look at the response of praise from heart of Mary (Luke 1 – Magnificat); When Jesus is born in Bethlehem look at the rejoicing on the part of the shepherds and the song of the angels (Luke 2); something new coming to bless all the nations, not just Israel; Luke 19:36 – Triumphal Entry; “*mighty works*” evoke praise; Ps. 118 “*this is the day the Lord has made*”; Let us rejoice and be glad in it; It is one thing to look at beautiful sunset and mountain scene and say “Wow, look at what God has made;” it is another thing to look with eyes of faith on the work of Christ on the cross and His great saving work; Astronaut **James Irwin** quote: “Jesus walking on the earth is far more important than man walking on the moon”; Phil. 2 references a Christological hymn circulated among early church;

Def. of Worship: our heart's affections and mind's attentions focused on His glory and grace

II. Historical Aside

Early church got off to a great start praising the Lord; after a few generations becomes encumbered in Middle Ages; worship was obscured; joy of worship was dismal; worship needed to be reformed

The Dismal doctrines of this dismal worship:

- Had forgotten the bible; many of the parish priests could not read their Latin bibles
- Doctrine of salvation had been perverted into system of works and sacraments
- Indulgence system – selling forgiveness for money
- Some chants – worship more of a spectator sport; congregations didn't sing; Luther and other reformers restored congregational singing; people died for this doctrine;

Reformation rediscovered doctrines – this had to happen before you renew the singing; start reading the bible; then followed a rediscovery of worship

- Authority of Scriptures – Rom. 1:16-17 – Luther read this and was impacted; sola Scriptura, etc.
- Gospel of Grace – by grace through faith
- Translation work – John Wycliffe, Luther translation in German; John Calvin and others putting Scripture in French language – fueled the fires of worship

III. Recovery of Worship at the Reformation

- Lord's Supper and Baptism replaced the 7 sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church – and these were recovered
- Sermons become vital – not just priest moaning on in Latin; based on Scripture in the native tongue;
- Scriptures in the vernacular
- Great crowds coming to hear the message
- Home worship renewed
- Congregational singing implemented
- Luther loved the gift of music; common to have sing-songs after dinner in the home; wrote a hymn about each of the main points of the catechism he wrote to help people learn them; people all over Germany were singing
- “A new song now shall be begun” = Luther's ballad about martyrdom of 2 of his followers in Brussels – 1523

4 Applications:

- Know the Lord and sing His praises; Is. 42 uses the covenant name of God = YHWH; if you don't feel much like praising Jesus you probably don't really know Him
- Guard the deposit of sound doctrine – your religious behavior must be based on truth; 2 Tim. 1:8ff;
- May the truth be preserved and passed on in our songs; Ps. 96 – declare His glory among the nations; write anthems and sing them
- Tune our own heart for eternity – if you play an instrument you know how importance this tuning process is; our life in this world is prior practice for heaven above

TEXT: Isaiah 42:18-25

TITLE: *CLUELESS REGARDING GOD'S HEAVY HAND OF DISCIPLINE*

BIG IDEA:

PRIVILEGED ISRAEL (GOD'S SERVANT/MESSENGER) REMAINS DEAF AND BLIND TO GOD'S HEAVY HAND OF DISCIPLINE

INTRODUCTION:

How is it that our nation today can be so oblivious to our precarious position due to our rejection of God's moral law and standards for righteousness? How much more patience can God extend to us in His love and forbearance? We seem to have no clue regarding how far we have fallen. I am not claiming that all of our founding fathers were dedicated believers; many of them like Thomas Jefferson were Deists. But still for the most part they had a healthy respect for the God's revelation and understood the reality of absolute morality as opposed to the relativism that has engulfed us today. Look at the Puritans up in New England – wonderful depth of theology. Look at the founding of prestigious colleges on the East Coast as centers for studying theology and preparing men for Christian ministry.

As a nation, we tolerate and now even promote abortions. We tolerate and now even promote the homosexual agenda. We have come to the point where we call good evil and evil good. Have we not learned anything from the lessons of history. How did the great cultures of the past fare when they went down this same road of decadence and worship of entertainment and materialism? What about God's warnings to us in passages like **Romans 1** that spell out the downward spiral of a culture who has rejected God and exchanged the worship of the Creator for the worship of the creature? Who anymore even believes in the simple creation account recorded in the first chapters of Genesis?

Every day our leaders are making **decisions that shock us** – decisions regarding our national defense (or lack thereof), regarding our economic situation (with complete disregard to the common sense principal that you cannot continue to spend more than you can afford), regarding education, regarding the family, regarding you name it . . . We are more clueless than we can even imagine. This is even more distressing in light of how much opportunity and privilege and revelation we have had poured out on us by the grace of God.

How many bibles do you have at home? How many electronic bibles can you access right now – on your laptop . . . on your Ipad . . . on your phone? Do you know that with increased privilege comes increased accountability? That is why Jesus condemned so strongly the citizens of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum – **Matt. 11:20-30**.

Illustration: Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. After a good meal, they lay down for the night and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Watson, look up and tell me what you see." Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars." "What does that tell you?" Watson pondered for a minute.

"Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all-powerful and that we

are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. Why, what does it tell you?" Holmes said, "Watson you idiot, someone has stolen our tent."

Well as a nation, someone has stolen our tent and we are exposed to God's wrath and seem clueless about what type of judgment must be headed our way. God's message to His covenant nation Israel is certainly relevant to us today. America is in no way the new Israel ... but the principle of how we perceive and respond to God's discipline remains very applicable.

Constable: Chapter 42 thus contains a strong contrast. It opens with one Servant who will discharge His ministry successfully, and it ends with another servant—in servitude to his captors—having failed to minister effectively. The Servant Messiah obeys God and fulfills His task, but the servant Israel refuses to listen to God and draws His judgment.

PRIVILEGED ISRAEL (GOD'S SERVANT/MESSENGER) REMAINS DEAF AND BLIND TO GOD'S HEAVY HAND OF DISCIPLINE

I. (:18-20) THE SURPRISING LACK OF DISCERNMENT ON THE PART OF GOD'S SERVANT NATION ISRAEL

A. (:18) Deaf Ears and Blind Eyes – Despite Much Opportunity

"Hear, you deaf! And look, you blind, that you may see."

It sounds almost unreasonable to command the deaf to hear and the blind to see ... their very problem prevents the called for solution

Constable: The Israelites had concluded that Yahweh was blind and deaf to their situation, namely, impending destruction. Now He revealed that it was they who were blind and deaf to what He would do for them. He challenged them to comprehend what they had missed.

Motyer: Blindness would thus make Israel's need identical with that of the Gentile world, while deafness would add that other dimension of culpability (ever the Lord's primary charge against his people) of failure to hear his word (see 30:9-11; Am. 2:4).

Like the Israelites, we practice **selective hearing**. We only see what we WANT to see. - we're blind. We only hear what we WANT to hear.

B. (:19) Clueless Despite Their Privileged Status

1. Privileged Status as God's Messenger Servant

*"Who is blind but My servant,
Or so deaf as My messenger whom I send?"*

The nation sent to announce God's good news to the Gentile nations of the world
No nation is as blind as Israel

Oswalt: The Servant is blind because he will not draw the correct implications from the experiences he has had with God.

Motyer: The “missionary” task of the Old Testament was characteristically performed by attraction rather than by outreach, by the Lord’s magnetic people.

No capability to perform the function of a faithful servant or the function of a faithful messenger

2. Privileged Status as God’s Covenant Servant

*“Who is so blind as he that is at peace with Me,
Or so blind as the servant of the LORD?”*

The nation enjoying peace with God as a result of their special covenant relationship.

Constable: It is the servant of the Lord, and of all people—*Israel* (cf. 41:8-16)—that was blind and deaf. How ironic it was that God’s messenger to the world, the one that He had brought into covenant relationship with Himself, was blind and deaf, blinder and deafer than any other. *Israel*, above all others, needed to be able to see and hear what her Lord told her so she could tell it to the world (cf. ch. 22). The nations were blind (cf. vv. 6-7), but *Israel* was both blind and deaf (cf. 6:9-10; 30:9-11; Amos 2:4).

Unaware of how bad off they are:

Revelation 3:17 *“Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:”*

First step in recovery is always admitting your situation – how bad off are you? That’s why 12 step programs or Alcoholics Anonymous, etc. have you start off with admitting your problem; no solution apart from coming to terms with where you are right now

Our nation is deceived by how much wealth we have in the stock market – that could be wiped out tomorrow; we are deceived by the security of our insurance policies and the abundance of our retirement nest egg – if our confidence is not in God, it is sorely misplaced

Our children can be deceived by their association with church and with Christian teaching – have they ever really been regenerated by the grace of God? Just growing up in a Christian family and hanging around church and other Christians does not make someone a believer

C. (:20) Blind Eyes and Deaf Ears – Despite Much Revelation

*“You have seen many things, but you do not observe them;
Your ears are open, but none hears.”*

Sounds like the book of James – no practical faith; no implementation of the Word of God

II. (:21-23) THE SURPRISING LACK OF DELIVERANCE FOR GOD’S SERVANT NATION ISRAEL

A. (:21) The Purpose for God’s People -- Exaltation of God’s Law

*“The LORD was pleased for His righteousness’ sake
To make the law great and glorious.”*

One of the purposes for which God raised up *Israel* was to give them His Law and have that Law

(entire OT revelation rather than just the Torah) regarded throughout the world as *great and glorious* because it reveals the righteousness of God (all that is right and true and good).

Young: Israel's sinful and rebellious condition had despised the law, but it is God's intention to carry out His purposes. He will magnify and make honorable His law that all the world may see the honor and majesty of His truth and authority. The magnifying of the law would also and primarily consist in its being carried out and obeyed. The law is not to go by default, but will be shown by God Himself to be glorious and honorable.

B. (:22) The Predicament of God's People

1. Imprisoned and Plundered

*"But this is a people plundered and despoiled;
All of them are trapped in caves, Or are hidden away in prisons;"*

Young: He pictures the people as plundered, like a caravan travelling across a desert place attacked by bandits . . . hidden in darkness, a symbol of the greater darkness of sin and ignorance.

2. Pursued and Abandoned

*"They have become a prey with none to deliver them,
And a spoil, with none to say, 'Give them back!'"*

C. (:23) The Plea for God's People – Because of Deafness Towards God's Correction

*"Who among you will give ear to this?
Who will give heed and listen hereafter?"*

Beall: God is pleased with His righteous standard; He will magnify the law (here probably including the prophetic revelation as well as the Sinaitic law), regardless of the receptivity of the people. But, Isaiah continues, this (emphatic pronoun, in opposition to hwhy) is a people who have been plundered (as in the Babylonian exile), and yet still do not see the error of their ways. Will any one listen (v 23)? It is God Himself who has ordered this pillage of Israel, in order to get their attention, to show them their sin. And yet, they still would not obey (v 24). Therefore, the Lord had to set the nation on fire, and yet still the people would not hear.

Problem: not being able to discern the signs of the times; you can't look at your experiences and draw out the principles that God is trying to teach you

III. (:24-25) THE SURPRISING LACK OF DISCERNMENT ON THE PART OF GOD'S SERVANT NATION ISRAEL

A. (:24) Clueless in Understanding Their Discipline –

Cannot answer either of the 2 most fundamental questions?

1. Who Abandoned Them? Their Covenant God

*"Who gave Jacob up for spoil, and Israel to plunderers?
Was it not the Lord?"*

It was not King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon that was to blame

2. Why? Deseved Because of Their Law Breaking

*“against whom we have sinned,
And in whose ways they were not willing to walk,
And whose law they did not obey?”*

Motyer: In difficulties we rush to ask “**Why?**”, a question prompted by the pride that claims “I did not deserve this” and that assumes the capacity of the human mind to measure all things by its logic. But, as Job discovered, there are always dimensions of the human condition not amenable to present human logic, and there is no guarantee that to understand why trouble has come will comfort the troubled. On the contrary, the true question is “**Who?**” – discover the agent and through knowing him adopt a position of acceptance, trust and hope.

Oswalt: The people have not understood the meaning of their own history. They have failed to recognize what God was about in calling them, and they have failed to learn the lessons that their experiences with God should have taught them. It is relatively easy for us, living in the modern age and imbued with a concept of history and its lessons, to grasp this idea. But in Isaiah’s time this idea was revolutionary. Nowhere else in the ancient world of that day do we find the idea that human experience from the past could be classified and evaluated in such a way that it could be learned from, and that future behavior could or should be modified on that basis. The law of continuity dictated that all human actions were determined by corresponding forces in the cosmos in an endlessly repetitive cycle. Thus persons had no real control over their behavior nor any real responsibility for it. . . Today the Western concept of history is in desperate trouble because we no longer believe in one, transcendent, personal, righteous, purposeful God. Yet we still talk about human accountability and responsibility, as if those concepts could long survive the loss of the entire ground on which they rest.

B. (:25) Clueless in Responding to Their Discipline

1. Intensity of the Discipline -- Fierce

*“So He poured out on him the heat of His anger
And the fierceness of battle;”*

Cf. the Warning of Wisdom in **Prov. 1:20-33**

2. Insensitivity to the Discipline -- Delusional

*“And it set him aflame all around, Yet he did not recognize it;
And it burned him, but he paid no attention.”*

You are in a bad way when you are burning and you don’t even know it.

Bomkamp: Isaiah knew that captive Judea would be crying out and asking the question of, “Why God would allow this to happen to them?” It is this question which Isaiah attempts to answer in these verses. It was because of their sin that these things happened, they were suffering only the consequences of their own sin.

Young: As a result of the outpoured wrath, the anger burned Israel on all sides; but Israel was unable rightly to interpret the meaning of the calamities that had come upon her. These calamities did not come by chance or accident. They were manifestations of the burning anger

of the God of the covenant. The reason why Israel does not know the truth of what is happening is that she does not set her heart to consider the meaning of these events. Her thoughts are far from God and she does not look unto Him as the One who dispenses all providence. In manifold ways God had pointed out the nation's iniquity and the nature of the coming judgment, but Israel hearkened not. Now that the punishment has come, Israel does not consider it nor understand it.

CONCLUSION:

Romans 11:25-32

- This blindness; this hardening is **partial** – does not extend to all Jews
- This blindness is **temporary** – will not last forever
- **Deliverance** is coming; God will keep all of His covenant obligations

What about our country? Will we open our eyes and give ear to God's revelation?

What about you personally and your family?

James 1:22 *“Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do you respond when your children do not properly accept discipline?
- 2) What are some of the practical tests of genuine faith in the book of James that prove encouraging to you?
- 3) How can we better function as trophies of God's grace and exhibits of the power of the gospel working through us?
- 4) How can we function more effectively as God's servants and messengers?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Guzik: What is the cure? It begins with knowing our condition. When the deaf know they are deaf, and the blind know they are blind, they know their need, and do not deceive themselves about their condition.

When Jesus healed a man born blind, He used the occasion to speak about spiritual blindness, and its cure. In the diagnosis of Jesus, only those who know they are blind can be healed of their blindness. Jesus said, *“For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”* Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, *“Are we blind also?”* Jesus said to them, *“If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.”* (**John 9:39-41**)

David Thompson: We come now to a section in Isaiah in which God flat out tells Israel what they have done wrong and why He is doing what He is doing to them, specifically because He is mad or angry (42:25). God tells them why He has permitted such negative things to come against Israel. This started back in Isaiah's time and it will culminate when God will permit the Antichrist to lead a massive military movement against Israel. Why would God allow such devastating things to happen? You get your answer right here. What Isaiah says here is this:

GOD IS PRESENTLY ANGRY WITH HIS OWN PEOPLE FOR THEIR REFUSAL TO RESPOND TO HIM, BUT THEY CAN BE COMFORTED BY KNOWING THAT THERE IS COMING A DAY WHEN HE WILL SAVE THEM AND DELIVER THEM.

DIVINE ACTION #1 – God is presently angry with His people and that is why they experience bad things. **41:18-25**

There are two points about God's Divine Anger described here:

Category #1 - God gives the reasons for His Divine anger. **42:18-21**

There are four stated reasons why God is angry with His own people.

(Anger Reason #1) - God is angry because His people refuse to hear and see the truth. 42:18

(Anger Reason #2) - God is angry because His people do not act like His servant or messenger . 42:19

(Anger Reason #3) - God is angry because His people refuse to observe all the things He has done for them and learn from them. 42:20

(Anger Reason #4) - God is angry because His people refuse to apply His great and glorious law. 42:21

Category #2 - God reveals the results of His Divine anger. **42:22-25**

(Anger Result #1) - God's people are plundered and despoiled . 42:22a

(Anger Result #2) - God's people are trapped in caves. 42:22b

(Anger Result #3) - God's people are hidden in prisons. 42:22c

(Anger Result #4) - God's people have become a prey . 42:22d

Just so you don't miss this, I'll state three reasons why I am allowing your world to cave in:

(Reason #1) - God's people have sinned against God. 42:24a

(Reason #2) - God's people refuse to walk in God's ways. 42:24b

(Reason #3) - God's people refuse to obey God's Word. 42:24c

DIVINE ACTION #2 – God who created and elected His people will eventually redeem His people. **43:1**

Description #1 - God created His people. "*bara*" create something from nothing (Gen. 1:1)

Description #2 - God formed His people. "*yatsar*" predestine, plan, form, design and create

Description #3 - God has redeemed His people. "*gaal*" purchase by paying the price of blood

Description #4 - God has called His people. "*qara*" call and name these people as His own

Motyer: The Redemption of Israel – coherent and parallel development of two themes

A. National redemption (42:18-43:21)

- a1 Israel's spiritual failure resulted in national captivity (42:18-25)
- a2 The meeting of national needs (43:1-7)
- a3 The Lord, Saviour and only God, contrasted with idols (43:8-13)
- a4 Redemption from Babylon (43:14-21)

B. Spiritual redemption (43:22-44:23)

- b1 The totality of Israel's sin (43:22-24)
- b2 The meeting of spiritual needs (43:25 - 44:5)
- b3 The Lord, Redeemer and only God, contrasted with idols (46:6-20)
- b4 Redemption from sin (44:21-23)

Brian Borgman: When the Word Does No Good

Stinging rebuke on God's people in their present condition; these people had the Word of God but it did them no good because they were deaf and blind

I. (:18-22) God's Servant -- Deaf and Blind

Contrast between earlier part of chapter where the servant was Messiah (the head) vs. Israel here (the body) – the blind cannot lead the blind; two servants being described in this chapter as God's servant

Vs. 18 Call to do the **impossible** -- Starts off with an impossibility; the call to the professing people of God emphasizes that they should be able to hear and see but they don't; they are still morally culpable even though they are unable to hear and see; cf. the free offer of the gospel; people often object: if someone is totally depraved and can't exercise a free will, how is that fair ... therefore, election and effectual calling cannot be true; faulty assumption: God would never ask someone to do what they morally and spiritually cannot do; We tell those who are dead in Christ to repent and believe even though they are blinded; grace of God is required; the command to do that which we cannot do exalts the grace of God; not speaking to Gentile pagans but Jews – God's covenant people

Deut. 28:15ff distinction between Old Covenant and New Covenant –

- If you obey the stipulations of the covenant, leads to blessing; if you don't obey, cursing; **28:63**
- Obedience not optional in the New Covenant –
- **Deut. 29:2-4** You have seen it all; critical passage; under the Old the people failed because God had not given them a heart to know and eyes to see; under New Covenant the blessed promise of **Jer. 31** is that God will take out the old heart and replace with a new heart – the different is what God does inside of us – not a difference between commands and no commands – but between an old heart that could not obey and a new heart that can; cf. Pilgrim's Progress and other writings of **John Bunyan**; poem that describes the distinction between Old and New Covenants:
“Run, John, Run the law commands but gives me neither feet nor hands; far better news the gospel brings, it bids me fly and gives me wings”
Flying is harder than running
- Love your enemies – difficult commands in the new covenant

How can a blind servant be a faithful or reliable servant? They cannot

Something particularly appalling about their deafness and blindness – shocking because of all people they profess to be at peace with God; but they are the most blind; the more revelation a people have, the more responsibility is given; therefore the more culpability in the final analysis

We should be more shocked by the low level of morality in the professing church rather than that of the pagan world

Think about our own nation and our own family and community; look at how much light God has given this nation for 400 years; not that all of our founding fathers were evangelical believers ... but they had a high regard for the Word of God and the moral law of God

Look at the founding of the great universities on the East Coast – but look at us now
What about us as individuals? God has been pleased to give us light; does the light penetrate my soul and make me into the kind of person God says I should be

Is our eyesight failing? Is our hearing declining?

Vs. 20 – the means are there but the response is not; cf. James 1
Pendulum swings from a Do, Do, Do religion to a Do Nothing religion – James gives us the balance – visit widows and orphans; keep yourself undefiled from the world; We do because God has done

Possible to be a professing member of Christ's church and still be blind and deaf; never transformed on the inside; I preach the way I do because I am not convinced that everybody can see and hear

Conclusion of the Parable of the Soils – *“he that has ears, let him hear”*

Vs. 21 – God's design for His people – motivated by His **righteousness** – His unswerving commitment to uphold the worth of His own glory – Israel was to show the truth and life and light of God's Word to the nations; example of Jonah
Instead of being a conquering people who go forth sharing the Word, they are a conquered people who need deliverance themselves; find none to liberate

II. (:23-25) God's Servant – Unwilling and Disobedient

God lays down the challenge; how will you receive this rebuke? Are you going to listen this time and respond with obedience and faith?

Book of Deut. is last plea of Moses – reiterating the obligations of the covenant to new generation preparing to enter the Promised Land – Please choose life

All the argumentation and logic has been set forth – nothing more to say – Won't you give your ear to this?

vv. 24-25 constitute a threat – God sovereignly delivers His people into the hands of their oppressors; that is why you are in the shape you are in; you better listen now or it will get worse; Isaiah starts out identifying with the sin of the nation and then switches to third person and stands in distinction to their disobedience (Daniel and Nehemiah associated themselves with sinful people just like Jesus did in His baptism)

God hemmed him in with the flames; burned him on all sides; complete captivity
Astonishing picture – completely oblivious to being burned in the fire

TEXT: Isaiah 43:1-13

TITLE: CONFIDENCE AND CERTAINTY IN GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PURPOSES

BIG IDEA:
GOD'S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO HIS PEOPLE REINFORCES OUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PURPOSES AND GOD'S IDENTITY AS THE ONE TRUE GOD MAKES CERTAIN THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS REDEMPTIVE PURPOSES

INTRODUCTION:

Today God wants to raise our level of **Confidence** in His redemptive purposes. He calls on His people Not to Fear – despite whatever trials we might face – threats of overwhelming floods or fires that would consume us. “*Do not fear,*” says our God. God wants to raise our level of **Certainty** in His redemptive purposes – our conviction that He will carry out all that He has promised to perform. The more we understand of our God – who He is in relationship to His chosen people and what it means for Him to function as the one true God – the more we will live in Confidence and Certainty.

- What type of confidence and certainty did God want Noah and his family to have in the face of the oncoming judgment of a worldwide flood?
- What type of confidence and certainty did God want Israel to have as they fled Egypt in the Exodus and were trapped against the Red Sea with Pharaoh and his troops pursuing them?
- What type of confidence and certainty did God want the 12 spies to have whom Moses commissioned to bring back a report about their prospects of successfully entering the Promised Land?
- What type of confidence and certainty does God want His people today to have in His gracious redemptive purposes and His providential care?

GOD'S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO HIS PEOPLE REINFORCES OUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PURPOSES AND GOD'S IDENTITY AS THE ONE TRUE GOD MAKES CERTAIN THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS REDEMPTIVE PURPOSES

**I. (:1-7) CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PURPOSES --
EXPRESSED IN 3 COVENANTAL PRIVILEGES: 3 REASONS NOT TO FEAR**

A. (:1-2) Israel is Protected by God – Despite the Level of Threat or Difficulty

1. (:1) Basis for Confidence in God's Protection

a. Created by God

*“But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob,
And He who formed you, O Israel,”*

Young: The introductory words *And now* form a logical rather than a temporal connection with the preceding. They present a contrast between the dismal present condition of the people and the glorious redemption they are to enjoy in their God.

Young: *Jacob . . . Israel* -- Thirteen times within the compass of chapters 40—49 Isaiah uses this double designation, and with one exception (41:8), in this order. Jacob was the deceiver and had to become an Israel [*prince with God*]. Hence in this order of the names there may be a hint that the Jacob character of the nation had to be abandoned. Implied also may be the thought that in Israel is expressed the true destiny of the people. They are to become an Israel, and as such the heirs of the promises that had once been made to their ancestor Israel.

God created and formed each of us as unique human individuals – we each have inherent strengths and weaknesses – those weaknesses are part of God’s design to cause us to depend upon Him for grace and sufficiency – When He created each of us it could be said that He broke the mold – never again to make someone exactly like us – Just by virtue of creation, God has a special individualized plan for each of us

b. Redeemed by God

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;”

No reason to fear because things have not gotten out of control from God’s perspective

Beall: The word “*redeem*” is used 24 times in Isaiah, 23 times in chaps. 40-66 (and 6 times in chaps. 43-44 alone; the other time is in 35:9); its primary meaning is “to act as a kinsman redeemer,” i.e., to redeem a field sold by a relative in time of need, or avenge the blood of a slain relative. It is also used for the redemption of property (including non-sacrificial animals) dedicated to the Lord by payment of its value + 20% (see Lev 27:1-34). In connection with the broader use in Isaiah (and elsewhere), perhaps the concept is that God will redeem His needy people from their state of bondage because of His covenant relationship with them (indeed, His ownership of them). The verb here is in the perfect, indicating that in God's eyes the redemption has already been accomplished (though it is yet future for Israel): it is a sure thing.

Speaks to:

- The payment of a price
- Deliverance from the market place
- Subsequent ownership

c. Personally Known by God

“I have called you by name;”

Motyer: in a crowning intimacy, there is naming; “*to call by name*” (40:26) is a direct personal relationship involving having a specific plan and place for the one named

John 10:3 *“He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out”*

The protection of the sheepfold against ravaging enemies;
The guidance provided by the Good Shepherd
The intimate personal relationship

d. Owned by God

“you are Mine!”

Nobody can pluck us out of God’s hand – nothing can separate us from the love of God

2. (:2) Extent of God's Protection

a. No Possibility of Drowning

*"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you."*

Cf. Red Sea experience and Jordan River

b. No Possibility of Burning

*"When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
Nor will the flame burn you."*

Beall: Because of the Lord's special relationship to Israel as her *goel*, v. 2 points out that He will protect her through difficult times: when she passes through the waters (as in crossing the Red Sea or the Jordan River), God promises to be with her (a hint here of Immanuel, "God with us"?); when she passes through fire (as Daniel's companions did in Dan 3:25-27), she will not be burned (though see 42:25). What a tremendous promise!

Motyer: idiom of totality – trials of whatever sort and however they come; in all there is the Lord's presence

Look at our **Year verse** – **Is. 41:10** -- *"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."*

B. (:3-4) Israel is Precious to God – Special Covenantal Love

Think of role that a husband performs to his wife – or parents perform to their children -- offering **protection**; treating them as **precious** and showering them with love – this is the role that God plays to his covenant people

1. Claim of God's Love

a. (:3a) Based on Who God is in Relationship to His People

*"For I am the LORD your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;"*

Oswalt: all these terms had gained special emphasis through the exodus

1) *The Lord your God* --

The name (Yahweh) God had given Moses to identify the One who wished to deliver this captive people (Exod. 3:14; 6:3). Elohim – speaking of the entirety of the godhead

2) *The Holy One of Israel* --

Stressing both His moral purity and His otherness (Lev. 11:44-45) – Call to be holy because God is holy; need for separation from idolatry

Motyer: Isaiah's special title for the Lord

3) *Your Savior* --

The one we look to for deliverance; no one else can help; trust in any other is futile; God will not share His glory with another

b. (:4a) Based on How Much God Values His People

*“Since you are precious in My sight,
Since you are honored and I love you,”*

Young: Love involves choice and exclusion. In regarding Israel as valuable and precious, God singled them out for particular attention; and inasmuch as He so regarded them, He redeemed them. They were honored, not through works of their own or because of their own deserving, but because God so regarded them.

2. Guarantee of God’s Love – in the Context of Ransom

a. (:3b) Historical Example of Ransom

*“I have given Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your place.”*

Constable: Perhaps the Lord meant that He would give Persia rulership over Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba—as rewards for allowing the Israelites to return to their homeland. I tend to favor this view. Another option is that He meant that He had given over Egypt and its southern extremities to redeem Israel at the Exodus. A third view is that these nations represent the heathen nations in general, whom God did not favor when He redeemed Israel.⁴⁵⁸ In another larger sense, God sacrificed His Son as a ransom in the place of many whom He had called (cf. 53:8-12; Matt. 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Beall: This may have reference to the conquering of Egypt and portions of Ethiopia and Seba by Cambyses (Cyrus' son) after the edict given by Cyrus for the Jews to return to their land from Babylon. Note that the same three nations are pictured in 45:14 as submitting to Israel and her God in the end time. The reason for this action is given in v. 4: Israel was precious in the eyes of the Lord and was honored, and God loved her. It is for this reason that Israel was ransomed by God with others paying the price.

b. (:4b) Prophetic Example of Ransom

*“I will give other men in your place
and other peoples in exchange for your life.”*

C. (:5-7) Israel is Preserved by God – Will Be Regathered to the Promised Land

1. Take Confidence in the Presence of God

“Do not fear, for I am with you;”

2. Anticipate Worldwide Regathering

a. From the Four Corners of the Globe

*“I will bring your offspring from the east,
And gather you from the west.
I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'
And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.’”*

Constable: Worldwide scattering would not prevent Him from fulfilling His promises and giving them a future in the Promised Land (cf. 11:11-12; 27:13; 49:12; 60:4; Deut. 30:3-6). He would reassemble His sons and daughters from the ends of the earth (cf. Jer. 30:10-11; Ezek. 37). Return from Babylonian captivity would not be from the four compass points and so does not qualify as the complete fulfillment. He will do this when Jesus Christ returns to the earth (cf. 5:26; Matt. 24:31). Amillennialists often take this as the spiritual gathering of lost sinners to Jesus Christ.

Motyer: Just as once the choice was between the captor, Egypt and the threatened Israel, so if the world were to turn captor, Israel would still be chosen, for such is the Lord's love for his people. Isaiah is therefore looking far beyond any threat that Babylon might impose.

b. From the Most Remote Regions

*“Bring My sons from afar,
And My daughters from the ends of the earth,”*

3. Rest in God's Character and Purposes

a. Designed to Glorify God's Character

*“Everyone who is called by My name,
And whom I have created for My glory,”*

Oswalt: called and created for one purpose: the glory of God. Because of these factors the people of God cannot be left in bondage. God's name is on them. What happens or does not happen, to them is directly attributable to him. But more than that, their whole purpose in existing as a people is that they might reveal the Holy One, whose glory alone fills the earth (6:3). Unless God delivers and purifies them, that purpose will not only fail but will also be directly contravened, because the world will say that the Lord is not just one more of the gods, but he is a particularly despicable one because he alone makes the arrogant (and now patently false) claim to be the only god (43:11-13; Ezek. 36:20-25; Jer. 10:12-16).

b. Created to Fulfill God's Purposes

*“Whom I have formed,
even whom I have made.”*

Constable: Their condition reflects on Him, and unless He restores them they cannot fulfill His purpose for them in the world.

Beall: The three words “create,” “form,” and “make” used in v. 7 are all taken from the Genesis 1 creation account, thus showing the significance of this statement: as **Young** notes, “it is God alone who performs the wonder of a new creation, the redemption of His elect people” (3:146).

II. (:8-13) CERTAINTY OF GOD CARRYING OUT HIS REDEMPTIVE PURPOSES

A. (:8-9) Courtroom Scene of Competing Witnesses

1. (:8) Call Spiritually Ignorant Israel as God's Witnesses

*“Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes,
And the deaf, even though they have ears.”*

Constable: Isaiah summoned an unidentified authority to bring out the Israelites: the spiritually blind and deaf (cf. 42:18-25; cf. Deut. 29:4; Jer. 5:21). The setting of this scene is a courtroom. The prophet was summoning them so God could address them (v. 10) as His witnesses. Imagine calling blind and deaf people as witnesses in a court of law! Yet the Lord would use even them to testify to His greatness.

Beall: It is clear from v. 8 that the Lord is under no delusion as to Israel's current spiritual condition: they are blind (though they have eyes) and deaf (though they have ears—i.e., it is not the Creator's fault that they can't see or hear!), just as the Lord had pronounced them in the previous chapter (Isa 42:18-20).

2. (:9) Command the Gentile Nations to Call Their Witnesses

“All the nations have gathered together In order that the peoples may be assembled. Who among them can declare this And proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified, Or let them hear and say, ‘It is true.’”

Contrast between “people” in the singular (Israel) and “peoples” in the plural (Gentile nations)

B. (:10-13) Compelling Testimony to the Certainty of God’s Promises

1. (:10a) Testimony Based on Personal Knowledge of God

“‘You are My witnesses,’ declares the LORD, ‘And My servant whom I have chosen, In order that you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He.’”

Young: The knowledge of God is the possession only of those whom God chooses. It is a fruit of the divine election and so a gift of His free grace.

2. (:10b-11) Testimony Focused on God’s Unique Role in Redemption

“Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me. I, even I, am the LORD; And there is no savior besides Me.”

Beall: The simple statement in v. 11, that there is no one apart from the Lord, is repeated six times in chapter 45. The phrase is probably taken from Deut 32:39 (“Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me . . .”), but the word “savior” is used instead of “God.” This word, “Savior” ([:yviAm]), is a favorite of Isaiah's (17:10; 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 62:11; and 63:8), and shows the prophet's stress on the Lord's redemption.

Young: The true God can explain the past and interpret the future, but also He can manifest power in the deliverance of His people. Not only could He predict salvation; He could also actually save.

Oswalt: In a series of dramatic assertions God declares His absolute sovereignty (v. 13), His absolute saviorhood (vv. 11-12), and His absolute knowledge of the future (v. 12) – in short, His absolute unlikeness to any other being in the cosmos. He is unlimited and unyielding but also unfailing. Why should Israel doubt that He would either want to or would be able to deliver them?

3. (:12) Testimony Focused on God's Sovereign Role in Redemption

"It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange god among you; So you are My witnesses,' declares the LORD, 'And I am God.'"

Constable: Yahweh pointed to the people of Israel, His servant, as those who would be His witnesses that He could predict the future and bring it to pass. For example, He had promised to make Abraham a great nation, to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, to give them Canaan, and to make David's dynasty secure. He had fulfilled all these promises and more. In the process He had made the Israelites His witnesses so they would learn that He alone is the true God (cf. Exod. 3:14). Similarly, Jesus told His disciples that they would be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). They had witnessed His works for several years and could testify to His uniqueness, even His deity. Thus the early confession of the church became "Jesus is Lord." Yahweh alone, among all the "gods," is the only real deliverer, the one who knows the future, and the sovereign. He is unique. None of the idols was Yahweh. The Israelites could bear witness to that, but they were blind and deaf. Therefore the Lord had to testify in His own behalf.

4. (:13) Testimony Grounded in the Certainty of God's Eternal Decrees

"Even from eternity I am He; And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?"

Job 42:2 *"I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted"*

Beall: v. 13b indicates that no one can reverse the work of the Lord—in judgment or redemption.

CONCLUSION:

Romans 8:28-39

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where do we turn for help when we experience doubts and fears?
- 2) Do you consider yourself beloved by God and precious to God?
- 3) In light of the present scattered condition of Jews all around the world and the constant threats against their national security, how amazing is God's promise of regathering and deliverance?
- 4) What is the significance of Jesus referring to His disciples as His "witnesses" in **Acts 1:8** in light of the context of Is. 43?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Thompson:

Only God can turn around hearts and bring back wayward children to Himself; one day God will prove to the entire world that He is the true God; He will use Israel to make a statement to the world; this text is about national Israel – double title: “Jacob/Israel” – application to NT believers; despite how we botch things and end up in terrible fix, God will still deliver His people

6 Encouraging Messages God Presents to Israel

1) **God Created Israel** – should be a comfort – 6 Blessings:

- a) I have created Israel – also has created us; *bara* – making something from nothing;
- b) I formed Israel – planned you and designed you to be you; God’s workmanship for the glory of God; said of Lincoln: When God made Lincoln, He broke the mold; can be said of each of us
- c) I have redeemed Israel – LXX uses *lutrao* – God paid the price and set you free
- d) I have called you into a special relationship –
- e) I have named you – Jacob means crooked; God named him Israel;
- f) I possess Israel – you are mine; any who attempt to destroy her will be judged
you have nothing to fear; I will not let you be wiped out

2) **God Will Protect Israel** – amazing that Israel still exists today when every country wants to annihilate her; surrounded by intimidating Arab enemies; 2 Protective Promises:

- a) won’t drown
- b) won’t burn

God with us every step of the way

3) **God is the God of Israel** (:3-4) – on her side

6 Wonderful Relationships:

- a) God is Israel’s God – YHWH, Adonai, Elohim – used here; the entire Godhead (plural) is on Israel’s side
- b) God is Israel’s Holy One -- contrasted with nation’s sinfulness; we need a holiness that we don’t have in ourselves; we need a righteous advocate
- c) God is Israel’s Savior – you can’t save yourself; What do we need to repent of?
- d) God considers Israel to be Precious – more so than any nation on the face of the earth; difficulties do not lessen the value;
- e) God honors Israel – niphil stem – God will cause Israel to participate in the action of being the exalted nation of God
- f) God loves Israel – we cannot even imagine how much God loves Israel; Valentine’s Day presents a very shallow concept of love; God cared for Israel every day; she didn’t see it

4) **God will Eliminate Israel’s Enemies** (:3-4)

3 Arab nations named by God here – son of Cyrus freed many of the Jews and then God allowed him to take over these nations; if you take good care of God’s people you are blessed of God; sometimes God allows enemies to threaten us to draw us closer to Him;

5) **God will Regather Israel** (:5)

Very hard to believe; only God could do this; this theme shows up constantly in OT; God is not done with Israel; He will give her every inch of the land

6) God will Honor Israel (:8)

Great purpose of man is to bring glory to God

God will take a blind and deaf nation (describes Israel today to a tee) and turn her around and show her off as my prized trophy of grace – all the nations will witness this; can Mohammed and Allah justify you? how about any other manmade system of religion; God is the only god that can save and justify; Israel will be seen as the great witness and chosen servant of God

Brian Borgman: Witnesses to the One True God and Savior (:8-13)

First 7 verses: God reinforcing the truth to His remnant that they will certainly not be destroyed; Tells them not to fear; God is committed to glorifying Himself; He will complete the project;

Phil. 1:6; God will complete His good work; that is where we bank our hope; “*I will cause you to walk in my statutes for my name’s sake*” – new covenant promise; Father, cause this to happen; I want to walk in accordance with the purpose you created us for

(:8-13) – section on God’s witnesses

[Young]: they have been transformed from blind and deaf to those who now see and can testify; John 8 – the only thing I know is that once I was blind but now I see; speaks to God’s power Challenges the nation’s to produce witnesses that can substantiate their own truth claims about their own gods; error undermined by demonstrating the folly of it; we need not fear the truth claims of those who oppose us;

[Illustration: Harry Ironsides] preaching in San Francisco – heckler = head of atheist society; challenged him to a debate; agree on 1 stipulation – we gather here tomorrow night; I will bring 50 people whose lives have been changed and you bring 50 whose lives have been changed by the doctrines of atheism and then we will debate;

Doctrine of election always has an end in sight – multiple ends (to be holy and blameless before Him; for the praise of the glory of His grace) – “*chosen so that you may know and believe and understand that I am He*” – that God is God and there is no other; converted polytheists become monotheists; the gods of this age are the idols of men’s hearts

Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Jesus is a created God, a lesser god; this verse disputes that; God is not in the business of creating smaller gods

Elected not only onto salvation and the knowledge of God but also elected to be witnesses; one who has seen and heard the truth and now testifies to the truth to others; “*I have chosen you that you would bear fruit*”; not called to be Joe Friday witnesses (“Just the facts”); should be full of deep conviction and praise; we are called to make our boast in God; excited about the mighty deeds of God; Peter: “*How can we stop testifying to the things we have seen and heard?*”

God is YHWH – self existent and covenant keeping God – very specific; reference to our Lord Jesus Christ; Booklet by Barnes and Noble and ADL (anti defamation league) – ways to combat prejudice and condemn all forms of bigotry; have clergy from other religions deliver sermon at your assembly; co-sponsor events with other religions that celebrate our joint humanity = pluralism to the nth degree; organize an inter-faith retreat for your young people to promote understanding; develop a common language; suggested reading list on the back of the booklet to help you overcome your inbred hatred against other people; they object to Christian claims of exclusivity; Romans killed Christians not because they believed in Jesus but because they wouldn’t say “Caesar is Lord”

TEXT: Isaiah 43:14-21

TITLE: *God Will Make a Way -- Roadway in the Wilderness . . . Rivers in the Desert*

BIG IDEA:

GOD WILL MAKE A SPECTACULAR WAY OF DELIVERANCE AND BLESSING FOR HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION:

Sometimes we find ourselves in a wilderness in life; in a desert place. We live in such lush surroundings that maybe we don't have that much familiarity with the harsh conditions of the desert like you would find out in Arizona.

But we know what a wilderness looks like in our life:

- A place of Wandering aimlessly – getting nowhere
- A place of Hunger and Thirst – no provisions
- A place of Isolation – no companionship or support
- A place of Sorrow and Defeat – no Joy and Victory
- A place of Pressure – no peace or relief
- A place of Hopelessness – no future prospects

[Short text this morning Isaiah 43:14-21 – the inspiration for the song by Don Moen]

Don Moen:

God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me
He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength
For each new day
He will make a way
He will make a way

By a roadway in the wilderness
He'll lead me
And rivers in the desert will I see
Heaven and earth will fade
But His Word will still remain
He will do something new today

BIG IDEA:

GOD WILL MAKE A SPECTACULAR WAY OF DELIVERANCE AND BLESSING FOR HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

Context: The Babylonian Captivity will not be the end for the Jewish nation. Think about that ... what other country gets completely taken over but ends up returning to their land. God will sovereignly raise up His servant King Cyrus of the Persian Empire to overthrow the Chaldean Empire and facilitate the Jews returning to repopulate and rebuild Jerusalem. We have been studied the fulfillment of that in the Book of Nehemiah. But that is not the only level of fulfillment in view.

4 Levels of deliverance and blessing in view:

- Exodus from Egypt – this is the only level that is past history; the rest point forward
- Return from Exile in Captivity as I just mentioned = the immediate historical context
- First Coming of the Messiah to accomplish the Redemption of which Exodus was a type and a shadow
- End Times Regathering of the Jews to usher in the Messianic Kingdom

Application to saints today in the church age who experience spiritual deliverance and blessing through entrance into the kingdom of the Messiah and His provision along our spiritual journey

(:14-15) AUTHENTICATING THE MESSAGE

A. Credentials

“Thus says the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,”

Listening to the authoritative Voice of the Lord; we tend to just skip right over this short expression;

Do you even care what the Lord says? Is His message important to you?

Why should I listen to the what God has to say?

He gives some impressive credentials here to get our attention before He delivers His key message.

B. Calling on the Chaldeans to Perform Their Role

“For your sake I have sent to Babylon, And will bring them all down as fugitives, Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice.”

C. Credentials

“I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King.”

I. (:16-17) PAST DELIVERANCES HAVE BEEN IMPRESSIVE

A. Impressive Deliverance of God’s People at the Parting of the Red Sea

“Who makes a way through the sea And a path through the mighty waters,”

Make no mistake – this was a big deal! God repeatedly brings this up to inspire faith and confidence in His people; Just like He wants us to look back to our redemption and new birth experience – now that we have become a child of God, how can we doubt that He will take care of us?

What were the Israelites to expect as they were backed up against the Red Sea? Not a very hopeful picture; no natural solution they could even imagine

Not just waters ... but *mighty* waters; (strong, mighty, fierce) – not something you were going to swim across; raging waters

How well would you sleep that night knowing that the enemy troops were fast approaching?

God specializes in **Transforming** certain defeats into impressive victories

B. Impressive Destruction of God’s Enemies at the Same Point of Blessing

1. Sovereignty Demonstrated Over Impressive Enemy Forces

“Who brings forth the chariot and the horse, The army and the mighty man”

Strategic ambush; God is shown as sovereign over the path that our enemies take; these enemies had the most advanced weaponry and military equipment of their day; they were a well-trained force accustomed to winning military victories; advantage of numbers; no contest they thought; Egyptians over-extended themselves – presumptuous to think that the blessing God had provided of safe passage through the Red Sea would be extended to them as well; in their pride and self-confidence, they thought too highly of themselves; were not living a life of dependence upon the Lord

2. Severity Demonstrated in Finality of Destruction

“(They will lie down together and not rise again;”

Can you put yourselves in the sandals of these Israelites who had just safely passed through the Red Sea and now look back and see the Egyptians following the same course? What a scene when God unleashed that huge wall of water and created His own tsunami of destruction; Picture Niagara Falls being poured out on the enemy; “Finish them off!” – God knows how to finish off the wicked; No Triumphant Resurrection for the Wicked; just being raised up to bow the knee in submission before entering into eternal torment and judgment

3. Strength Demonstrated in Effortless Breath of God

“They have been quenched and extinguished like a wick”

Physical Demonstration / object lesson

Neh 9:11 *“You divided the sea before them, so they passed through the midst of the sea on dry ground; and their pursuers You hurled into the depths, like a stone into **raging** waters.”*

“dry ground” – God never does just some type of half-way, miserly miracle

Must remember that this demonstration did not benefit those who actually witnessed this impressive display of God’s power, of God’s deliverance for His people, of God’s judgment on His enemies.

Heb. 3:12 – 4:13 Disobedience and unbelief ruled instead; we must embrace God’s message by faith

Remember different audiences: All Jews – but in different spiritual states:

MacArthur: I. Hebrew Christians – in danger of going back into the standards and patterns of Judaism – not of losing their salvation but of getting hung up on OT tradition; Importance of perseverance; II. Hebrew Non-Christians who were at the point of intellectually acknowledging the truth about Christ but had not committed to fully embracing Christ; III. Hebrew Non-Christians who still needed to be convinced of the truth of the gospel and the superiority of Jesus Christ

Look at your life and how God has delivered you from your lost condition – How impressive has that been! That should inspire faith in His providential care regarding whatever wilderness challenges face you today

II. (:18-19A) PAST DELIVERANCES CANNOT COMPARE TO FUTURE BLESSINGS

A. The Past is not the Standard by Which to Measure the Future

“Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past.”

This is a surprising statement –

First must decide: Is God talking about **our** former failures or about **His** former gracious dealings with us? True that we can't dwell on our failures in the past and allow them to paralyze us in the future ... but that is not the context here;

God has just spoken of His powerful deliverance at the point of the Exodus ... now He says in surprising fashion: Don't limit your thinking to that!

- Not saying that we should not learn lessons from history;
- Not saying that we should not praise the Lord for His past acts of faithfulness in delivering and blessing His people

[cf. sermon on **Memory Markers** I am preparing]

But we should not limit our expectations of what God can do in the future to our experience of what God has done for us in the past;

look at the sin of idolatry that Isaiah spoke against as He predicted the coming Captivity; would be easy for the people to imagine that God had written them off; no hope for the future; no way for them to imagine how God will fulfill all of those national promises He had made to Abraham; they seem doomed

B. The Future Will Showcase God's Spectacular Creativity and Power

“Behold, I will do something new,”

Quite something for God to say that – this is the God who created the world and all that is in it Israelites could have said: “Boy, I'd be happy right now just for another Red Sea miracle!” God has something much bigger in mind.

1. Will be something accomplished By God – not by our works

Message of Eccles. = “*Nothing new under the sun*” . . . Man unable to do something new in the sense in which God speaks here; but God is able to do something New and Spectacular --

We are unable to change our lives and make something new out of our heart – just as we cannot change the spots on the leopard; but God is the Creator and the giver of life

Jeremiah 13:23 *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.”*

2. Will be something new:

חַדָּשָׁה -- new, fresh --

Isaiah 65:17 *“For behold, I create **new** heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.”*

Jeremiah 31:31 *“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a **new** covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,”*

Ezekiel 11:19 "And I will give them one heart, and put a **new** spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,"

Ezekiel 18:31 "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a **new** heart and a **new** spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?"

Ezekiel 36:26 "Moreover, I will give you a **new** heart and put a **new** spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new** creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

Galatians 6:15 "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **new** creation."

Ephesians 4:24 "and put on the **new** self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

Colossians 3:10 "and have put on the **new** self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him –"

Revelation 21:5 "And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things **new**.' And He said, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true.'"

3. Will be something beyond comparison:

Rom. 8:18 "For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us"

What has God been doing in your life in terms of maturing you into His new creation? He already made you new ... now He wants you to act in a way consistent with your new nature. Do you have the expectation today that God can do something new in your life and in your circumstances?

When we think of the future blessings of the Millennial kingdom and of eternity in heaven ... do we have a low level of expectation or are we excited about the new things that God will show us; new experiences of joy and delight that are unimaginable – can't even compare our present experience to what that will be like

III. (:19B-20) FUTURE BLESSINGS SURPASS ALL EXPECTATIONS

A. (:19B) Future Blessings Come About Unexpectedly

"Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert."

How can something so incredible just "spring forth"? The humanist and the evolutionist would have all sorts of convoluted scientific explanations of what took place over eons and eons of time ... but they would be wrong. God is able to simply speak into existence new things *ex nihilo* – out of nothing; look at what God is doing to transform lives today when those lives are submitted to Him

How can you miss such a message? But the vast majority of people are not aware of what God is doing

Not talking about a little trail in the woods that is difficult to follow . . . but a roadway in the wilderness.

Not talking about a little trickle of water – for which you would be abundantly grateful because of the desert conditions . . . but rivers in the desert – abundant blessing

B. (:20A) Future Blessings Glorify God

"The beasts of the field will glorify Me, The jackals and the ostriches,"

Jackals: translated dragons in KJV – (one letter off from sea serpents – but here it lives in the field, not in the sea); some type of howling creature that lives in places of devastation, howling mournfully in waste places

Ostriches: Unclean bird; perhaps extinct now; “daughters of the owl” – “daughter of howling”
Micah 1:8 “Because of this I must lament and wail, I must go barefoot and naked; I must make a lament like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches”

Job 30:29 “I have become a brother to jackals, and a companion of ostriches.”

Jeremiah 51:37 “Babylon will become a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, An object of horror and hissing, without inhabitants.”

Remember animal blessings in the Messianic Age -- 11:6-9; 30:23-24; 35:7; 65:25

You cannot picture a more **radical reversal** than animals who symbolize mourning and howling in the most devastated of circumstances now glorifying and praising God with great joy for His blessings

How can humans be more blind and foolish than animals in terms of recognizing God’s worth and returning to Him the praise and worship due to Him?

C. (:20B) Future Blessings Meet the Deepest Needs of God’s People

“Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My chosen people.”

(35:6-7; 41:18; 44:3-4)

Edward Young: It is not a contrast between the redemption from Egypt and the deliverance from Babylon, but between the redemption from Egypt and the redemption that the servant will perform. Inasmuch as God had once done the seemingly impossible in making a path through the sea, so in the future He will deliver His people from the spiritual bondage in which they find themselves.

Connection between water and life – message sprinkled throughout the Gospel of John as Jesus presents Himself as the Son of God, the great I AM, the one who is the giver of eternal life

Isaiah 44:3-5

John 4:13-14 “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life”

IV. (:21) FUTURE BLESSINGS WILL EVOKE EVERLASTING PRAISE

A. Lesson From Creation: It’s Not All About Us

“The people whom I formed for Myself”

Why did God create us? For His glory

Isaiah 43:7 “Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”

Should the pot turn around and complain to the potter, why did you make me like this?

Isaiah 45:9-10 “Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker – an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’ Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands?’ Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’ Or to a woman, ‘To what are you giving birth.’”

God accomplishes His sovereign purposes -- **Isaiah 46:9-13** King Cyrus was a man whom God had formed for Himself to carry out His purposes; the Lord will save His people – the nation of Israel

Psalms 103:14 “For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.”

B. Application to Worship: It’s All About Praising God

“Will declare My praise.”

How are we doing in carrying out our most basic function in life? What type of praise are we offering up to our God?

This is part of our witnessing function – telling others about what God has made new in our lives.

How was Stephen able to praise the Lord as he was being stoned to death as the first Christian martyr? (Acts 7)

How were the Apostle Paul and Silas able to praise the Lord from the shackles of prison? Acts 16:25 “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God”

CONCLUSION:

- 1) Have we listened to the voice of God regarding His past displays of mercy and judgment?
- 2) Do we believe God when He promises that He is able to do **something new** in our life and experience?
- 3) Do we understand that God can surpass all of our expectations – whatever the wilderness of our current life situation, God can make a way for us – a roadway in the wilderness; rivers of water in the desert

4) How are we doing in our central mission – the reason God created us for Himself – that we would be a people who belong to Him and offer up praise continually?

Chris Tomlin:

"Indescribable"

From the highest of heights to the depths of the sea
Creation's revealing Your majesty
From the colors of fall to the fragrance of spring
Every creature unique in the song that it sings
All exclaiming

Indescribable, uncontainable,
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name.
You are amazing God
All powerful, untameable,
Awestruck we fall to our knees as we humbly proclaim
You are amazing God

Who has told every lightning bolt where it should go
Or seen heavenly storehouses laden with snow
Who imagined the sun and gives source to its light
Yet conceals it to bring us the coolness of night
None can fathom

Indescribable, uncontainable,
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name
You are amazing God
All powerful, untameable,
Awestruck we fall to our knees as we humbly proclaim
You are amazing God
You are amazing God

Indescribable, uncontainable,
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name.
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All powerful, untameable,
Awestruck we fall to our knees as we humbly proclaim
You are amazing God
Indescribable, uncontainable,
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name.
You are amazing God
Incomparable, unchangeable
You see the depths of my heart and You love me the same
You are amazing God
You are amazing God

NOTES:

MacArthur: To bring assurance of the greater future deliverance He will bring through His Servant, the Lord reminded Isaiah's readers of His deliverance of their ancestors from Egypt (Ex 14:16, 21, 26-28; Jos 3:13). Deliverances of the nation in the past will pale into insignificance in comparison with the future deliverance the Lord will give His people (42:9; 48:6; Jer 16:14, 15).

In the Messiah's future kingdom, the barren places of Israel will be well-watered (41:18) and will supply refreshment for God's chosen people (43:1). In the Messianic age, Israel will finally give the Lord the credit that is due Him (contra. Jer 13:11).

Geoffrey Grogan: The fundamental principles of the divine activity are changeless, but the outward shape of that activity alters with the changing needs of God's people. We are meant to reflect on the past with gratitude and stimulated faith but not to allow it to stereotype our expectations from God. Here God affirms – in detail and with emphasis on the deadly efficiency of his deeds – that he was the God of the Exodus (vv. 16-17), but he also asserts the wonderful freshness of his new act in prospect (vv. 18-19). He had made a way through the waters; now he would make a new way – through the desert! Water, formerly a barrier, would now be a blessing, with God as its source. The abundant provision for men would be enjoyed by the wild creatures also (v. 20). This would perhaps be an earnest of the regeneration of creation promised elsewhere in Isaiah (cf. 11:6-9; 65:25).

Vine: If the waters speak of overwhelming trials, the wilderness and the desert speak of the condition of the world around us, with which if we are unduly occupied we shall suffer spiritual depression. But God has a way amidst such conditions, a path of fellowship with Him, a path of joy and fruitfulness. . .

Dr. Larry Hufhand: God Will Make a Way

Maybe you find yourself in a wilderness. How are you going to survive in this kind of a place? Find food to eat and water to drink? God will make a way. He made a way for the children of Israel and He will make a way for you. Our job is to trust Him, watch, and see how He does it. I wish I could tell you that everything is going to come up roses. But the truth is it may get worse before it gets better. If you can trust God in the day (the good times, when life is easy, in life), then you can trust Him in the night (the bad times, when life is hard, in death). How is God going to make a way for me? Whatever the crisis, the difficulty is for you . . .

1. One of the ways God makes a way is by giving us a great supply of **Patience** (Heb. 12:1-2). By nature we are not a very patient people; we hate to wait. We want everything yesterday. Why does God want us to wait? He has a plan for our life. It took God 4000 years from Adam to Christ to work out the plan of redemption. We ought to be able to wait upon God. Sometimes waiting is painful. Patience is endurance under pressure. James links it with faith. Patience is a faith that endures through the trials and struggles of life. Claim it by faith.

2. By Helping Us to **Persevere** – *“His way have I kept and not turned aside”* – Job – *“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him;”* Things don't always turn out well; It didn't turn out well for John the Baptist, for Stephen, for Paul, for Jesus --

Norris Harris: Rivers in the Desert

We are surrounded on every side by trouble, tragedy, misfortune, heartache, discouragement; consumption, decline, loss destruction, decay; ruin, devastation, spoliation, desolation; refuse, rubbish, trash, garbage - DESERTS!

Deserts fill our world, stalk our streets and sting our spirit. Decay pollutes our air, poisons our water. Deserts kill our joy, dash our hopes and snatch our loved one away prematurely. We are surrounded on every side by desolation, ruin, waste and destruction! . . .

A TRANSFORMATION IS OCCURRING IN OUR DESERT. The Text makes the claim that

GOD IS MAKING WASTE INTO WATERS, RUINS INTO RIVERS AND DESERTS INTO DELIGHTS. You see God is going to make the Worst of Circumstances Manageable. He intends on Making our WILDERNESS WAY MANAGEABLE, EVEN A DELIGHT!! So He says in Verse 19, *“I will even Make Rivers in the Desert.”*

Now I must confess that on last week, I miss a major point in translating this text into English. I took for granted that the KJV was accurate. But after having examined the Hebrew Text, I discovered that the verb translated as “Make” here really means “To Turn Something into Something Else.” So the Lord is not saying that He will make rivers in the desert, but that He will turn the desert into rivers. HE WILL TRANSFORM IT INTO SOMETHING ELSE!!!

I. THE MORE DESOLATE YOUR DESERT IS, THE MORE GOD WILL DO; FOR GOD OPERATES ON THE BASIS OF NEED.

II. THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE IMPLICATIONS OF GOD TURNING DESERTS INTO RIVERS. -- Renewal / Revival / Rejoicing

TEXT: Isaiah 1:43:22 – 44:5

TITLE: WHO CAN BLOT AWAY MY SINS?

BIG IDEA:

GOD'S GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS CAN TRANSFORM WORTHLESS WORSHIP INTO SURPRISING SALVATION

INTRODUCTION:

Today we are going to approach this passage a little differently – we are going to start at the heart of the passage – at the middle – rather than the beginning.

At the heart of the passage we see the heart of God – and the heart of God is one of **forgiveness** towards His chosen people.

- Whether in a national sense = Israel
- In an individual sense by way of application to those of us in this church age who have experienced forgiveness through Jesus Christ

GOD'S GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS CAN TRANSFORM WORTHLESS WORSHIP INTO SURPRISING SALVATION

I. (43:22-24) WORTHLESS WORSHIP

II. (43:25-28) FORSAKEN FORGIVENESS

III. (44:1-5) SURPRISING SALVATION

I. (43:22-24) WORTHLESS WORSHIP – OFFERING SINS INSTEAD OF SACRIFICES

Chiastic structure: A B C B A

A1 Worthless Worship Wearies the Worshiper

*“Yet you have not called on Me, O Jacob;
But you have become weary of Me, O Israel.”*

Refers to prayer or invocation of God's Name; maybe Israel has called on other gods (2 Sam. 22:4; Ps. 14:4; 116:2)

They have been created for the purpose of proclaiming praise to their God but have not performed this function

Oswalt: although they may have thought they were giving him acceptable worship, they were not, and that this is the reason they find their worship so wearying (1:11-14; 66:3; Jer. 7:5-10; Hos. 6:6; Amos 4:4-6; Mic. 6:3-8)

B1 Worthless Worship Robs God

*“You have not brought to Me the sheep of your burnt offerings;
Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices.”*

Young: you brought me a sham offering and not the real thing

On the surface, God's complaint seems to be that they totally neglected even the activity of religious worship altogether; but this cannot be the case; rather the issue is one of **motive and**

heart involvement 1:11-20

Motyer: Ritual divorced from moral and spiritual commitment neither satisfies God nor blesses his people. Indeed to the contrary, for they were acting as if their ritual was a technique for manipulating blessing, putting the Lord at their beck and call. . . in the intention of God the sacrificial system was meant to meet the needs of people as they discovered their inability to live up to the law and their constant need for forgiveness and restoration. Thus the sacrifices were designed for relief, delight and home-coming to God. By opting of r a mere ritual and evacuating the sacrifices of their power they remained in their sin and as such were a constant weariness to the Holy One. . . There was much religious fervor but no religious reality.

C God's Worship Demands Are Not Burdensome

*"I have not burdened you with offerings,
Nor wearied you with incense."*

Young: God had not wearied or exhausted the nation with His requirements for offerings. Thus, the entirety of the sacrificial system was not intended to be a burden of no profit, but rather a joyful offering of sacrifices in which the offerer would approach the Lord with a willing heart

B2 Worthless Worship Robs God

*"You have bought Me no sweet cane with money,
Neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices;"*

Sweet cane is used in the preparation of incense

Lev. 3:16-17 the fat was commanded to belong to the Lord

A2 Worthless Worship Wearies God

*"Rather you have burdened Me with your sins,
You have wearied Me with your iniquities."*

Young: The great contrast is introduced by the important particle *'ak* (surely).

Constable: The people had brought few sacrifices and offerings to the Lord, even though His requirements of them in this regard were not excessive, and even what they had brought had not touched Him. Sweet cane (*calamus*) was an ingredient in the anointing oil (cf. Exod. 30:23; Jer. 6:20). What they had brought to Him in abundance was sin and iniquity. He was wearier of their worship than they were.

Parunak: They were doing many things, but not for the right reason. They may have done them to impress their neighbors, or to reinforce their link with their culture, or to satisfy their own sense of self righteousness, but their hearts were not directed to the Lord. The Lord's warning to his Servant should serve as a challenge to us, to examine our motives for our spiritual exercises.

Oswalt: Isaiah's point is that the carefully performed rituals had been as though not done at all, because they had not reflected genuine submission and real changes of heart. Thus the rituals themselves were sinful and iniquitous. Far from being a reason why God would owe special favors to his people, their attempts to use cultic ritual to manipulate God were only one more

manifestation of their deeply ingrained inability to surrender themselves, their needs, and their destinies to him.

II. (43:25-28) FORSAKEN FORGIVENESS – OWNING UP TO SPIRITUAL BANKRUPTCY

A. (:25) Only God Can Forgive Sins

*“I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake;
And I will not remember your sins.”*

Ps. 51:3, 9; Is. 44:22

No explanation given here as to how a holy God can forgive sins and still remain just

Young: climactic negative

Motyer: **Blots out** is used in the sense of “wipes clean” in **2 Kings 21:13** and of sin in **Psalm 51:3**

Constable: The Lord Himself (cf. v. 11) would forgive His people for His own sake, not because they had earned forgiveness with their worship. Forgiveness of sin is a divine prerogative (cf. Matt. 9:2-6). He pictured forgiveness as erasing something previously written on a record (cf. 44:22; 2 Kings 21:13; Ps. 51:1, 9). Another figure, forgetting sins committed against Himself, strengthens the promise of forgiveness (cf. Jer. 31:34; Mic. 7:18-19). Since God is omniscient He never forgets anything, but in this promise He compared Himself to a person who does forget things (an anthropomorphism, cf. v. 24) to illustrate the fact that He would not hold their sins against them. He would not call their sins to mind with a view to punishing them. It was sin, not captivity, that was the root trouble that needed dealing with. Later, Isaiah revealed that God would deal with it through His Servant's ministry (53:10-12).

Oswalt: it is plain that Israel's problem is not solely, or perhaps even mainly, physical captivity. A deeper problem than bondage must be addressed. What about the sin that caused the bondage? It is not enough that the Lord should be the God of history who can make the pagan Cyrus serve him. It is also necessary that sin be addressed.

B. (:26) Man Cannot Justify Himself

*“Put Me in remembrance; let us argue our case together,
State your cause, that you may be proved right.”*

Young: The challenge is a strong way of emphasizing that the Israelites are without merit and have no justification for their conduct. It would then seem to be implied that if the Israelites cannot justify themselves they should submit to the righteousness of God so freely offered to them when He blots out their transgressions.

Oswalt: If this offer of grace is too humiliating, if the Israelites do not want a forgetful God, he is willing to be reminded of anything in their favor that they think he may have forgotten. The tone here is heavily ironic . . . We humans do not like grace; we like to feel that we deserve everything we get. We want to be able to say that our good behavior has earned favorable treatment for us before the bar of God.

C. (:27-28) Sin's Guilt and Condemnation Have Deep Roots and Future Consequences

1. (:27)

*“Your first forefather sinned,
And your spokesmen have transgressed against Me.”*

Constable: Israel's sin was traceable all the way back to her namesake, Jacob (v. 22; cf. Deut. 26:5; Hos. 12:2-4). Other possibilities are that Adam or Abraham is in view. Even the leaders of Israel had consistently sinned against the Lord (cf. 9:15; 28:7; 29:10; Jer. 5:31); it was not just the present generation that was unacceptable to Him.

Young: “mediators” = namely, prophets, priests, and kings, all who would in some way bring the message of God to the people and instruct it in the way it should go.

2. (:28)

*“So I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary;
And I will consign Jacob to the ban, and Israel to revilement.”*

Constable: God would also pollute the priests with guilt since they had for generations polluted His sacrifices with their guilt (cf. 2 Chron. 24:5). They, of all people, should have been holy since they dealt with the holy things connected with Israel's worship (cf. 65:2-5; Lev. 10:3). God would consign the whole nation to the ban (Heb. *herem*), something devoted to destruction. Israel had become like Canaan (cf. 1:9-10; Josh. 6:17; 1 Sam. 15:21), and it would become the object of Gentile reviling as Canaan had been for the Israelites.

Young: It will no longer be the people of God, the light of the world, but a nation set aside for destruction. Jacob will simply become reproaches

Oswalt: The nation has not merely sinned; it has become the very opposite of what it was meant to be. Far from its behavior providing some justification for deliverance, that behavior gives ample reason for its complete abandonment. Nevertheless, God will not allow that to happen. Why not? Solely because of his own grace. . . God is the only savior, and it is by means of his grace alone that deliverance will be effected.

III. (44:1-5) SURPRISING SALVATION – OVERFLOWING IN THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION

A. (:1-2) Redemption is Certain

Chiastic structure: a / b / a

1. (:1) Listen to the Lord – based on special relationship to God

*“But now listen, O Jacob, My servant;
And Israel, whom I have **chosen**.”*

Servant: called to follow the Word and the Will of the master; Israel did not look like God's servant at many points in her history

Chosen: comfort of doctrine of election – despite protests by people who think it is against their concept of fairness

2. (:2a) Hope in the Lord -- Your Creator Is Your Redeemer

*“Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb,
who will help you,”*

not in the kingdom by accident

3. (:2b) Trust in the Lord – based on special relationship to God

*“Do not fear, O Jacob My **servant**;
And you Jeshurun whom I have **chosen**.”*

Oswalt: *Jeshurun* – only other OT usages: Deut. 32:15; 33:5, 26; etymology is uncertain; the root may be *ysr*, which has to do with straightness or uprightness.

B. (:3-5) Revitalization is Celebrated

1. (:3) Accomplished by the Spirit / Abundant in Blessing

*“For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, And My blessing on your
descendants;”*

How is this revitalization brought about?

2. (:4) Attained Through Healthy Growth and Abundant Prosperity

“And they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water.”

What does this revitalization look like?

Numeric abundant growth

3. (:5) Affirmed by Allegiance

*“This one will say, 'I am the LORD's'; And that one will call on the name of
Jacob;
And another will write on his hand, 'Belonging to the LORD,' And will name
Israel's name with honor.”*

Who will this revitalization attract?

Every Jew will be proud of their affiliation ...

Are we proud of our identification with Christ?

Do we make our boast in Christ?

Oswalt: This segment speaks of God’s gracious salvation that will lead to persons vying for the honor of being an Israelite and belonging to her God (v. 5).

Beall: Thankfully, despite the English chapter division, the story does not end there for the nation Israel. Isa 44:1-5 belong to the end of this section, as they show that the nation (note the Jacob and Israel interplay once again), as God's servant and chosen people, was special to Him, and He would redeem them.

Beall: v. 4 indicates that Israel will flourish and prosper as grass and willows (both of which need water to flourish).

Oswalt: This section has four emphases. The first is God's continued love for Israel (vv. 1-2); the second is the outpouring of the Spirit (v. 3); the third is abundant offspring (v. 4); and the fourth is the privilege of being counted as an Israelite (v. 5)

CONCLUSION:

Malachi's message – Outline

OUTLINE: GOD ANSWERS 7 KEY QUESTIONS OF THE SELF

RIGHTEOUS

I. (1:1-5) HOW HAS GOD LOVED US?

THE LORD'S COMPASSION GIVES HOPE AND SOFTENS THE BLOW OF HIS REBUKE OF THE PROUD CRIES OF THE SELF RIGHTEOUS

II. (1:6 – 2:9) HOW HAVE WE DISREPECTED THE NAME OF THE LORD?

THE LORD REBUKES THE SELF RIGHTEOUS PRIESTS FOR OFFERING SUB-STANDARD WORSHIP

III. (2:10-16) WHY HAVE WE BEEN DENIED THE FAVOR OF OUR GOD?

THE LORD REBUKES THE SELF RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE FOR PROFANING THE SACRED COVENANT OF MARRIAGE

IV. (2:17 – 3:6) HOW HAVE WE QUESTIONED THE INTEGRITY OF GOD'S JUSTICE?

GOD PROMISES TO DEMONSTRATE HIS JUSTICE AND PURIFY HIS PEOPLE WHEN HE SENDS HIS SPECIAL MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT TO ESTABLISH RIGHTEOUS WORSHIP

V. (3:7-12) HOW CAN WE REPENT IF WE DON'T KNOW WHERE WE HAVE GONE WRONG?

GOD REBUKES THE SELF RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE FOR ROBBING HIM OF HIS DUE TITHES AND OFFERINGS

VI. (3:13-15) HOW HAVE WE SPOKEN ARROGANTLY AGAINST GOD?

GOD REBUKES THE SELF RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE FOR DENYING THE VALUE OF OBEYING AND SERVING GOD

VII. (3:16 – 4:6) HOW WILL THE RIGHTEOUS BE CLEARLY DISTINGUISHED FROM THE WICKED?

GOD WILL REMOVE THE BLURRING OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

Followed by **THE SILENCE OF GOD** until the coming of John the Baptist and the Messiah

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What part of our Christian worship and service to the Lord tires us out or seems burdensome and wearisome?
- 2) How have our sins wearied the Lord?
- 3) Do we hold on to offenses that others have committed against us?
- 4) Are we proud to own our allegiance to the Lord Jesus?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Again, we encounter the Servant, first condemned but then redeemed. The Lord goes through two cycles of condemnation and forgiveness. The central two elements are much shorter than the outer ones, so the first cycle focuses on condemnation, and the second on forgiveness. The repetition of the notion of remembering in the two central elements links them together as a transition.

43:22-25, Focus on Condemnation

Each element in the first cycle begins with an emphasis on the centrality of the Lord.

- 22, “it’s not me on whom you have called.” Their worship has not been focused on him. They have been preoccupied with form, and neglected the relationship.
- 25, “I, even I” (and nobody else).

The second element of each panel can be understood as the cause that leads to this defective worship: They were bored with God. They viewed the time spent in worshipping him as tedious, boring, wearying.

David Thompson: (44:1-8)

Famous actor said He would keep believing in himself and he would defeat cancer ... he died; trusting in the wrong thing

Greatest days for the people of God lie ahead; not because of our greatness but because of God’s greatness; If you belong to God you have nothing to fear

Israel will be banned and reviled (43:28) – we can see evidence of this verdict even until today; most Jews don’t even live in their promised land;

Even if you are in a spiritual mess ... if you belong to Jesus you have a great future in store; God does not want His people to fear;

Fear is the most devastating emotion on the face of the earth;

We are living in a time when people are afraid – don’t know what is going to happen to their family, their country, their job, their health, etc.

God controls the future and will take care of His people;

3 Reasons Why God’s people should not fear:

1) God does not want His people to be afraid because of how He views His people

Think biblically in terms of our position; see ourselves from God’s perspective;

- a. you are **my servant** – pursuing the word and will of God; ambassador of God; Israel

did not look like a servant

b. you are God's **chosen** – from Israel's conception; Jeshurun – a tender loving appellation of people of Israel; they will be His upright, righteous nation; impute His righteousness to that nation; some people do not like the doctrine of God's election; should be a comfort to believers; you may not look like much right now or appear to have my blessings

c. you have been **made by God** – prepared, produced and created – stresses actual activity of God; involved in the actual process of making this nation come into existence; we are the property of God

d. **formed by God** – put together Israel as a beautiful artist would design it and bring it into existence; conceived you; planned and designed you; you didn't just show up here on earth by accident; you didn't believe on Jesus Christ just by your choice or by chance

2) God does not want His people to be afraid because of what God will do

a. Israel will always be **helped by God** – when you find yourselves in war, I will be there as your ally; Israel will always survive; you will find yourselves in difficult circumstances

b. Israel will be **physically blessed by God** (:3) – God is the key to physical blessings; will turn that land into beautiful fruit-producing land; politicians are not the key to blessings; God is our shepherd;

c. God will **spiritually bless Israel** – pour out His Spirit – God does this by His gracious activity; you don't get this by begging for it; Ezek and Joel and Zech talk about this eschatological blessing; **Acts 2:16** – “*this*” – without an article – not saying this is the specific event but this kind of outpouring is like the outpouring that God had predicted; some major differences with the OT prophecies – key distinctions: (people confuse church with Israel)

- cosmological signs in the skies – that didn't happen in Acts 2

- pour out His Spirit on all mankind rather than just 3000

- nation Israel will be in her land and will look like Garden of Eden

- all the nations of the world will honor Israel – hardly true today

- when God pours out His Spirit the entire nation would mourn for Jesus Christ

None of these things have happened yet to Israel

Acts 2 = beginning of church age for individuals but not culmination of blessing for national Israel; don't you dare ever minimize Israel – still the apple of God's eye

d. Israel will be multiplied by God – numeric abundant growth

e. Israel will be honored by God and will honor God – national truth but individual truth; anyone who is in the kingdom is in it one by one

3) God does not want His people to be afraid because of who God is

(:6-8) 9 wonderful realities

TEXT: Isaiah 44:6-23

TITLE: FLEE FROM IDOLATRY AND CLING TO THE ONE TRUE GOD

BIG IDEA:

IDOLATRY MAKES NO SENSE IN LIGHT OF THE UNIQUENESS OF THE ONE TRUE GOD AND HIS PRECIOUS, IRREVOCABLE PROMISES TO THOSE HE HAS REDEEMED

INTRODUCTION:

Why are we tempted to trust in ourselves? Why do we doubt the sufficiency of our God? Why do we set up idols that compete with God for our affection, our loyalty, our time, our energy? Why are we not resting in the precious promises that God has put out there for the encouragement of His elect children of the faith?

Remember what an idol is: anything that replaces God as the object of our trust and affection and worship; anything that man lives for – could be money and material possessions – covetousness at its essence is idolatry; our career; could be power and prestige; could be the affirmation of people around us – so that our value system is governed by our peers – so that we live as man-pleasers; could just be the “I did it my way” individualistic philosophy of our age; could be sports or entertainment that consume our time and affection – that we look to in order to escape the pain of the reality of our broken relationship with God; could be our own deluded reasonings where we create a god after our own imaginations

IDOLATRY MAKES NO SENSE IN LIGHT OF THE UNIQUENESS OF THE ONE TRUE GOD AND HIS PRECIOUS, IRREVOCABLE PROMISES TO THOSE HE HAS REDEEMED

God’s sarcasm drips from every verse in this passage as He completely destroys the folly of idolatry – How could anyone be so stupid as to walk down this path – yet we do it all the time
1 Cor. 10:14 “*Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*”

I. (:6-8) ENCOURAGE YOURSELF WITH THE UNIQUENESS OF GOD – WHO IS LIKE GOD?

Fortify yourself; edify yourself; guard yourself with this understanding of who God is --

A. (:6) Unique as the Eternal, Self-Existent God – King and Redeemer

*“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
‘I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.’”*

Typical fashion for Isaiah – as he sets forth the words which the Lord is speaking to His people; he piles up a **list of identifiers** as to who this God is; wants to get our attention; wants to emphasize the importance of what God is saying; wants us to focus in on our relationship with God

Intimations of the Trinity in this verse – the Lord and His Redeemer (always goes back to the memory of the Exodus as he causes us to anticipate even greater redemption that God will perform in the future)

There should be **no competition** to God; God has no tolerance for the false gods of other religions – does not speak favorably of those who trust in the religion of Islam or Hinduism or the Health and Wealth gospel or the Pharisaic error of Roman Catholicism with its reliance on good works and church sacraments or the dead shell of apostate Protestantism which has stripped away the guts of the gospel

Look at the sports figures who embraced a supposed transformation: Tremendous sports careers
Lew Alcindor – Kareem Abdul Jabbar – how many women does he boast of sleeping with? His only marriage lasted 6.5 years

Cassius Clay – Muhammad Ali – converted to Islam in 1975 -- Ali has been married four times and has seven daughters and two sons.

No deliverance from the bondage and lust of sin and covetousness and idolatry

Not models to be followed or idolized

Constable: The same terminology used in this verse describes Jesus Christ later in Scripture (Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13).

Motyer: As *first* he does not derive his life from elsewhere (contrast the idols; verses 10-17) but is self-existing and self-sufficient; as *last* he remains at the end, supreme, totally fulfilled.

Oswalt: It is evident that as their King, God does not intend to let Israel be swallowed up in captivity. Instead, he will play the part of the near kinsman who will deliver his abject relative from the effects of misfortune and tragedy.

Darryl Klassen: The LORD is first in that he does not derive his life from anywhere else. He is self-existing and self-sufficient. He is eternally present and the eternal “I AM.” He is the last in that he remains at the end of all things supreme and totally fulfilled. He is so complete that no one can add or take away anything from him. He is the beginning and the end; the Creator and the Judge; the full revelation and the final authority.

B. (:7) Unique as the Sovereign Master of History

“And who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place.”

Oswalt: Because he alone controls history, what has happened to Israel was neither a surprise to him nor against his will. The people are in captivity for one reason alone: their broken covenant with God, and it was all foretold. By the same token, God’s uniqueness means that the gods of Israel’s enemies can do nothing to prevent him from delivering his people at the moment he chooses to do so.

Oswalt: the evidence for the uniqueness of God, that he is the sole creator, rests on his ability to predict novel turns of history in advance, an ability the idols and their technicians do not have. Specifically those predictions included Assyria’s all but total conquest of Israel and Judah. Assyria’s failure to capture Jerusalem, the fall of Assyria, the fall of Jerusalem and Judah to Babylon, the exile, the fall of Babylon to Cyrus, Cyrus’s proclamation of freedom and encouragement to rebuild, the return of a remnant, and the establishment of a messianic kingdom.

C. (:8) Unique as the Solid and Reliable Rock -- Who Alone Can Be Trusted

“Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.”

Motyer: Here we see the devastating exclusivity of biblical monotheism. Apart from the Lord there is *no God* and *no Rock* (nothing reliable to rest on, nothing active in salvation). . . a symbol of refuge (cf. Pss. 71:3; 95:1), trustworthiness, changeless integrity (26:4) and reality as opposed to fantasy (Dt. 32:31). The Lord who brought Israel to birth (Dt. 32:4), the Redeemer and ruler (Ps. 19:14-15) is active in salvation (Ex. 17:6; Ps. 95:1). The character of God is the ultimate assurance of his people.

Name of our church – Solid Rock

Oswalt: The message that this royal Redeemer wants to impart is that there is no one who can even be compared to him. It is not merely that he is the greatest of the gods, but that in comparison to him, there *is* no other god. . . But the God of the promises is much more than an aloof, if benevolent, Master of history. He is one in whom we can hide when storms, whether deserved or undeserved, break on us.

Darryl Klassen: In Deuteronomy 32 God is called “the Rock” several times and Moses croons at one point, *“For their rock is not like our Rock, as even our enemies concede” (32:31).*

II. (:9-20) EXPOSE THE ABSURDITY OF IDOLATRY – WHAT PROFIT IS AN INANIMATE IDOL CREATED BY MAN’S HANDS?

A. (:9) Idolatry is Rooted in Futility and Leads to Shame

“Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.”

Futile and unprofitable

Motyer: to fashion an idol proves that the maker has no sense of meaning and purpose in the world nor any chance of achieving it.

Martin: Pagans view their worship of idols as meritorious, but it will ultimately bring them shame (cf. v. 11; 42:17; 45:16).

B. (:10-17) Idolatry is Limited by Both Its Creator and Its Composition

1. (:10-13) Idol Limited by Its Creator

a. (:10-11) The Creator’s Humanity

“Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit? Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame.”

Young: The true God can create that which is lesser than Himself, but the creature that partakes of flesh and blood cannot produce what is divine. The idols, being under men and inferior to them, cannot help men.

b. (:12) The Creator's Frailty

"The man shapes iron into a cutting tool, and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers, and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary."

Medium here is iron; in vs. 13 it is wood

Oswalt: Humanity is creating god in its own image, and that is a compulsive, exhausting task, because it is ultimately futile. But apart from the revelation of the transcendent Creator, what other hope is there of giving meaning to one's life and forging out some semblance of control over it?

c. (:13) The Creator's Man-Focused Modeling

"Another shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes, and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit in a house."

2. (:14-17) Idol Limited by Its Composition

a. (:14) Made From Trees That Men Cultivate

"Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak, and raises it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow."

God needs to make the tree grow; provides the rain that makes it grow

b. (:15-17) Identical Material is Both Burned and Worshiped

"Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image, and falls down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, 'Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire.' But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, 'Deliver me, for thou art my god.'"

- Burned for heat and for cooking food
- Worshiped – prays to it and seeks deliverance from it

C. (:18-20) Idolatry is the Product of Blindness and Self-Deception

1. (:18) Blinded to the Truth

"They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend."

Grogan: the *reductio ad absurdum* of idolatry

Mark 4:23 – take heed what you hear and how you hear

2. (:19) Irrational in Their Thoughts and Deeds

“And no one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, ‘I have burned half of it in the fire, and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat it. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!’”

idolatry is defiled reasoning

3. (:20) Deceived so That Their Condition is Hopeless

“He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, ‘Is there not a lie in my right hand?’”

Clay Curtis: Idolatry is perverted appetite – **what are ashes?** All that is left of matter that has been completely consumed; utter death and ruin; what creature or plant can live on ashes? The refuse of everything that is good; Every time plane crashes they look for the little black box that explains what actually happened – people are deluded and deceived

Oswalt: The idol worshiper misses the goal for which humanity was made, and his own delusion, the delusion that the creature and the Creator are the same, is the cause of that failure. Why would we not see the fallacies in the delusion? Why would we not ask the obvious questions that idolatry raises? Because the biblical alternative is too painful. We would rather believe that we can capture the divine in the stuff of this world, with all the contradictions that involves, than to admit that God is utterly beyond our control and manipulation.

Constable: Seeking refuge in idols is not only fruitless but fatal (vv. 9-20). The idols have no witnesses to their ability to forecast and control the future. They are nothing (vv. 9-11), and their worshippers are confused (vv. 12-17) and blind (vv. 18-20). If Isaiah could show that it was foolish to think that supreme power resided in an idol, he could expose the heresy of paganism. This he did in this pericope.

Beall: In vv. 12-14 the blacksmith and craftsman are featured. The blacksmith works hard to make the metal image, which requires great strength. And yet, the maker himself gets tired and weak in the process! Similarly, in vv. 13-14 the woodworker (either putting the finishing touches on the metal idol, or making a new, wooden idol) carefully measures out his work, but in the process shapes it in the form and beauty of (“adam”), man! The idol is made in the image of one no greater than man himself! v. 14 continues the description of the idolmaker, going back to the forest from which the wood for the idol came. He mentions how the wood is cut, and then how it is “made” in the first place: “he plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it”! It is God Himself who providentially cares for the pine by causing it to rain, who is responsible for the pine to grow in the first place! And yet, here is this man, turning his back from God on the one hand to make an idol; yet, all the while, dependent upon God (whether he realizes it or not) even while making the idol! Man cannot be entirely “humanistic” after all! So much for our self-sufficient attitude of the '80's.

Constable: vv.15-16 - The craftsman uses one piece of wood to make an idol, and another piece out of the same tree—as fuel—to warm and feed himself. Actually, the piece he burns does him more good than the piece he worships. The piece burned serves man and delivers him from the cold and hunger, but the piece not burned demands human service and only promises deliverance

(cf. Acts 17:29; 1 Cor. 8:4-8). Instead of thanking the Creator for the wood, the idolater uses what the Creator has made to make a god in his own image that he thanks (cf. Rom. 1:18-23).

Oswalt: Instead of a logically developed summation in which previous points are enumerated, the author paints a detailed picture whereby he appeals to the imagination to drive the final nail of persuasion. Here, when he has finished his sarcastic picture, it is simply unthinkable to compare these gods to God.

III. (:21-23) EMBRACE THE PROMISES OF GOD – HE WILL NEVER CAST YOU ASIDE

Application: 3 Simple Commands:

A. (:21) Remember Your Relationship to the One True God

*“Remember these things, O Jacob, And Israel, for you are My servant;
I have formed you, you are My servant, O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.”*

God keeps His covenant promises; we need to embrace the promises of God; He will never forget His children

Has created and formed Israel for a purpose that He will see through to fruition; not done with the nation of Israel yet

Oswalt: life is to be lived on the basis of reflection on the character of God as revealed in his treatment of his people in their historical experience. . . . Thus in the light of all that has been said about the Lord’s superiority over the idols and in the light of this special relationship that Israel bears to him, she must not interpret the exilic experience to mean that God has forgotten her. The purpose for which he created her – evidence of his sole Godhood – has not yet been fulfilled. How can he cast her off?

B. (:22) Return to the God Who Loves You and Redeemed You

*“I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud, And your sins like a heavy mist.
Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”*

Story of **prodigal son** – father ready to receive the straying son who returns home; not about condemning him

Oswalt: *cloud* has two possible meanings in this context: that which intervenes between heaven and earth, and that which is of no substance. The first, which some medieval commentators favored, would apply to the fact of sin intervening between God and humans. Thus God removes the barrier to divine-human fellowship. But nothing in the context supports that usage here. The more fitting meaning is that, as real and substantial as sin is, God has the power to remove it from the record as swiftly as a rising wind can sweep a cloud from the sky.

Young: The emphatic form of the imperative is not to be overlooked. To return involves turning from the direction in which one had been facing to another direction. In this case it is a turning from the place where sins and transgressions had led the people and a turning unto God. A complete change is required. *“Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old”* (Lam. 5:21).

C. (:23) Rejoice with Songs of Joy

“Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the LORD has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.”

Constable: vv. 21-22 - This brief section is a call to God's people to **embrace God's promises**. It concludes this section of the prophecy (42:10—44:22) by affirming that God would not abandon the Israelites because of their sins, but would deliver them, and even use them to demonstrate His unique deity.

Oswalt: typical feature of the book: transitional elements that function so smoothly that it is difficult to determine whether they point primarily forward or primarily backward.

Young: Whereas the mountains and trees of the forest manifest in wondrous fashion the glory of God their Creator, the redemption of Israel is an act in which the saving and redeeming glory of God will be displayed. Even more wonderful than the creation is the new creation, the redeemed humanity that Yahweh, the God of Israel and the Creator of heaven and earth, has brought into existence.

Darryl Klassen: The ironic thing here is that the very wood that a man takes and shapes into an idol yearns to break out in praise of the true God. Man subjects creation to a position it does not belong in, the position of god. All creation, even in its fallen and sinful state, sings praise to God – that is its purpose.

CONCLUSION:

We have TV shows like **American Idol** – somehow trying to transform that word idol into a positive image

1 John 5:21 *“Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What types of idols present the most challenge to you personally?
- 2) What other passages present the absurdity of worshipping in idols from a divinely sarcastic point of view?
- 3) What type of meal could someone make out of ashes?
- 4) Are we aggressively rejoicing and singing the praises of the one who loves us and has redeemed us?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Thompson: Futility of Idolatry (:9-20)

Muslims are not worshipping the same God as Christians when they call out to Allah. The Islamic religion is an idolatrous, evil, God-hating system characterized by fleshly lust. Other religions have invented their own deity. People will worship a wide range of things other than the true God. The God of Israel is the only true God who can rescue you from sin.

Def. of idol = anything that man lives for; willing to sacrifice his time, energy and money for.

Cf. Kareem Abdul Jabbar and Mohammad Ali – most of the world reveres them

13 major rebukes against worshiping idols:

- 1) Those who make idols are futile – people try to make a god in their own image; a total empty waste; God does not flatter these idol makers; people make pilgrimages to worship a false god
- 2) They are of no profit – consider things to be precious and valuable that are useless; whole life given to music or sports or business ... no usefulness or benefit at all; only one who should hold first place in our heart
- 3) They don't know they will be put to shame – disturbed in mind; I put my expectation in something that amounted to nothing; my life was a total waste; Col. 3:5 greed for money is idolatry; How much money did the rich Vanderbilt leave? All of it
- 4) The idea of man being able to form a god is stupid – one who is involved in this activity is of no profit; leading others astray
- 5) The companions of these people will be brought to shame – one who associates with idolaters; cf. attending bad churches; real culpability; 66 inspired books – study them diligently so we can know God; “I'll go to your service if you go to mine” = not a good compromise
- 6) They will tremble and be put to shame – will start in Tribulation and culminate in Great White Throne judgment; worshiping sun, moon or stars and Rev. 6 their idols are gone and they are trembling
- 7) Those who make idols are nothing but weak men – Buddha, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young = all weak men – gets hungry and thirsty while making the idol; can't possibly make a god who can save others; Mohammad – if you could pray in Mecca, would be 25 times more powerful than praying in your house ... militant religious nut – comes up with ridiculous system; millions of people cannot see absurdity of this system – he is weak and dead and gone
- 8) Those that design the idol then need to worship that same dead idol – 1090 AD Catholic Church came up with idea of rosary beads that they could market – count how many times you prayed to Mary; viewed as something sacred to God; Catholic bookstores filled with icons you can buy and then worship
- 9) Make idols out of materials that God must make grow –
- 10) They use materials that are used for other things – Protestants who will worship a piece of bread – just a symbol; Welch's grape juice cannot become the blood of Christ
- 11) Don't realize that God is the one not letting them see the truth – God has blinded them; Rom. 1 – God gives people up; God has opened the eyes of believers
- 12) They do not have logical minds so that they can understand – almost like their brain has shut down; no man is a god
- 13) They are liars – vs. 20 – will not admit they are trusting in a lie;

Clay Curtis: Remember, Return, Sing

Covetousness is idolatry; thoroughly polluting; desiring to have the sufficiency of ourselves so

that we don't have to trust in anyone; Israel about to go into captivity into Babylon; had no idea what they were about to face; represents everything that is false; they had low thoughts of God and high thoughts of themselves; God never casts off His chosen people; He does correct us while preserving us

Remember these words; hear this message; let these words get down into your heart; vs. 8 – there is no God besides Me; you will be pressured when you live among Babylonians to think their gods are somewhat like the one true God; declares His other contempt of idolatry

1. God's definition of idolatry –

a. Idolatry is vanity and unprofitable – vs 9; the man who makes it and the image he makes are both vanity; the god formed in man's imagination (just like the image you may make to represent that god) is weak and ineffectual just like the sinful man who made it; human nature hasn't changed; Examples: the worship of money; power, prestige – trusting in something other than God; worship of human opinion and applause; worship of human merit, will and works in any form; whatever you put confidence in that is not God alone;

b.. Idolatry is the Worship of Man – vs. 12 – zealous for the work of his hands; makes it into the image of a man; God made man in His own image;

c. Idolatry uses the things of God to make the idol – trees; rain to water the trees; vs. 14

d. Idolatry is absurd ignorance – vs. 14

e. Idolatry is defiled reasoning – vs. 19; no power in any of these things – so why worship them?

f. Idolatry is perverted appetite – vs. 20 – what are ashes? All that is left of matter that has been completely consumed; utter death and ruin; life without God is empty of all meaning

2. Word of Encouragement to Elect

a. Remember these things – vs. 21 -- God doesn't forget His people; we don't have to take matters into our own hands; remember what you were and where you were when God found you = feeding on ashes; you were a pagan idolater in your heart; Eph. 2:1 – God's works of grace; God is sovereign in Creation, Providence and Salvation; God creates appetite to feast on Christ

b. Return – vs. 22 – God persuades His child to return; walk in His light; He does not upbraid but will receive his children

c. Sing – vs. 23 --

TEXT: Isaiah 44:24 - 45:13

TITLE: RESTORATION OF ISRAEL THROUGH DIVINE MISSION OF CYRUS

BIG IDEA:

THE UNIQUE CREATOR-LORD RAISES UP CYRUS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS SOVEREIGN PURPOSES TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE FROM THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY (TO INHABIT THE CITY OF GOD)

INTRODUCTION:

Amazing text today – one that makes liberal scholars gag and scramble to try to explain away its validity. How could Isaiah 150 years before the time of King Cyrus specifically write down by inspiration from God that it would be Cyrus whom God would raise up to deliver His people from the Babylonian Captivity? The Jews had not yet even been captured by Nebuchadnezzar. They were still in their homes in Jerusalem worshiping in the temple that had not yet been destroyed. But God has a point to make. He has something very important to communicate.

“*Thus says the Lord*” introduces the **3 different sections**

Grogan: The assertion “*This is what the Lord says*” (v. 24) punctuates this section of the prophecy (cf. 44:24; 45:1, 11, then again in 18)

THE UNIQUE CREATOR-LORD RAISES UP CYRUS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS SOVEREIGN PURPOSES TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE FROM THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY (TO INHABIT THE CITY OF GOD)

Maybe you are struggling today with whether God is really in control of your situation. Look at all of the trouble that abounds in the world. Look at all the world leaders with so little regard to God. It seems like everything is out of control.

Our God is still on the throne ...
Almighty God is he
And He cares for His own through all eternity ..

First and last sections are like bookends – presenting the credentials of the Lord to speak with authority regarding prophecies of the future; guts are in the middle section

I. (44:24-28) PRESENTING THE CREDENTIALS OF THE LORD

Matchless credentials – in the business world I have the opportunity to review many resumes – people try to present their credentials in as impressive fashion as possible – sad how many people even lie about their credentials

A. (:24a) General Credentials of the Lord – by Way of Demonstrated Relationship

1. Relationship as Sovereign Lord

“*Thus says the LORD,*”

Not just Lord over His people; but Lord over all the pagan nations as well as we will see Him directing the course of history by using Cyrus to accomplish His purposes

2. Relationship as Saving Redeemer

“your Redeemer,”

Needed twofold redemption:

- Physical sense from Babylon
- Spiritual sense – they had failed to be faithful to the Lord as His ambassadors and messengers to the world – testifying of His uniqueness and superiority over the idols

3. Relationship as Special Designer – Israel, His Elect Nation

“and the one who formed you from the womb,”

The personal touch of the Lord in forming Israel as a nation

“from the womb” – indicates that everything that took place came from the divine initiative, not human will

Young: the reference is to the prenatal period (cf. **Job 3:11; Jer. 20:17**). Even before Israel was born, God was forming her. Translated into history, this would refer to all the period before the actual constitution of Israel as a nation. It would include the time of bondage in Egypt and also the period of the patriarchs.

Beall: There follows in vv. 24b-28 a series of **nine participles**, all describing the work (and the uniqueness) of the Lord: v. 24b contains three phrases, all beginning with participles; vv. 25- 26a contain three lines, all beginning with participles and ending with a verb in the imperfect; and vv. 26b-28 all contain a participle of the verb “to say” with the definite article and end with a verb in the imperfect

**B. (:24b-28) Specific Credentials of the Lord – by Way of Demonstrated Superiority
three groups of 3 participles**

Take a look at the Lord’s resume; what are His major accomplishments . . .

1. (:24b) Creator/Control Credentials – Reference to **remote past**

3 participles: “maker of” “stretcher of” “spreader of”

a. Comprehensive Summary

“I, the LORD, am the maker of all things,”

Think of how much God must hate the theory of evolution;

b. Unassisted Creator of the Heavens

“Stretching out the heavens **by Myself**,

Took counsel with nobody; no assistance or help

c. Unassisted Creator of the Earth

“And spreading out the earth **all alone**,”

God is the one who should receive the glory; as another Earth day approaches this week – April 22 – we see that mankind has come to worship the creation rather than its creator

Each participle is now amplified with another verb

Frustrates two types of alternative sources for guidance:

2. (:25-26a) Guidance/Wisdom Credentials – Reference to the **present**

Where should you look for a true word from God??

- a. Exposer of False Claims of the Occult – Don't trust in the false spiritualists
*“Causing the omens of boasters to fail,
Making fools out of diviners,”*

Court magicians, soothsayers – relies on access to supernatural powers

Motyer: pretentious talk of fortune-tellers

Constable: God embarrasses astrologers, diviners, and fortunetellers by controlling history in ways that deviate from past patterns. Ancient and modern prognosticators usually base their predictions on the belief that things will work out in the future as they have in the past. But Yahweh can move future events in entirely new directions. Archaeologists have discovered many predictions of the future of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires among Babylonian writings, but they are consistently optimistic; none are messages announcing the fall of these kingdoms. He can do things never before done.

Beall: In addition, He makes the diviners (those who make a claim based on the supernatural—the word is used of Balaam [Josh 13:22], the witch of Endor [1 Sam 28:8], the false prophets [Jer 27:9; 29:8; Mic 3:7], and of Philistine soothsayers [1 Sam 6:2]) fools.

- b. Frustrator of Human Wisdom – Don't trust in human resources
*“Causing wise men to draw back,
And turning their knowledge into foolishness,”*

Wise man relies on knowledge and study and expertise

Motyer: It would be foolish to claim that such wisdom is always nonsense, but in this context Isaiah has in mind people's attempts to probe and give meaning to the future and the meaning of history.

Young: David had prayed that God would turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness (the same verb is used as here) – 2 Sam. 17:14

- c. Confirmer of Predictive Prophecy – Look to divine revelation
*“Confirming the word of His servant,
And performing the purpose of His messengers.”*

Nation = servant

Messengers = International ambassadors

3. (:26b-28) Performance/Prophetic Credentials – Reference to the **future**
God says 3 things; 3 decrees: take these 3 in reverse order – from the decree to the accomplishment – God can get the job done – nothing frustrates His purposes

Parunak: ; puts article on last 3 phrases = the predicate; first 6 participles are part of the subject giving Lord's credentials; His ability to do what He has predicted – pay attention to me; **I am saying 3 things**

- a. (:26b) With Respect to Accomplishing the Restoration of Jerusalem and Judah

*“It is I who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!'
And of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.'
And I will raise up her ruins again.”*

Parunak: The purpose that God wants to accomplish; remember the start of Lamentations – city sits empty – how sad; God wants to dwell in the midst of His people; cf. Garden of Eden; tabernacle in the wilderness; God always picks a place and decrees that worship to Him be offered there; **Deut. 12:5**, etc. ; **1 Kings 11:36**; everything else here is a means to that end

b. (:27) With Respect to Overcoming Obstacles

*“It is I who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!'
And I will make your rivers dry.”*

Parunak: How does this get you from Cyrus’ decree to Jerusalem being inhabited?? **43:16-17** – importance of the historical memory of the Exodus – and the drying up of the Red Sea; a reenactment of the Exodus; great emblem of overcoming all the obstacles that stood in the way; obstacles were faced when Jews came back from Babylon as well; whatever obstacles lie between the decree and the enactment don’t matter; pagan kings are just doing God’s good pleasure

Constable: God is the one who dried up the Red Sea during the Exodus. He could likewise dry up rivers in the future to bring His will to pass (cf. 48:21). Herodotus wrote that Cyrus overthrew Babylon by diverting the Euphrates River that ran under its walls. He then used the riverbed to storm the city. Young claimed that cuneiform records from the region have shown that Herodotus' account was in error. God's promises covered both the rebuilding of Judah's cities (vv. 26, 28) and the exiles' return home.

c. (:28) With Respect to Decreeing the Divine Mission of Cyrus in Rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple

*“It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My
desire.'
And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,'
And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.’”*

Constable: The title "*My Shepherd*" was one that God used of the Davidic kings (cf. 2 Sam. 5:2; 1 Kings 22:17; Ezek. 34:23). The fact that He used it here of a pagan monarch shows that God would use pagans to fulfill His wishes— since the Davidic kings had proved unreliable (cf. 7:13; 39:7). This was indeed a new thing that God had not done before (cf. 43:19).

Having established His credentials, what does the Lord say in this instance regarding the prophetic future of using Cyrus as His instrument to deliver His chosen people:

Parunak: “*She shall be built and she shall be founded with a temple*” – the building of the temple was the foundation of the city; purpose of Jerusalem is where God connects with men; Jerusalem doesn’t start with a wall but with a temple

II. (45:1-10) PROPHECY REGARDING THE DIVINE MISSION OF CYRUS

A. (:1) Divine Mission of Cyrus Introduced

1. Divine Initiation of Mission of Cyrus

*“Thus says the LORD
to Cyrus His anointed,”*

Constable: Yahweh shockingly referred to Cyrus as His "anointed" (Heb. *mashiah*), a title normally reserved for Israel's prophets, priests, and kings. One exception is Hazael whom Elijah was to anoint as King of Aram (cf. 1 Kings 19:15-16). Hazael was also the Lord's anointed. It also refers to the Messiah. The Israelites thought of their anointed leaders as those whom God uniquely raised up to accomplish His purposes. By calling Cyrus His anointed, the Lord was teaching them that He was the Lord of all the earth, not just Israel. He could and would use whomever he chose to deliver His people.

Oswalt: Above all, the oracle is not really addressed to Cyrus, but to the despairing Israelites who cannot see how the glowing promises of restoration can possibly be kept. [and why God would use a pagan king as His anointed and His shepherd to carry out His purposes]

Young: God has put His Spirit on Cyrus to equip him for the performance of this task

2. Divine Purpose of Mission of Cyrus

“Whom I have taken by the right hand,”

Oswalt: expression of choosing and of intimate fellowship (cf. 42:6; Ps. 73:23)
And of control; hand of special favor

a. Conquer Nations

“To subdue nations before him,”

Motyer: this is a specifically Davidic motif (Ps. 1, 110)

b. Cause Kings to be Powerless and to Fear

“And to loose the loins of kings;”

Oswalt: to be stripped of one's weapons' belt, which in turn leaves the robe hanging down freely where it can entangle the legs

c. Liberate God's People

“To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut;”

B. (:2-4) Cyrus' Victory Orchestrated by the Lord

1. How the Lord Will Accomplish the Victory of Cyrus

a. Paving the Way for Victory

“I will go before you and make the rough places smooth;”

b. Obliterating All Obstacles

“I will shatter the doors of bronze, and cut through their iron bars.”

- c. Rewarding Cyrus with Spoils of Victory
*“And I will give you the treasures of darkness,
And hidden wealth of secret places,”*

2. Why the Lord Guarantees the Victory of Cyrus

- a. Exalting the God of Israel
*“In order that you may know that it is I, The LORD, the God of Israel,
who calls you by your name.”*

but no reason to think that Cyrus ever converted to the faith; might have just added the God of Israel to his appendage of deities

Oswalt: this does not predict conversion . . . just as the pharaoh came to recognize that the God of Israel is the Lord without ever coming to faith in him, so Cyrus could well acknowledge that he had been commissioned by the God of Israel without surrendering himself to the exclusive worship of the Lord.

- b. Exalting the Elect Nation of Israel
*“For the sake of Jacob My servant, And Israel My chosen one,
I have also called you by your name;”*
- c. Exalting Cyrus Himself as God’s Instrument to Accomplish His Will
*“I have given you a title of honor
Though you have not known Me.”*

C. (:5-7) Uniqueness of the Lord Declared and Demonstrated

1. Uniqueness Declared

*“I am the LORD, and there is no other;
Besides Me there is no God.”*

2. Uniqueness Demonstrated in Success of Cyrus

- a. Success Attributed Solely to the Lord
*“I will gird you,
though you have not known Me;”*

takes care of Cyrus, provides for him – as God does for us

Motyer: he does not require the willing or knowing co-operation of those he so uses . . . the Lord’s sovereignty is absolute, neither overriding responsibility nor requiring conscious co-operation.

- b. Worldwide Recognition of the Lord’s Uniqueness
*“That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
That there is no one besides Me.”*

Young: Obviously the return from exile did not accomplish this end . . .
Looks forward to end-time fulfillment

3. Uniqueness Declared and Demonstrated

a. Uniqueness Declared

“I am the LORD, and there is no other,”

b. Uniqueness Demonstrated

1) Creation of Light and Darkness

“The One forming light and creating darkness,”

2) Sovereign Over Good Times and Bad Times

“Causing well-being and creating calamity;”

Oswalt: What the prophet is saying is that if bad conditions exist in my life, they are not there because some evil god has thwarted the good intentions of a kindly but ineffectual grandfather-god, who would like me to have good conditions but cannot bring them about. They are there solely as a factor of my relations to the one God.

c. Uniqueness Declared

“I am the LORD who does all these.”

D. (:8-10) Sovereign Rights of the Lord as Creator /Controller Affirmed

1. (:8) Creator Sovereignly Ordains Righteousness and Salvation

“Drip down, O heavens, from above, And let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, And righteousness spring up with it. I, the LORD, have created it.”

Beall: V 8 is a transition verse, both looking back to vv. 1-7 and forward to 9-10. The heavens are exhorted to pour down righteousness and salvation, because the Lord Himself has created it. vv. 9-10 declare a woe on any who would seek to strive with his creator. It is foolish for the potsherd or clay to strive with the one who makes it, or for the child to say to the father or mother, what are you doing?

Young: Verses 8-10 constitute a unit, each verse beginning with the Hebrew letter, He; vs. 8 serves as a statement of the truth and the two following verses point out the folly of disbelief in the truth

2. (:9-10) 2 Examples of the Sovereignty of the Creator = Impermissible Questions

a. (:9) Vessel Complaining Against Potter

“Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker-- An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands '?”

Oswalt: To disagree with God’s ordering of one’s life or one’s world is not merely a matter of preference or outlook. At bottom, it is a refusal to let God be God, a reversal of roles, in which the creature tries to make the Creator a servant to carry out the creature’s plan.

b. (:10) Child Complaining Against Parents

“Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?’

Or to a woman, 'To what are you giving birth?'

Grogan: The point at issue in the quarrel (v.9) is probably God's disclosure to his people that he would deliver them through pagan Cyrus. We cannot accuse God of using inappropriate means to achieve his ends.

III. (45:11-13) REAFFIRMING THE CREDENTIALS OF THE LORD

A. (:11a) General Credentials – by Way of Demonstrated Relationship

Beall: In vv. 11-13 the Lord replies to those who would be so foolish as to ask these questions. It is the Lord, the Holy One of Israel who speaks, the Creator. “*My sons*” and the “*work of My hands*” probably refer in this context to Israel. God is the one who created the world, and who raised up Cyrus as well (v 13) to build Jerusalem. Yet, Cyrus received no reward or tribute of any kind for doing this—a further evidence of the Lord's sovereignty over the deliverance of His people.

1. Relationship as Sovereign Lord

“Thus says the LORD,”

2. Relationship as Saving Redeemer

“the Holy One of Israel,”

3. Relationship as Special Designer

“and his Maker:”

B. (:11b-13) Specific Credentials – by Way of Demonstrated Superiority

1. (:11b) Performance/Prophetic Credentials

*“Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons,
And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands.”*

2. (12) Creator/Control Credentials – Creator of Earth and Heaven and Man and Angels

*“It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it.
I stretched out the heavens with My hands, And I ordained all their host.”*

3. (:13) Guidance/Wisdom Credentials –

Ordaining the Divine Mission of Cyrus with Respect to Jerusalem

*“I have aroused him in righteousness, And I will make all his ways smooth;
He will build My city, and will let My exiles go free, Without any payment or
reward, ’ says the LORD of hosts.”*

Motyer: divine sovereignty in creation is matched by equal sovereignty in history

CONCLUSION:

All of mankind is under the control of the one and only sovereign God, their Creator, whether they acknowledge that fact or not. God implores us to “*Turn to Him and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.*” **45:22** Even the pagan rulers of our day owe their very existence to God and are ultimately accomplishing His purposes – just as Cyrus.

What **comfort** for those of us who have submitted to the Lord’s sovereignty. Our lives are in His hands. Our present as well as our future is governed by His loving hand of Providence.

Our God is still on the throne ...

Almighty God is he

And He cares for His own through all eternity ..

He alone is God and there is no other.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we be more aggressive in proclaiming the Lord’s credentials?
- 2) How has God in our day frustrated the fortune telling of the spiritualists and confused the wisdom of those who would rely on just human resources?
- 3) Are we taking comfort in God’s purposes for us – in how He calls us by name and equips us to carry out His will?
- 4) Do we ever quarrel with our Maker over matters of control and His way of working in our circumstances?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John Martin: To approach the Bible with an antisupernaturalistic bias and say that the references to Cyrus were added later, after he released the captives, causes the passage, as stated earlier, to lose its emphasis on God's uniqueness in predicting the future. This would mean that God is no different from idols—the very point Isaiah is disproving!”

In 539 Cyrus conquered Babylon (Dan. 5:30) and the very next year issued a decree that the Jews could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). In doing this Cyrus was serving God’s purposes as if he were God’s shepherd. Those returnees built the temple, completing it in 515 B.C., and years later (in 444 B.C.) Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls.

Motyer: The “Deutero-Isaiah” theory denies the Lord the glory of prediction, allowing him only sharpness of perception in seeing what was afoot once Cyrus was on the march. If this is the work of an unknown prophet ministering in Babylon after the rise of Cyrus, then the argument from prediction is deprived of force, for then the Lord too, like the “idol-gods”, is only wise after the event.

Van Parunak: (44:24-28) – Overall message of Isaiah -- Israel's relationship to Assyria and then Babylon; chaps. 36-39 are historical; prophetic chapters outside of that core; anticipates time when Israel will need comfort in their suffering in Babylonian Captivity; looking forward to deliverance that looks forward to ultimate deliverance

3 major themes in last chapters of the book – with 3 fold refrain “*There is no peace for the wicked*”

- The Lord's superiority to the idols – main thrust of this section
- The Suffering Servant of the Lord – gives testimony to God's creative power and His ability to predict the future
- The choice that Israel has to make

Lord is Creator and Redeemer

David Thompson: (45:1-7)

We are living in troubled times; govt money used to kill babies; attitude of White House towards Israel; look at how much turf the Muslim world controls; to whom can we turn?

I know who holds the future ...

Men think that they are so smart, yet in reality they control so little;

Only God can predict and control the future;

Accuracy of this prediction verifies accuracy of end time prophecies of Isaiah; our God is still sovereign – gives comfort to God's people

586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar came and destroyed the temple and took Jews captive

God predicting things with pinpoint accuracy

God sovereignly uses heathen pagan rulers for His own purposes

1. God reveals what he will do for Cyrus – 5 facts:

- a. God names Cyrus – long before he was born; Josephus claims that Cyrus read these things and had an earnest desire and ambition to fulfill these promises; 1879 Cyrus Cylinder unearthed – did remarkable things by hand of sovereign God; that monument still stands in Iran today;
- b. Cyrus is God's anointed – only non-Jewish king to whom God gives this title; used of Saul, David, Messiah – using Cyrus to redeem His people
- c. God would take him by the right hand – hand of special favor; God can use all kinds of political leaders
- d. God would use him to subdue the nations; using him to deliver the Jews and punish the nations even though he was worshiping false god Marduk
- e. God would open doors of successful military accomplishment – who determines who wins in battle? Most people don't see the sovereign hand of God in victory
 - I will make the rough places smooth – smooth sailing; Obstacles for God are nothing
 - God would shatter secure doors – no fortress that would be able to stop you; you may feel that you are locked into your circumstances – but God can open doors
 - God would give him great treasures – all the spoils of war

2. God reveals Why He will do these things for Cyrus – 4 reasons:

- a. So that the whole world would know I am the God of Israel – God is always looking out for the welfare of His people – even when they are unaware
- b. To prove He has sovereign powers to accomplish things for people that don't even know Him – ask God for wisdom regarding His will for your life; God equips you to do your job; you must identify what you are
- c. So all would know He is the sovereign God –

- I am the Lord Jehovah; the covenant God of Israel; the I AM

- I am the only God –

- He does what He wants with those who don't even know Him – to accomplish His purposes

d. He wanted the whole world to know He is in charge of everything – nothing in your world is happening by random chance

TEXT: Isaiah 45:14-25

TITLE: ONLY ONE TRUE GOD . . . ONLY ONE TRUE SAVIOR

BIG IDEA:

THE UNIQUENESS OF GOD DETERMINES THE EXCLUSIVITY OF SALVATION

INTRODUCTION:

Our culture of pluralism with its naïve foundational tenet of tolerance for all religions finds the Christian doctrine of an **exclusive gospel** to be absolutely repugnant. How can you say that there is only one way to God . . . or even that your concept of God is the only correct one? Yet didn't Christ Himself testify: *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man comes to the Father but by Me."* Sounds pretty narrow to me . . . and that should be expected if there is one true God and He is the one who dictates the pathway of salvation.

Our passage in **Isaiah 45** today hammers away again at some of the common themes that have been recurring throughout the book –

- God declares that He is the Lord and there is none else
- God presents Himself as the absolute Sovereign of the universe since He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things
- God presents Himself as the only Savior of men – the Savior not only of the Jews but of the Gentiles as well . . . if they will but turn and look to Him alone for salvation

THE UNIQUENESS OF GOD DETERMINES THE EXCLUSIVITY OF SALVATION

Two sections – each begins with the same announcement formula: *"Thus says the Lord"*

I. (45:14-17) THE EXCLUSIVITY OF SALVATION LEAVES MANKIND WITH ONLY TWO OPTIONS: SUBMISSION (AND EVERLASTING SALVATION) OR SHAME (AND EVERLASTING SUFFERING)

A. (:14) Confession of Gentiles Who Submit to the God of Israel in the Day of the Lord

1. Impressive Gentile Nations Will Ultimately Submit to the God of Israel

"Thus says the LORD,

Beall: In v. 14 a new section begins (again with *"Thus says the Lord"*), essentially an outworking of the Cyrus section. The basic idea of this section is that the work of redemption and release of God's people Israel begun by Cyrus would be completed one day (**in the Millennium**), and all the other nations would recognize Israel's God as well. . . The same three nations were mentioned in **43:3**. **Isa 60:1-7** also notes that the Gentile nations will bring their wealth to Israel in the Millennium.

These Gentile nations that will ultimately embrace the salvation the Lord offers are viewed as impressive from 3 different perspectives:

a. Impressive Achievements of Gentile Nations

"The products of Egypt"

No matter how impressive your works . . . the testimony of Solomon in Ecclesiastes = *"Vanity, vanity"* apart from obedience to the God who transcends all things

b. Impressive Wealth of Gentile Nations
“and the merchandise of Cush”

No matter how impressive your business empire ... *what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?*

c. Impressive Reputation of Gentile Nations
“And the Sabeans, men of stature,”

Sabeans = those who dwell in “Upper Egypt” between Egypt proper and the Lower Sudan

No matter how impressive your fame and popularity . . . it is more important to please God than to be a slave to human opinion

“Will come over to you and will be yours;”

Quite a different orientation towards the God of Israel and towards His chosen nation Israel then what we see on the world scene today; all of these Arab nations who spew hatred towards Israel will eventually bow the knee and embrace the God of Israel after the great purge of the Tribulation Period

2. Images of Subjection and Worship Involved in This Confession

“They will walk behind you,
they will come over in chains And will bow down to you;”

Young: acknowledging that only in Israel is the true God to be found

Images of vanquished enemies – yet in this case they will willingly submit to the one true God by grace through faith

3. Identifying with the One True God of Israel

“They will make supplication to you:
'Surely, God is with you, and there is none else, No other God.'”

They completely embrace the message of God’s Uniqueness and hence the Exclusivity of the salvation which He alone can offer; no longer pleading for the recognition of their pagan gods and false idols; they have repented and rejected their former gods in favor of embracing the one true God; they had found it futile to make supplication to their gods

B. (:15) Concealment by God of His Ultimate Purposes as He Sovereignly Works in Secret

“Truly, Thou art a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, Savior!”

Difficult verse – some take this in a negative sense as a complaint against God who has not been forthcoming with His gospel message – thus they would see God responding in vs. 19 by contradicting this complaint

I think this is more of a positive statement of God working behind the scenes without explaining the ultimate purposes behind His actions at the time ... so that we need to be careful not to

complain against God's providence in our lives – we don't see the whole picture ... yet God is operating as the Savior of His people

Beall: In v. 15 the prophet exclaims that God is one who hides Himself, i.e., that God's ways are known only through His revelation, not through man's efforts; but in truth His revelation is marvelous, since He is not only the God of Israel, but the Savior (note that both “*hide*” and “*savior*” are participles, in parallel with each other: the God who hides is the God who saves).

Young: God keeps hidden under the clouds of the contemporary situation the purposes of mercy He is about to reveal.

Constable: The nations that will come to God, or perhaps Isaiah himself or Israel, observed that God hides His acts of salvation so they are not obviously apparent. They become clear to those who carefully observe what He has done, and whom God enlightens, but they do not inevitably impress every single individual. One might say the same thing about Jesus' claims. They could have been clearer, but to those who really considered them, and whose eyes God opened, they were clear. This is essentially a testimony to God's transcendence (cf. **Rom. 11:33**).

The Weaver - Poem by Anonymous Works

My life is but a weaving, between my God and me,
I do not choose the colors, He worketh steadily.

Ofttimes he weaveth sorrow, and I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper, and I the underside.

Not till the loom is silent, and the shuttles cease to fly,
Will God unroll the canvas, and explain the reasons why

The dark threads are as needful in the skillful weaver's hand
As threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.

C. (:16-17) Contrast Between Shame and Everlasting Salvation

1. (:16) Idol Worshipers Will Be Shamed and Humiliated

*“They will be put to shame and even humiliated, all of them;
The manufacturers of idols will go away together in humiliation.”*

Both those who make the idols (a sarcastic indictment of idol worship) as well as those who worship them will know only shame and humiliation

2. (:17) God's People Will Enjoy Everlasting Salvation

*“Israel has been saved by the LORD With an everlasting salvation;
You will not be put to shame or humiliated to all eternity.”*

Emphasis on the eternal nature of the salvation of God's people

II. (45:18-25) THE EXCLUSIVITY OF SALVATION DERIVES FROM THE UNIQUENESS OF GOD

A. (:18) Declaration of the Uniqueness of God

“*For thus says the LORD,*” -- takes Him the rest of the verse before He makes His statement

1. Credentials for Making the Claim of Uniqueness

a. Sovereign as the Creator of Heavens and Earth

*“who created the heavens
(He is the God who formed the earth and made it,”*

Created (*bara*) out of nothing;

b. Sovereign as the Intelligent Designer – Creating with a Purpose

*“He established it and did not create it a waste place,
But formed it to be inhabited),”*

How do you reconcile this with the statement in Gen. 1:2 that “*the earth was formless and void*”?

Constable: God's intention in Creation was not to create something permanently without form but to create an environment for His creatures that He suitably formed for their habitation. Thus this verse says nothing about the steps God may have taken in creating the cosmos. It rather explains His purpose in creating the cosmos.

2. Claim of Uniqueness

“I am the LORD, and there is none else.”

B. (:19) Disclosure of Truth by God Openly – in Contrast to the Occult

1. Clarity and Accessibility of God's Revelation

*“I have not spoken in secret, In some dark land;
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek Me in a waste place';”*

2. Content of God's Revelation

*“ I, the LORD, speak righteousness
Declaring things that are upright.”*

C. (:20-21) Daring the Gentile Nations to Dispute with God

1. (:20a) Challenge

*“Gather yourselves and come;
Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations;”*

2. (:20b) Condemnation

“They have no knowledge,

Who carry about their wooden idol, And pray to a god who cannot save.”

3. (:21a) Challenge

*“Declare and set forth your case;
Indeed, let them consult together.”*

4. (:21b) Coronation – God affirms His own Supremacy

*“Who has announced this from of old?
Who has long since declared it?
Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me,
A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me.”*

God was the one who had prophesied ahead of time about all of the events of the conquest of Cyrus

D. (:22) Demanding the Only Response That Leads to Salvation

*“Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is no other.”*

Beautiful offer of the gospel to the Gentile nations –

What is involved in **Turning to God**?? Looking to God in faith – cf. Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness – even so must the Son of Man be lifted up – **John 3**

Borgman: people complain how **narrow** the message is; but how much **broader** can you get than this invitation? God doesn't put any restrictions on this invitation; why turn to somebody who can't save? You will never be saved apart from repentance; *turn from idols to serve the living and true God*; not just offered to Israel but to all the ends of the earth; fulfillment of promise to Abraham – *in your seed all the families of the world will be blessed*
If God is the only Creator; He must be the only Savior . . .

John 4:42; 1 Tim. 4:10 – understand these passages in light of **Is. 45** – there is no other savior in the world for men; sounds very narrow to our modern culture; people are very tolerant today – a more important virtue than purity or self-sacrifice or truth; we have exalted tolerance to place of chief virtue for modern man; but absolutely intolerant of message of exclusivity of the gospel – makes them red-faced and angry; there is no other God and there is no other way; that is exactly how it was in Paul's day; Romans did not have a problem with Jesus; but they wouldn't also worship Caesar! You can't tell people they should only have one Lord; God did not have to open any way; certainly He can dictate the way He chooses to open;

Constable: Since Yahweh alone saves, people and nations around the world should turn to Him for salvation (cf. **Num. 21:8-9**). In so doing they could experience the same salvation that Israel would enjoy. Yahweh is the saving God of the whole earth, not just Israel, so salvation is available to all, not just Israel. God used this verse to bring the light of salvation to the English preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon when he was a youth.

THE UNIQUENESS OF GOD DETERMINES THE EXCLUSIVITY OF SALVATION

E. (:23-25) Destiny Depends on Submitting to the Exclusivity of Salvation

1. (:23a) The Exclusivity of Salvation is Non-Negotiable

*"I have sworn by Myself,
The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back,"*

God will never change His mind or renege on His universal offer of salvation or on His threat of judgment to all who will not turn to Him
Don't try to debate God on this

2. (:23b-24a) The Goal is Universal Submission and Allegiance to the Lord

*"That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.
"They will say of Me, 'Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.'"*

Paul quotes this verse in Phil. 2

Conclusion: Jesus Christ is Jehovah

Borgman: rebels will not continue in their rebellion; there will only be saved rebels and damned rebels – but all will be in subjection to King Jesus

Why not submit in faith now and enjoy the blessings of salvation rather than submit by force when Jesus returns and suffer the punishment of hell

3. (:24b-25) The Response to the Gospel Determines Destiny of Shame or Salvation

*"Men will come to Him,
And all who were angry at Him shall be put to shame.
In the LORD all the offspring of Israel will be justified, and will glory."*

Any rebellion against God's ruler of your life is an expression of anger

Look at the doctrine of justification by grace through faith as presented here in the OT

God turns sinners and rebels into worshipers who praise Him and reflect His glory

CONCLUSION:

Man should not be complaining against God because of the **narrowness** of the gate that leads to salvation. Man should be praising the **mercy of God** that He has provided such a universal offer of salvation by appointing Jesus as the Door through which all men have access to salvation.

It would be folly to turn to anyone else for salvation when God has clearly revealed that all other paths lead to eternal shame and humiliation and suffering.

But for all who will look to Christ alone for salvation, there is joy and praise for all eternity.

*What a Wonderful Savior is Jesus my Jesus
What a Wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord.*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why are the tolerant of this world's current culture so intolerant of Christians?
- 2) How would you define God's purpose for Creation and His purpose for Revelation?
- 3) How do we combat the error of easy believism which leaves out the concept of repentance?
- 4) In what ways can you improve in your role of worshiping and praising the God who has saved you?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: The exhortation to the Gentiles is given in **vv. 22-25**. All the ends of the earth are to turn and look (the verb has this dual connotation) to the Lord. He is the only God! Since they would all turn sooner or later, God pleads with them to turn voluntarily. His word is true, and will come to pass ("*it will not return,*" **v. 23**)—namely that all will bow their knee to Him, and will confess that only in the Lord is their righteousness and strength. All will ultimately come to Him, and those who have raged against Him will be ashamed. Those who are descendants of Israel will ultimately be justified (through faith in Christ their Savior), and will glory.

Paul uses v. 23 in **Rom 14:11** to remind the Romans that all of us will ultimately have to face the judgment seat of Christ, and therefore should act accordingly . . .

In **Phil 2:10-11** Paul makes more extensive use of the passage to show that Christ would ultimately be exalted by everyone, as every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Him in that day . . .

May we likewise exhort those we know to turn to Him while they have a choice, for one day they will turn, but not voluntarily. All creation will ultimately worship Him.

David Thompson: (:8-25)

God can sovereignly save any sinner at any time; He can break into our lives at any time; teaching us the sovereignty of God;

Themes: the only Sovereign Maker; creates things out of nothing; God is the only Sovereign Savior – if those people will turn to Him; can declare eternal shame;

Real problem with any country is not political but theological; must turn to the Lord and trust Him; God offers complete salvation if you will only turn to Him; otherwise you get your day in court and will be condemned to eternal shame

6 Facts of God's Sovereignty:

1. God is Sovereign over Heaven and Earth (:8) – righteousness will reign in Millennial Kingdom;
2. God is Sovereign over Individuals (:9) – interested in each individual; children think they know more than their parents; we are just broken clay pots – should never talk back to Almighty

God; most people if they have any wits about them like to settle things out of court

3. God is Sovereign over Israel (:11-13) – to understand the future you must understand God's program for Israel; turn to God and He will help you

4. God is Sovereign over all nations in their relationship to Israel (:14-17) – there are things going on in history right now that we cannot give a reason for; God working sovereignly behind the scenes; “*men of stature*” = prominence, importance – most of these people names here are Islamic Arabs; It might look like God is hiding Himself ... but don't kid yourself ... God is still in control; one day God will run religion of Islam right out of the land; put it to shame;

5. God is Sovereign over all Creation – (:18-19) – did not create the world to be a waste place; God does not desire that Israel be a dark and dreary place; wants to shower land with fertile blessing;

6. God is Sovereign in offering His salvation to the nations and to Israel –

- (:20-21) judgment of the nations in a court of law – will have to admit that only the God of Israel is the true God; they will have their day in God's court; we were wrong; we could not save anyone

- (:22) Amazing verse of grace – Turn to God and be saved – speaking to idolatrous nations; turn to God and look at Him as your Savior by faith; no works required on our part; don't turn to anything else; this verse struck a chord in young Spurgeon – snow storm, he couldn't make church so he stopped in a small church; pastor could not make it; so older man opened this verse and preached it; “Young man, you turn to the Lord Jesus and you will be saved”

- (:23) God will never change His mind on a deal like this

- (:24) God is the only God who can offer such salvation; if you refuse this offer you will be put to everlasting shame; you will be brought to nothing

Van Parunak: (:18-19)

Judgment and Blessing sections alternate; (:11-13) – Promise about Cyrus; then first section dealing with Gentiles

3 Speakers: Lord spoke; then confession of Gentiles (:14-15); then Isaiah spoke in (:16)

Vs. 18 – The Gentiles must come to the Lord because there isn't anyone else to come to

There is no alternative; no choice – no one else you can worship

Message = “*I am the Lord and there is none else*” – the rest of the verse just describes the Lord who makes this statement – Lord giving His credentials again; flashes His badge –

- He is the Creator and keeps it going – defines the purpose it is to serve
 - o Not to be a waste land
 - o But to be a place of habitation
- He can foretell the future

Did God create the world *tohu* or not?? When compared to **Gen. 1:2**;

- Theory 1 -- some people explain this via the Gap Theory (Scofield Bible) – some great judgment because of rebellion of Satan and angels – contributes to longer age of earth, etc.
- Theory 2 – Gen. 1-2 only describes creation of cosmos but not the earth; Waltke; starting with an earth without form and void -- not telling you how we got there; “*heavens and earth*” refer to ordered cosmos; but **Ex. 20:11** says God made it all in 6 days
- Theory 3 – Traditional position – vs. 1 encompasses the whole thing; the first thing God did was to produce the blob and then refine the blob; Why would He make something that is formless?? Tohu is not ready for human habitation; people can't live in a scrambled mess; was the world ready to be inhabited at the end of day 1??

NO, not until the end of day 5; took 5 days to correct the *tohu* condition

Other examples of Lord working via process:

- **Mark 8** – progressive healing of the blind man – God does some things in stages
 - **Day of the Lord** – when the Lord returns to bring final judgment on His enemies and set up His kingdom on the earth to rule in perfect righteousness for 1000 years
- God unfolds His promises over time; doesn't always jump right to the ultimate completion

Point of central section is to give God's credentials for being the only hope for the Gentiles;
Vs. 19 – God's response to accusation that he had not spoken as clearly as He should have;
3 things about His revelation:

1) **the place** of His revelation – contrast with necromancers and sorcerers; voice would come out of a pit – in secret – in dark places of earth; Israel is at the heart of the world; crossroads in Europe; the bridge that ties areas of the world together; place designed to make it accessible to everyone

2) **its form** – don't seek *Me tohu* – as formlessness; modern consensus, if you want to find God, you have to look in the formlessness and chaos and randomness and wind and earthquake; I use words in the human language to communicate; you don't have to be a sophisticated scientist to understand it

3) **its content** – speak righteousness – not just meaningful words but righteous words
You are dead wrong when you say that I am a God who hides myself; read my word and believe it and do it – problem is not with God's revelation being sufficient

(45:20-25) in the middle of God's call to the Gentiles –

God had predicted that the Gentiles would come in the first segment; now He invites them twice (:20, 22) to come – gives a motivation; after Cyrus has established his Persian Empire ... God says to anyone who is left, come to Me; your pagan God can't help you; prediction contest; idols are silent; idols can't even move on their own;

Vs. 23 is summary of these 2 invitations; ultimately everyone will bow to the Lord; Phil. 2 quotes this passage;

Brian Borgman: The God of Redemptive History

Vs. 14-15 describes the **Conversion of the Gentiles**; language of spiritual bondslaves;
Rev. 3:9 – Jesus using Is. 45 passage in message to Philadelphia; now Jews are coming over into the church – reverses the imagery

The nations making a confession of faith

In order to be right with God you have to be right with His people; as you come you are integrated into a corporate worshiping body

Vs. 16-17 – Folly of Idolatry -- Contrast with non-saving power of the idols and saving power of the one true God; when the day comes where they need salvation they will be ashamed because they have trusted in vanity; our idolatry has become more sophisticated; worst idol = self;

Vs 18 – God's Purpose in Creation – 4 words used for creation; God is the true creator; those idols didn't create anything; made out of the creation and worshiped by the creature; *tohu* = waste place – chaos; in 6 days God took what was chaotic and made it ordered and beautiful to reflect His glory; direct stab against paganism – they refuse to admit of a God who stands outside of chaos; humans created to serve the needs of the gods with their hands; God did not create man because He was lonely or needy; but out of the overflow of His goodness to reflect His glory; this earth is the stage for redemption; book: "Not a Chance" -- R. C. Sproul refutes the view of

many contemporary scientists that chance can cause something to come into being or cause an event to occur. There is a divine purpose for this created world; evolutionists try to tell teenagers they should have good sense of self esteem even though they were created from primordial slime??

Vs 19 – God’s Purpose in Revelation – not some enigmatic, dark oracle like that of the pagan gods with their witch caves; did not tell you to seek me in the *tohu*, in the chaos; I spoke plainly and openly through the prophets; I used prophets; spoke righteousness; no mysterious oracles; God’s Word declares His righteousness; Mark Twain: “It’s not the parts of the Bible I don’t understand that bother me; it is the parts I do understand.”

Not a secret code book with hidden messages for those who are smart enough to figure it out; Perspicuity of scripture; clarity of scripture – did not mean that all parts of the bible are equally understandable – historical and cultural barriers; language barriers; etc. The gospel message is plain regarding sin and repentance and faith and salvation in Jesus Christ alone

Without God’s revelation we are left with a chaotic world view; bible teaches us who God is and what He requires of us; book by Francis Schaeffer: “He is There and He is not Silent” – both the creator and revealer; otherwise we are groping in the dark if we reject the revelation of God about His purpose in creation

Vs. 20-21 – Universal Salvation – idolatrous stragglers after Cyrus’ conquest – wandering around in fugitive status = plain evidence that their god did not save them; make your best case; by the way who told you all this was going to happen anyway? God affirms His own supremacy *God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all*; This upright God is also the only Savior; Not only the mighty God but the merciful God;

Vs. 22 – Universal Invitation – message preached by Methodist lay preacher in little primitive Methodist chapel in London in early 1850s where Charles Haddon Spurgeon sat and heard; pointed out Spurgeon: Young man you look like you need to be saved; irony:

Vs. 23 – Ultimate Goal of His Universal Invitation – irrevocable oath; writer of Hebrews will make much of this; God will not have a recall on His Word – Is. 55; universal submission and adoration; there must be a bowing of the knee – a yielding of ourselves to who God is or no salvation; Faith by its very nature is submissive and yields to the one who is above; refutation of easy believism vs lordship salvation; God’s Word will conquer all – either in love through the gospel message bringing the sinner to the point where he embraces the forgiveness of God or that knee will be bowed when in power and glory God reveals His Son on that day = forced obedience and eternal subjection in eternal punishment

Vs. 24-25 – God’s Glory Culminates with the Submission and Praise of His People -- bad news to be one of God’s enemies; expression of anger towards His rightful rule over your life; justification by union with God for all of true Israel; God turns sinners into praisers

TEXT: Isaiah 46:1-13

TITLE: NO CONTEST -- GOD'S SUPERIORITY OVER IDOLS OF BABYLON

BIG IDEA: ONLY THE TRUE GOD CAN CARRY HIS PEOPLE AND DELIVER ON THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

INTRODUCTION:

Some heavily promoted fights end up being huge mismatches. I didn't stay up to watch the Mayweather-Pacquiao bout (couldn't afford it anyway and Karen would have been disgusted with me) but I hear it ended up fairly one-sided. Both fighters are expected to make well over \$100 million from the welterweight unification bout with 60 percent of the purse going to Mayweather and Pacquiao collecting the other 40 percent. A limited number of tickets in the over 16,000 seat arena —maybe only 500 – were made available to the general public -- priced as high as \$7,500 with the cheapest going for \$1,500. At StubHub, a secondary ticket seller, a seat on the MGM Grand floor was listed at \$128,706 Friday morning and the cheapest upper-deck seat was priced at \$5,826. This fight was a pretty bid deal!

When the true God enters into conflict with the false gods of Babylon – No Contest. Talk about an undefeated record. Nobody can compare to the only true God – the God of Israel. That is the message that Isaiah has been trumpeting as he prepares God's people to withstand the pressure of being corrupted by false gods when they are in bondage in Babylon. They need assurance that their God is able to judge their enemies and ultimately deliver them.

Where do you look for relief from the burdens of this life? Where do you find your fulfillment and your value system? Whose agenda are you pursuing with your time and your talents? When times get rocky, where is your anchor and solid foundation? False religions and the allure of idols can make a lot of promises about happiness and prosperity and pleasure and future bliss, but:

ONLY THE TRUE GOD CAN CARRY HIS PEOPLE AND DELIVER ON THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

- I. (:1-4) FUNDAMENTAL CONTRAST**
- II. (:5-7) FUTILE COMPARISON**
- III. (:8-11) SOVEREIGN PURPOSE**
- IV. (:12-13) SALVATION PROMISE**

Brian Borgman has some good material on this passage ...

- I. (:1-4) FUNDAMENTAL CONTRAST – WHO CARRIES WHOM?**
 - BURDEN CREATING FALSE GODS OF BABYLON ... OR ...**
 - BURDEN BEARING TRUE GOD OF ISRAEL**

A. (:1-2) False Gods of Babylon Create Burdens

- 1. (:1) False Gods Are a Burden to Carry**

*“Bel has bowed down, Nebo stoops over;
Their images are consigned to the beasts and the cattle.
The things that you carry are burdensome, A load for the weary beast.”*

Constable: Bel and Nebo were the two chief gods of Babylonia. *Bel* ("lord," cf. the Canaanite Baal) was the title of the father of the gods in the Babylonian pantheon, whose name was Enlil. Bel was also later the title of Marduk, the city god of Babylon and the hero of *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian Creation account. *Nebo* was Bel's son, and he was supposedly a wise administrator. The names Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar ("Nebo, protect the boundary"), and Nabonidus, among others, show reverence for Nebo, and the name Belshazzar ("Bel, protect the king") honored Bel. Nebo was the god of learning, writing, and astronomy. The Babylonians carried images of these prominent gods in their New Year's Day parades.

Isaiah envisioned Bel and Nebo as bending over as the Babylonians carried their images in procession (cf. 1 Sam. 5:3-4). These images rode on carts that beasts of burden hauled with some difficulty, evidently because of their weight. The gods, which the images both represented and contained, were a burden to these animals. Rather than lifting burdens, these idols created them for their worshippers.

Young: Nebo was god of writing [English majors] and divine interpretation and seems to have been an object of devotion on the part of the intellectual world.

Beall: Isaiah's description is that of the Babylonian New Year festival procession, in which Nebo would be brought to Babylon from his temple in Borsippa. He notes that the gods were heavy, and in reality a burden for the people!

2. (:2) False Gods Cannot Relieve Any Burdens

*"They stooped over, they have bowed down together;
They could not rescue the burden,
But have themselves gone into captivity."*

Ultimate fulfillment in the end times

Motyer: Cyrus's avowal of allegiance to Marduk after he captured Babylon is as tongue-in-cheek as his devotion to the Lord in Ezra 1:2. It is the calculated pragmatism of a soldier turned politician, to whom religion was no more than another lever to power (like the sin of Jeroboam; 1 Ki. 12:25ff.)

Oswalt: His main point is that these beautiful images, so recently paraded with reverent pomp, are now a matter for ox carts and donkeys. What a decline – how the mighty gods are humiliated and ashamed.

B. (:3-4) True God of Israel Bears Burdens

1. God's People Need to Pay Attention

*"Listen to Me, O house of Jacob,
And all the remnant of the house of Israel,"*

2. God's Track Record Is Consistent as the Burden Bearer

*"You who have been borne by Me from birth,
And have been carried from the womb,"*

God did not come late to the party as did these idols who did not even exist at the beginning; they were created at a point in time by men who were already fully grown; but God has been carrying His people since the womb ... since their birth; every day of their existence – no small argument

Oswalt: At least three different images are involved here, as other references show: a father carrying a child (Deut. 1:31), a shepherd carrying a lamb (Ps. 28:9), and an eagle carrying its eaglets (Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11). The other reference in Isaiah (63:9), like this one, seems to partake of all of these.

Borgman: same images all through history of Israel: **Ex. 19:3** – bears up His people on eagle wings; **Deut. 1:30ff** – carried you through the wilderness like a father carries his son; **Is. 40:11** – like a shepherd ... carry the lambs in His bosom;
Cf. famous poem **Footprints** – 2 sets of footprints and all of a sudden just one; that is not when I left you; that is when I carried you – really only one set of footprints the whole journey – carries us through the whole journey

3. God's Future Performance Will Remain Consistent as the Burden Bearer

*“Even to your old age, I shall be the same,
And even to your graying years I shall bear you!”*

God proclaims that He will break the mold of normal practice; He will never change as the one who carries His people – How different from our family structure; parents carry their infants and then continue to support them during the transition to their independence; but as parents grow old and become tottering and feeble, they need the support of their now mature children; it will never be that way with God

4. Past Performance Is an Accurate Indicator of Future Results

*“I have done it, and I shall carry you;
And I shall bear you, and [I] shall deliver you.”*

Cf. all of those advertising caveats that appear in small print at the bottom of TV ads

“Past performance is no guarantee of future results”

Investment firms have to hedge their promises .. but with God there is complete boldness and confidence in His assertions

Constable: Addressing the remnant (house) of His people, Yahweh reminded the Judahites that He had carried Israel (as a burden sometimes) throughout her history (cf. 63:9; Exod. 19:4; Deut. 1:31; 32:11; Ps. 28:9), and He would continue to do so.

Beall: See **Isa 63:9** for a similar thought of the Lord carrying His people. V. 4 repeats the separate personal pronoun “I” **five times for emphasis!** [personal pronoun omitted before the last verb.] God cares about His people personally!

Motyer: While the Lord is inflexible regarding what he has determined to do (10-11), he is also inflexible in his commitment to his people (3-4).

Oswalt: At least three different images are involved here, as other references show; a father carrying a child (Deut. 1:21), a shepherd carrying a lamb (Ps. 28:9), and an eagle carrying its eaglets (Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11). . . There will never come a time when we outgrow our dependence on God.

Illustration: Remember the mantra of Jesus that *He did not come to be ministered unto but to minister* – **Mark 10:45**; that was Paul’s testimony as a spiritual leader and example to those elders he was training up to take on the mantle of leadership – **Acts 20:33-35** – I heard a sad testimony earlier this week from a home improvement contractor I had over to the house for an estimate on a job – He has been attending a mega church in the area for a long time – one that we would all know – his observation was that the leaders made a pile of money and didn’t seem overly burdened with the workload – how vastly different from the example that the great Apostle left for Christian leaders to follow – Have we been called to be a burden to others or to lift burdens off others and direct them to put their trust in the only one who can deliver?

II. (:5-7) FUTILE COMPARISON – GOD STANDS ALONE

A. (:5) Unique Glory of the True God

*“To whom would you liken Me, and make Me equal and compare Me,
That we should be alike?”*

How can we even describe and define God? Fortunately we can look to the Lord Jesus – God incarnate – who has come down from heaven and revealed the Father

The big fights make a big deal about the weigh-ins – let’s have the fighters come and look each other in the eye and step on the scale so all can see their measurable; Mayweather fight they sold tickets to just the weigh-in for

Get out your scales and weigh up God and the competition – No Contest!

B. (:6-7) Unproductive Glitter of the False Gods

1. Making of the Idol from Gold and Silver

*“Those who lavish gold from the purse and weigh silver on the scale
Hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god;”*

2. Worship of the Idol

“They bow down, indeed they worship it.”

Young: When the work is completed and the dead gold that came from mines under the ground is made into a god, the worshippers engage in the act of supreme folly in that they bow down to what has just been created at their own expense. This is the fourth time that the making of idols is described (cf. also 40:19; 41:7 and 44:9ff.).

3. Lack of Mobility of the Idol

*“They lift it upon the shoulder and carry it;
They set it in its place and it stands there. It does not move from its place.”*

4. Ineffectiveness of the Idol

*“Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer;
It cannot deliver him from his distress.”*

III. (:8-11) SOVEREIGN PURPOSE – ACCOMPLISHING GOD’S AGENDA = ABLE TO CARRY HIS PEOPLE

A. (:8-9a) Memory Exercise Related to Sovereign Purpose

*“Remember this, and be assured;
Recall it to mind, you transgressors.
Remember the former things long past,”*

Goal: to encourage and provide assurance to undergird the faith of His people

Addresses His people as “*transgressors*” – not exactly using flattery to attract a following; tells it like it is; no benefits flow to us unless we are willing to confess our sinfulness

God wants people to use their minds – not be driven by emotion

Look at the flim flam false prophets on TV – their presentation is all about emotion – setting the scene with the appropriate music and then trying to manipulate your feelings

God addresses His presentation to the mind – He wants our minds engaged

Talked before about sermon series on the great reminder monuments that God had His people set up throughout their history – don’t forget what God has done for us in the past

Oswalt: God is not to be known in the endlessly recurring cycles of nature, mind numbing in their glorious repetitions, but in his stark, unrepeatable intrusions into history. Remember those moments, say Moses and all the prophets, for as you do, you will see reality. You will see God as he really is and know that you can entrust yourself to him.

B. (:9b-11a) Declaration and Demonstration of Uniqueness Related to Sovereign Purpose

1. (:9b) Declaration of Uniqueness

*“For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like Me,”*

2. (:10-11a) Demonstration of Uniqueness via Sovereign Purpose

a. General Demonstration of Sovereign Purpose

*“Declaring the end from the beginning
And from ancient times things which have not been done,”*

Not just knowing what is going to happen in the future because He sees the future ... instead, He is at work to establish His agenda

Edwards: not only believe that God is sovereign but that He is always exerting His sovereignty;

b. Definition of Sovereign Purpose

“Saying, 'My purpose will be established,

And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';"

Borgman: remember the judgments and deliverances = the mighty deeds of God; encourages us to hope and trust in Him today;

Plagues of Egypt and God's mighty deliverance of His people – Why?? **Ex. 7:5, 17; 8:10; 9:14, 16; 14:4, 18** – so all would know that *God is the Lord*; making His name known; God making a distinction between His people and the Egyptians

None of the gods of Egypt can do what the true God of Israel can do; tried to duplicate some of the plagues but forced to admit: *"this is the finger of God"*

c. Specific Demonstration of Sovereign Purpose

*"Calling a bird of prey from the east,
The man of My purpose from a far country."*

Specific reference to calling of Cyrus from Persia

Beall: Cyrus is called *"a bird of prey from the east"* in v. 11 because of the swiftness and fierceness of his conquests (the term for bird, from the verb meaning "to scream", is used also in Isa 18:6 [twice], and elsewhere only five times in the OT).

C. (:11b) Guaranteed Execution of Sovereign Purpose

*"Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass.
I have planned it, surely I will do it."*

IV. (:12-13) SALVATION PROMISE – MAGNIFYING GOD'S GRACE AND GLORY

A. (:12) Proclamation to the Stubborn Wicked

*"Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded,
Who are far from righteousness."*

Beall: Again, the Lord addresses Israel with an imperative, and again in uncomplimentary terms: here He calls them stubborn-hearted (lit., strong of heart) and far from righteousness. For these ones, amazingly, God declares in v. 13, that He brings His own righteousness near to them, and that His salvation will not delay: salvation will be placed in Zion; God will give His glory (or beauty) to Israel. As Young states, "the glory Israel possesses, it possesses not in and of itself but receives from its Lord as a gift" (3:229). While this salvation was seen in the incarnation of Christ, full salvation for Israel will not come until the Millennium and the final deliverance from Babylon.

B. (:13) Promise of Salvation Centered in Israel

1. Salvation is Near

*"I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off;
And My salvation will not delay."*

False religions are all about works

With God it is all about grace

2. Salvation is Narrow – Centered in Israel

*“And I will grant salvation in Zion,
And My glory for Israel.”*

Constable: God would be faithful to His covenant promises and bring salvation to Zion (cf. 44:26-28; Rom. 3:21-25; 5:8; 1 Cor. 1:30). He would soon bring the righteousness that His people lacked. This deliverance would glorify His name.

Young: The glorious news those who are far from righteousness are to hear is that God has brought His own righteousness near. What must be noted is the divine action. Man is not commanded to obtain salvation or righteousness or to approach them. Rather, the emphasis falls upon what God has done; salvation is a gift from Him alone.

CONCLUSION:

1 Pet. 5:6-7 *“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety [burden] on Him, because He cares for you.”*

Ps. 68:19 *“Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, The God who is our salvation.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When are we slow to cast our burdens on the Lord and to try to cope by our own resources?
- 2) How do false religions burden down people and frustrate them?
- 3) How would our lives be more peaceful if we truly embraced God’s sovereignty over all things that happen to us?
- 4) How has God demonstrated His patience and grace in the context of our rebellion and stubborn sin?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: Having shown that Israel will be redeemed and the Gentile nations will be subject to her, Isaiah now turns again to what will happen to Israel's nemesis, Babylon. First, in **chap. 46**, he shows how Babylon's gods are inferior to the Lord; then in **chap. 47**, he explains Babylon will fall; and finally, in **chap. 48**, the prophet returns to show how Israel will return from Babylon.

David Thompson: Exposition

Many things that can creep into our lives and replace God if we are not careful; some put faith in career; in money; house, vehicle; love relationship; people think their real identity lies in these things but when that goes south they despair; not happy; not fulfilled; feel betrayed
Nothing can do for us what God can do for us;

We have already seen amazing prediction of Cyrus;
Amazing prediction here of Babylon – would not take place for another 150 years;
God is showing His people His sovereignty – will destroy Babylon and deliver His people;

5 Amazing Prophetic Points:

1) The false Babylonian gods will not be able to save Babylon – 2 main gods mentioned here; Not standing tall but are stooped down; God has dealt them a death blow; had to lug around their own gods; people today trust in their accomplishments or education;

2) The true God of Israel takes care of His people all the days of their lives – I watch you in the womb, when you are born and all through your life; He brought Israel into existence; brought them into the Promised Land; I am your dwelling place, your security; the one who will take care of your enemies; in false religions it is the people who carry the gods; all of grace on the part of God; all of works on the part of false religion; cf. how sports throw away the has-beens; Spend your time cultivating a relationship with God

3) Nothing can be compared to a relationship to the true God of Israel – what could sinful man design that would be comparable to the true God? A lot of people worship the church instead of the God of the church; not learning the Word of God

4) God calls transgressors and idolaters to remember truths about Him – vs. 8 – use your minds; false religion plays on people's emotions; does not want them using their minds; get them emotionally revved up and charged up; you need to focus on truth;

6 great theological truths God presents here to His people:

- God is God
- God is the only God – vs. 9; emphatic by position in the Hebrew
- God is an incomparable God – vs. 9 – impossible to fully explain and define God
- God is the only God who declares the end from the beginning – vs. 10; no false religion predicts the future accurately and specifically; God knows exact instant you were entered this world and exact instant you will leave this world
- I do what I purpose and pleasure at all times; I carry out my plans; we don't know what will happen from one minute to the next; God does what He delights in doing; loves to wipe out godless things and let my people see me do it
- I will call a man who will come from a far country in the East to accomplish my purposes in Babylon; nobody can stop my agenda

5) God invites stubborn-minded people to partake of His righteousness; amazing statement of grace

Borgman: The Sovereign God Will Carry You

Prepare the people so they don't give into idolatry when pressured from Babylonian Captivity; book of Daniel gives idea of the intensity of the pressure; impotence of the idols to deliver; instead they themselves have to be carried; God gives His people a beautiful promise and supports it with statement of His absolute sovereignty;

I. (:1-4) 2 chief gods – slouching and failing; God mocks the idols; the animals are tired of carrying around the gods; sarcasm;

vs. 2 not a prophecy but a vivid picture; gods are picked up and put back into holding area; Bel-Shazzar and Neb-uchadnezzar = prefixes of these names of the two gods used by the kings

Vs. 3 passage shifts gears again; God has carried His people from the womb and is not tired out; This passage defies normal course of life; we carry infants until they grow to point where they no longer need to be carried; as we get older parents need to lean on the child for support – that natural process is not true of God

The roles will never change in this life;

God doesn't need us; we need God – continually and always

Is. 64:4 – God works on behalf of the one who waits for Him

God doesn't have any needs – self-sufficient and independent; does not need our worship and our service

God delights when we confess our weakness and find our resources in His grace

We have the deep genuine needs and we are going to resort to an idol that we have to create and carry??

Christianity is a religion for the weak and helpless

Affluence intoxicates us into thinking that we are self sufficient people; don't worry about having heat and food vs. mindset of I need God or I will die

II. (:5-7) God's Uniqueness – folly of idolatry; Cry: "Save me; Provide for me" and the idol does not answer;

Vs. 8 – affirming to His people that He will accomplish all of His purposes; call to remember; a short memory makes us into big sinners; be assured = firm, fully persuaded; take a stand and don't be budged; stand on the truth that you should know; God addresses His people as transgressors;

Illustration of Harry Ironside when atheist demanded a debate: one condition -- you bring with you 100 people who have had their lives changed by your doctrine

Vs. 10 – not just able to do this because He sees and knows all things but because He determines and controls all things in accordance with His plan and purpose

Purpose of God passages – encompasses all of your life;

- **His purpose extends to all things**

Prov. 16:4 "The Lord has made everything for His own purpose, even for the wicked for the day of evil."

Rev. 17:17 "for God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose ... " – wickedness of waging war against the Lamb – still God is in control of it all according to His plan

- **His purpose cannot be thwarted**

His purpose cannot be thwarted; Job 38 – God asks him a series of questions to show that Job is not God; **Job 42:2** "you can do all things and no purpose of yours can be thwarted" – God is not the ER surgeon just responding to the cracked skulls of life; He is the ultimate Initiator who is carrying out His agenda

Heb. 6:17 – the immutability of His purpose; it does not change

- **His purpose is eternal** – not making it up as He goes along (Ephes. 3:8ff)

Incentives for His people to trust in His promise – He will carry His people --

1) (:5-7) **God's Uniqueness** – He is not like the idols who cannot deliver

2) (:8-11) **Unrivaled Sovereignty** – Rom. 8:28 –

Vs. 10 – declaration of the general truth of God's unrivaled sovereignty –

- **His purpose also includes salvation**; Not: God put in His vote for your salvation and the devil put in his vote – now up to you to cast deciding vote! No – devil is convicted felon and cannot vote; you are too young to vote; only God’s vote counts! *“the called according to His purpose”* – **Rom. 8:28**; concerned about preeminence of Christ and that we would be conformed to His image to the glory of the Father; this plan is not ultimately about us; **Rom. 9:10-11**;

TEXT: Isaiah 47:1-15

TITLE: *DIVINE HUMILIATION OF BABYLON*

BIG IDEA:

FALSE RELIGIONS CANNOT DELIVER EVEN THE MOST POWERFUL OF NATIONS FROM THE HUMILIATION OF DIVINE VENGEANCE FOR ARROGANT PRIDE AND WICKED BEHAVIOR

INTRODUCTION:

Scripture teaches that God is the one who raises up world powers and God is the one who brings them low. We have seen this worked out in history time and time again. Here we come to the example of the **Divine Humiliation of Babylon**. If ever there was a nation that thought it was autonomous and all powerful and beyond the reach of any conqueror, it was the nation of Babylon (present day Iraq). Yet the Book of Daniel records the suddenness of its fall at the hands of Cyrus, king of Persia. **Daniel 5** – maxim = Pride goes before a Fall

What does this teach us about the mighty nation of the United States of America today? Our leaders would be foolish to imagine that they ascended to power on the basis of their own strength and wisdom. Likewise, our leaders would be foolish to imagine that the United States will not be held accountable before God for its pride and wickedness and false delusion of self sufficiency. No nation has the power to perpetuate itself forever. Pride still goes before a fall and the Lord is still in the business of raising up and bringing low as He sees fit.

FALSE RELIGIONS CANNOT DELIVER EVEN THE MOST POWERFUL OF NATIONS FROM THE HUMILIATION OF DIVINE VENGEANCE FOR ARROGANT PRIDE AND WICKED BEHAVIOR

So largely this is a **chapter of judgment**; but there is an important sub theme here as well – that of the Lord’s **protection of His elect people**

Illustration: response to Deflate gate – gloating or defending?

**I. (:1-5) REVERSAL OF FORTUNES -- HUMILIATION OF BABYLON--
REDUCED TO HARSH SLAVE LABOR BY DIVINE VENGEANCE**

Bookends declaring coming reversal of fortunes (:1, 5)

A. (:1) Reversal of Fortunes Declared

1. The Depths: Brought Low

a. Down to the Dust

“Come down and sit in the dust,”

Mark of humility and mourning – cf. Job; **Lam. 2:10** at the fall of Jerusalem
As far away from the throne as you can get

b. Dethroned

“Sit on the ground without a throne,”

You have to sit on the ground because there is no more throne

Deprived of former glory

2. The Heights: From Lofty Privilege

“O virgin daughter of Babylon;”

“O daughter of the Chaldeans.”

Rich Cathers: “virgin daughter” -- the idea is that the nation of Babylon had not yet been conquered or captured. The city walls had never been broken down.

3. The Change: From Luxury and Comfort To Harsh Subjugation

*“For you shall no longer be called **tender and delicate.**”*

Life of luxury and comfort is over
Reputation has changed drastically

B. (:2-3) Reversal of Fortunes Described

1. Commands of Subjugation and Humiliation

a. Demeaning Work of Slaves

“Take the millstones and grind meal.”

Sin leads to slavery -- Look at example of **Samson** – humiliated by being relegated to the work of the servants to grind the grain – **Judges 16:21**

Oswalt: Work at the millstones was considered the lowest form of slavery (Exod. 11:5; Job 31:10; Matt. 24:41). The lower stone, with a concave surface, had a peg fixed in the middle. The upper stone, with a convex surface, had a hole drilled in its center through which the peg of the lower stone protruded. Grain was poured into the hole while the upper stone was turned. A groove from the center to the circumference of the lower stone allowed the ground meal to work its way out.

b. Disgraceful Humiliation of Common Laborer

“Remove your veil, strip off the skirt, Uncover the leg, cross the rivers.”

Mark of humiliation for these virgins to have their veil removed and head uncovered; disgraceful

Parunak: network of irrigation rivers and canals that made the land productive; doing servile work that causes her to uncover her thigh; remove her nice flowing garments

Constable: She should remove her veil, which she, as an upper-class lady, had worn previously to hide her beauty from commoners. Removing her veil would disgrace her. She should also take off her long skirt and uncover her legs, so she could work in the fields, and wade through the irrigation ditches of the rivers. She would become not only a beggar (**Isaiah 47:1**), but a servant.

2. Causing Agent of Subjugation and Humiliation

a. Shamefully Exposed and Violated

“Your nakedness will be uncovered, Your shame also will be exposed;”

Parunak: Violent image; **Lev. 18** and **20** – euphemism for unlawful sexual relationships; I am going to expose you and you will be raped; why does our culture insist on dressing in ways that

God describes as consistent with His judgment? Degrading; Who is going to do this??

b. Judged Without Hope of Deliverance

“I will take vengeance and will not spare a man.”

Parunak: nobody will be able to intercede for you and protect you from the coming humiliation

This paragraph is about divine retribution; God is watching and there is final accountability; punishment appropriate for the crime

C. (:4) Reminder: Redemption is God’s Stance Towards His Chosen Nation

Parunak: intrusive verse because of change of voice so that Isaiah is responding here

Review of the precious names of God:

1. All About Gracious Redemption

“Our Redeemer,”

Guzik quoting **Bultema**: A *gaal* had to be a close relative. Christ is this too, for according to His humanity He came forth from the Jews. A *gaal* had to be able to deliver. The Holy One of Israel does not lack this ability. Sometimes a *gaal* had to exercise bloody vengeance. Christ will work bloody vengeance upon Babylon for its oppression of His people. Frequently a *gaal* had to pay a ransom to free a prisoner. The Lord Jesus paid with his blood on Golgotha to ransom His people. On the basis of these considerations, to which could be added many more, it is evident that the name *Gaal* is very fitting for the Savior.

2. All About Sovereign Majesty

“the LORD of hosts is His name,”

3. All About Holy Righteousness

“The Holy One of Israel.”

Isaiah making his boast in the Lord

D. (:5) Reversal of Fortunes Repeated

1. The Depths: Brought Low – Dismissed into darkness and obscurity

“Sit silently, and go into darkness,”

Motyer: Babylon is about to lose authority, liberty and position.

2. The Heights: From Lofty Privilege

“O daughter of the Chaldeans;”

3. The Change: From Majestic Rule To Harsh Subjugation

*“For you will no more be called **The queen of kingdoms.**”*

Great reversal of fortunes passage – **James 1:9-11**

II. (:6-11) REASON FOR GOD'S JUDGMENT = PRIDEFUL FALSE SECURITY OF THEIR WICKEDNESS

A. (:6) Angry Response on the Part of the Lord

1. Towards His People – Who Needed Discipline

a. Motivation of the Lord = Anger

“I was angry with My people,”

b. Characterization of the Punishment

“I profaned My heritage,”

c. Delegation of the Discipline

“And gave them into your hand.”

2. Towards the Babylonians – Who Showed Excessive Cruelty

a. No Mercy Extended

“You did not show mercy to them,”

James 2:13

b. Unreasonable Excessive Burdens

“On the aged you made your yoke very heavy.”

Application: leaders, make sure you do not abuse your authority; important to show mercy

Motyer: The sin lies in the assumptions behind Babylonian action and the manner of their accomplishment its pitilessness, indiscriminateness, arrogance, and absence of moral sense.

B. (:7-11) Arrogant Denial on the Part of the Babylonians – Diagnosis = Arrogant Pride

1. (:7) False Assumption of Superiority and Self Perpetuation

“Yet you said, ‘I shall be a queen forever.’

These things you did not consider, Nor remember the outcome of them.”

Cf. writer’s block – this is a serious memory block – you should have take the former events of history into consideration

Constable: The mark of Babylon's arrogance was that she assumed that she would continue to rule the world forever. She had defeated Assyria, which had been the most powerful world ruler for 300 years, and there was no power on the horizon that Babylon could see that would threaten her sovereignty. She had not considered that all nations are subject to Yahweh's sovereignty, that no nation is self-sufficient or self-existent. She had failed to consider that someone more powerful than herself could call her to account for her treatment of the people she had conquered.

Oswalt: Because Babylon had entered a wrong assumption, the assumption of self-existence and self-perpetuation, into the equation, everything else in that equation was thrown off. *Remember*

their end. Believing that she would rule the world forever, she did not consider that she might be held accountable for the way she treated captive peoples. Believing that she herself was the highest tribunal, she paid no attention to the results of the choices she was making day by day.

2. (:8-9) Denial of Coming Reversal of Fortune – False sense of security

Particularly **Widowhood & Childlessness**

“Now, then, hear this, you sensual one, Who dwells securely, Who says in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me. I shall not sit as a widow, Nor shall I know loss of children.' But these two things shall come on you suddenly in one day: Loss of children and widowhood. They shall come on you in full measure In spite of your many sorceries, In spite of the great power of your spells.”

- a. Cause of These Judgments = Wicked Character Flaws
 - 1) Sensuality -- given to a life of pleasure and indulgence
 - 2) False Confidence
 - 3) Devotion to the Occult
- b. Pain of These Judgments
 - 1) Widowhood
 - 2) Childlessness
- c. Severity of These Judgments
 - 1) Suddenness = “*suddenly in one day*” remember Dan. 5
 - 2) Extent = “*in full measure*”

3. (:10-11) Completely Oblivious to God’s Universal Harvest Law – No sense of accountability

a. Secure in Wickedness

“And you felt secure in your wickedness and said, 'No one sees me,'”

Guzik: This is a searching insight into the heart of the proud sinner. They trust in their continuing wickedness to cover the tracks of their previous sin. They are clever, but their wisdom in wickedness has warped them (Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you).

b. Deluded by Human Wisdom

*“Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you;
For you have said in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me.’”*

Human Knowledge and Human Wisdom puff up and make one delusional; you think too highly of yourself; you have poor discernment – cannot discern the signs of the times; have no understanding of history and no accurate expectations regarding the future

The great “I AM” passage of humanism!

God has been refuting this false, delusional claim throughout this whole section of chaps. 40-48

c. Destined for Unavoidable Disaster

*“But evil will come on you which you will not know how to charm away;
And disaster will fall on you For which you cannot atone,*

And destruction about which you do not know will come on you suddenly.”

III. (:12-15) REPUDIATION OF ALTERNATIVE SAVIORS -- THERE IS NONE TO SAVE YOU – ESPECIALLY NOT THE ASTROLOGERS

A. (:12) Taunting Tone of the Lord

1. Take Your Best Shot

*“Stand fast now in your spells
and in your many sorceries with which you have labored from your youth;”*

Jim Bomkamp: Babylon is the source of all occult practice, and in Isaiah’s day they were the center of all occult practice in the world. However, the Lord tells Babylon that the nation would fall in spite of all the sorceries and spells which her magicians, shaman, diviners, and sorcerers might cast. . .

Astrology is such a ridiculous occult practice when you think of it. The astrologer looks to the stars for the alignment of the sun, moon, planets and stars to determine what influence these planets would have upon events that occur. They believe that each planet exerts a certain distinct type of influence or drive upon men and women and is therefore associated with a certain astrological sign. A horoscope then details the alignment of these heavenly bodies during a particular designated point in time, and indicates which astrological sign(s) is being most influential. By the way, the sun exerts trillions of times more and the moon exerts millions of times more gravitational pull upon the earth than any planet. The influence of any planet upon the earth is not even measurable at this point in time, I do not believe, and the measure of any star’s influence is definitely immeasurable. Yet, superstitiously astrologers follow the guidelines of this ancient art whose roots go all of the way back to the first nation, Babylon.

Ironside: It has been characteristic down through the centuries that when men, great leaders, gave up confidence in God and His Word they readily became the prey of all sorts of charlatans. Even the infamous Hitler had a special astrologer whom he consulted as to lucky and unlucky days, and suitable times to attack nations. He consulted the map of the stars to see what was indicated. That began at Babylon. Centuries ago they had their astrologers, their star-gazers.

Cf. U.S. presidents – Ronald and Nancy Reagan

2. Try to Have An Impact – Positively or Negatively

*“Perhaps you will be able to profit,
Perhaps you may cause trembling.”*

Motyer: concerned with Babylon’s religion and its officiants. Here the question is, does it perform religion’s functions of providing strength in a crisis (12) and clear forewarnings (13)?

B. (:13-14) Charlatan Claims of False Religion Exposed

1. False Religion is Tiresome

“You are wearied with your many counsels;”

Motyer: Commitment, discipline and effort are a true part of religion, but when allied to the worthless they are only a weariness.

2. False Religion is Futile

“Let now the astrologers, those who prophesy by the stars, those who predict by the new moons, stand up and save you from what will come upon you.”

Rich Cathers:

astrologers – habar (to divide) + shamayim (heavens, sky); to be an astrologer; Horoscopes, etc.
stargazers – *chozeh* – seer; vision
monthly – *chodesh* – the new moon, month, monthly
prognosticators – *yada*– to know; (Hiphil) to make known, declare; Those who would make predictions once a month at the time of the new moon.

3. False Religion Disappoints

*“Behold, they have become like stubble, fire burns them;
They cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame;”*

4. False Religion Crushes Hopes

*“There will be no coal to warm by,
Nor a fire to sit before!”*

Motyer: False religion may seem to offer the warmth of helpfulness, but it is not a fire to sit by, rather a fire which will burn up, a furnace of destruction.

C. (:15) Misguided Meandering of Imposter Saviors

1. Wasted Your Time by Exploiting Your Loyalty

*“So have those become to you with whom you have labored,
Who have trafficked with you from your youth;”*

Motyer: Babylon labored at its religion (12), but the religious practitioners were making a trade out of Babylon.

2. Wandered Clueless and Left You Defenseless

*“Each has wandered in his own way.
There is none to save you.”*

Oswalt: These few words at the end of v. 15 capture the whole argument of chs. 40-47: everybody needs a savior; the gods and the magical worldview on which they rest cannot save; the Lord who stands outside the cosmos and directs it according to his good purposes can save; which shall we choose?

CONCLUSION:

How low can a nation go? Pretty low when it comes to divine vengeance and retribution. When the reversal of fortunes comes (and it will come) the picture is shocking.

Rev. 18

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When in our experience has God demonstrated to us the maxim that *Pride goes before a Fall*?
- 2) Can you picture the ultimate humiliation of those who today fight against God's kingdom?
- 3) What are some of the characteristics of arrogant pride with regards to political leaders and rulers of nations?
- 4) What does this passage teach about the blessing of motherhood and family relationships?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Brian Bell: The fall of Babylon is a prominent theme in Scripture.

- Starting w/Tower of Babel(Gen.11; built in Babylonia)
- End in Rev.17,18.

Babylon is a picture of worldly pride & ambition.

Grogan: The point of chapters 41-47 is that the entire structure and system of the Babylonian Empire (represented by her idols) was developed by humans [cf. the Tower of Babel, Genesis 11]; Babylon had no lasting divine sanction. Just as an idol is of human fabrication, with no autonomous power or usefulness of its own, so the entire Babylonian system of society, economics, and politics was a human fabrication which in time would collapse. Israel, then, must reserve her worship, her ultimate commitment, for YHWH. This commitment must stand above all other systems and values. YHWH may grant these systems (including Assyria, Persia) temporary sanction to do his will, but he also reserves the right to repudiate and destroy them. Only YHWH deserves worship.

David Thompson: Isaiah predicts that Babylon (Iraq) would take Judah captive and would do such bad things against Israel that would so anger God that He would destroy her partially and, ultimately, completely. The partial destruction occurred back in 539 B.C., but the complete destruction is yet to occur.

There are five prophetic facts that God reveals in this chapter.

PROPHETIC FACT #1 – When Babylon is conquered, survivors will end up sitting in the dust as humiliated slaves. **47:1-3**

PROPHETIC FACT #2 – When Babylon is conquered, Israel will praise God realizing God is Israel's God. **47:4**

What is described in verse 4 proves this has not been completely fulfilled even to this day. When all of this finally happens, Israel will be looking to Jesus Christ, her Redeemer, and will be praising God that He is the LORD of hosts and the Holy One of Israel. Obviously, to this point Israel has not come to terms with this praise, but one day she will.

PROPHETIC FACT #3 – When Babylon conquered Israel, it was because God had permitted it as a judgment against His people, but she abused her power.

47:5-7

PROPHETIC FACT #4 – When Babylon conquered Israel, she became proud of her power and security, but God would completely destroy her. **47:8-11**

There are three observations we want to make from **verse 10**:

- 1) Our feelings do not determine our security. It is possible for a person to feel good about himself or herself and be caught up in some of the most diabolical and immoral things. Real security is not in feelings but in the facts of the Word of God.
- 2) Do not ever think no one sees what we do. God knows and God sees right down to the inside of our heart.
- 3) Do not think that life is all about us and no one else. Fact is, life is not just about us; it is about God and others.

PROPHETIC FACT #5 – God urges the Babylonians to keep devoted to their false religions . and false leaders until He totally and completely destroys them.
47:12-15

Motyer: Babylon's pride showed itself in heartless exploitation (6b), disregard of the moral dimension (7), dismissal of the possibility of retribution (10), the assumption of tenure of life's good as a natural right (8) and a comfortable attitude towards religion (14). For these things the Lord "visits" them with vengeance.

Chris Strevel: The Humiliation of Babylon and All Who Make War on God

Introd: closely related to chap. 46; A judgment chapter -- gods of Babylon are in the dust; people cannot save themselves; a grace chapter -- grace of God in Judah's existence is prominent; God will not forget His people and will fulfill His promises;

I. (:1-4) The Lord's Vengeance upon Babylon

Female personification used to heighten the humiliation; Babylon looks at herself as beautiful majestic ruler; pretension to purity (virgin); antithesis of true virgin daughter; reduced to work of lowest servant; utter humiliation; complete degradation

II. (:5-7) The Reason for the Vengeance

Destiny = darkness; nation that boasted in studying the lights in the sky; mistreated God's people; divine sovereignty (I raised you up to bring chastisement on my people) and human responsibility (now I will punish you for your sins); willing, bloodthirsty conquerors and tyrants – then God wiped them off the face of the earth; they were carrying out what they wanted to do; don't give me gods who just control the good things but not the bad things; emphasis on sovereignty; arrogance and pride that does not turn to the Lord and reflect on Him;

III. (:8-11) Catalog of Babylon's Sins – 3 parallels to sins of USA

- Hedonism – pleasure rules; I do my own thing and nobody can say anything to me
- Sorcery – given to divination and astrology; star gazing (cf. Daniel references);
- Hubris (:10-11) – pretension, pride, arrogance –
 - o She denies that the Lord sees her wickedness – Prov. 14:1
 - o She trusts in her intellectual prowess (:10)
 - o She has become a god in her own eyes – “*there is none beside me*”

IV. (:12-15) A Mocking Challenge – The Folly of Babylon’s Confidence

Even your merchants (your material prosperity) can’t save the nation; your judgment is certain

Application:

- Even the most powerful nation can be brought to absolute shame and degradation; the USA has a definite ending in store for it someday; will not bring in the kingdom of God; our fortunes as the church are not wedded to this nation; love your country but remember we are Christians first and we can criticize in the light of Scripture
- The Holy One is the Protector of the Church – transcendent over all; separate; exalted; ideas of sovereignty and purity; Job: *though He slay me yet I will trust in Him*
- Nationalistic pride is especially obnoxious to the Lord – because He is the governor of the nations; not “America right or wrong”; God hates pride; calamities are precursor of future more severe judgments of God
- Nothing can save a persistently perverse nation from God’s judgment
- The Lord will destroy the persecutors of His people

We are living in a nation that has a big bulls-eye on it – we need to repent

James Faris: What to Learn When Others are Humbled

Wrong ways to respond:

- Gloat arrogantly
- Defend or argue that they should not be punished – not seeing them as bad as they are

When unbelievers fall we need to understand that it is what they deserve . . . and it is what we deserve apart from the grace of God

I. The Nature of God’s Judgment (:1-7)

A. The Reality of it (:1-3) – awful, humiliating

Babylon = symbol of city of man – **Rev. 16:19** – the wine of the fierceness of His wrath; we should stand in awe and be warned; cf. programs that take youth into prisons to observe the reality of judgment to sober them; awful thing from human standpoint

B. The Purpose for God’s Judgment (:4) – redemption emphasized

C. The Reasons for God’s Judgment (:5-7) --

- Showed contempt for the people of God and had abused them
- Very proud – the only reason someone can fall is because previously God has raised

them up; Rom. 12:3 think soberly;

Application:

- stand back and sit in awe when we see someone else fall; never gloat: they had it coming to them; while their judgment is just, we deserve the same thing; easy for us to scorn others and forget the grace of God for the depth of sin in our lives
- God’s judgment is real and deserved; don’t try to rescue someone from the hand of God; sometimes people need to suffer the consequences for their sin = tool God uses to draw people to himself

II. The Nature of Our Pride

A. Their Supposed Superiority – Is. 13:19 – thought she was invincible

B. Their Supposed Lack of Accountability

III. The Nature of His Salvation

TEXT: Isaiah 48:1-22

TITLE: GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE HEARING DEFICIENT

BIG IDEA:

THE HEARING DEFICIENT WILL NEVER EXPERIENCE PEACE AND PROSPERITY UNTIL THEY HAVE EARS TO HEAR – 4 KEYS TO SPIRITUAL LISTENING

INTRODUCTION:

As parents we have all experienced situations where our exhortations to our children fell on deaf ears. We might repeat the same warning over and over but there is no response. Teachers in the classroom can testify to the same frustration. They might as well be speaking to the wall. Sometimes people just don't seem to have *ears to hear*. That was certainly the case for God's people back in the days of Isaiah. They could be characterized as **Hearing Deficient**. Chap. 48 concludes this first of 3 sections in the final 27 chapters of Isaiah. [this section began in Chap. 40] Each section ends with a similar warning to those in Israel who remain stubborn in their refusal to turn from their rebellion and trust fully and only in their God: "*There is no peace for the wicked' says the Lord.*" (57:21; 66:24)

Look at how often words associated with hearing and listening and paying attention are used in Chap. 48. Isaiah is trying to grab the nation by the throat and shake them and tell them to wake up and pay attention to God's Message before it is too late. Remember how the Lord Jesus characterized His disciples on many occasions as being hearing deficient. Sadly the same can be said of all of us at certain times in our spiritual journey. Hopefully this message will help clean the wax out of our ears and open up the auditory passageway to receive God's message of truth.

THE HEARING DEFICIENT WILL NEVER EXPERIENCE PEACE AND PROSPERITY UNTIL THEY HAVE EARS TO HEAR – 4 KEYS TO SPIRITUAL LISTENING

I. (:1-8) PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT GOD SAYS -- GOD'S PROPHECIES – PAST AND FUTURE

A. (:1-5) Pay Attention to What God Said in the Past – Addressed to the Hearing Deficient in 2 Key Areas:

1. (:1-2) Religious Hypocrites in Terms of Pedigree (Lineage) – Not acting in Truth or Righteousness

a. Fortunate Ethnic and Religious Identity

*"Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are named Israel
And who came forth from the loins of Judah,"*

Descendants of the patriarchs; good blood lines (cf. horses from the Preakness race yesterday)

Motyer: The most striking feature of this chapter is the severity of its diagnosis of Israel

b. Failure in Practice to Live Up to Their Calling – No Allegiance

*"Who swear by the name of the LORD and invoke the God of Israel,"
But not in truth nor in righteousness."*

Cf. indictment of the Pharisees by Jesus in **Matt. 23** – you hypocrites

Parunak: Third Commandment – don't take the name of the Lord in vain

c. Futile Profession of Allegiance

*“For they call themselves after the holy city,
And lean on the God of Israel;
The LORD of hosts is His name.”*

Lean, rest, support – happy to lay claim to the God of Israel – quick to check the box “Christian” when asked their religious affiliation

Profession of faith is not the problem; big talkers; use all the right vocabulary; perform the external rites and rituals

2. (:3-5) Stubborn Idolaters in Terms of Learning Lessons

a. (:3) Track Record of God = Accurate Prophecies Fulfilled in History

*“I declared the former things long ago and they went forth from My mouth, and I proclaimed them.
Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.”*

Tone shifting – Lord is now speaking

b. (:4) Track Record of Israel = Stubborn Rebellion

*“Because I know that you are obstinate,
And your neck is an iron sinew,
And your forehead bronze,”* cf. Jer. 3:3 harlot's forehead

Is. 46:12 *“Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded”*

cf. message of Proverbs – a fool won't respond to correction

Motyer: *Stubborn* means brusque (**1 Sa. 20:10**) or cantankerous (**1 Sa. 25:3**), i.e. temperamentally difficult. The *neck of iron* is one incapable of bowing in submission, indicating self-assurance; a *forehead of bronze* indicates an opinionated person with a set mind

Oswalt: The imagery the author uses here, which occurs elsewhere in the Bible, is that of a stubborn animal that digs in its heels, stiffens its neck, and refuses to be led in a way it does not want to go.

(see Exod 32:9; **Deut 9:6, 13**).

c. (:5) Purpose of Predictive Prophecy

*“Therefore I declared them to you long ago,
Before they took place I proclaimed them to you,
Lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, And my graven image and my molten image have commanded them.’”*

Oswalt: This perversity of heart means that we refuse to see the normal signs that point to the existence of a God beyond time and space who is not subject to our control. To admit his existence would be to admit his right to rule our lives, an intolerable conclusion. Therefore we, even after we have experienced his intervention for good in our lives, like Israel, would still

rather than the works of our hands, indeed, ourselves, for whatever has been accomplished in our lives.

Remember incident of the golden calf -- **Ex. 32:4** *“This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt”*

(:6a) APPLICATION: should go with the end of vs. 5 – talking about things they have already heard and are able to look at the results and should be faithful witnesses of God’s great acts
“You have heard; look at all this. And you, will you not declare it?”

Motyer: the *former things* include the Cyrus-plan (the fall of Babylon and the release of the captives), the *new things* are the servant events (the coming of the Spirit-endowed one)

B. (:6b-8) Pay Attention to What God is Saying About the Future Addressed to the Hearing Deficient in a 3rd Key Area

1. (:6b-7) Purpose of Predictive Prophecy

*“I proclaim to you **new things** from this time, Even **hidden things** which you have not known.*

They are created now and not long ago; And before today you have not heard them,

Lest you should say, 'Behold, I knew them.' ”

Constable: God directed His people to consider carefully what He had just revealed, and they would have to admit that it was true. It was important that they come to a clear understanding of His ways because He was making other predictions about the future (i.e., Cyrus, return from exile, the coming Servant). They needed to know that He is in charge and that He is dependable. What He revealed was hidden, in that its time and method of fulfillment were not specific, but the content itself was clear enough, having been revealed generally before (cf. Gen. 15:18-21; Deut. 30:1-5).

Motyer: Created (*bara*) is used of things so great or so novel that they demand God as their agent

2. (:8) Addressed to the Hearing Deficient = Treacherous Rebels

“You have not heard, you have not known. Even from long ago your ear has not been open,

Because I knew that you would deal very treacherously; And you have been called a rebel from birth.”

Motyer: *Treachery* means to renege on a known obligation (**1 Sa. 14:33**), to prove to be a disappointment (**Jb. 6:14**), to go back on one’s word (**Is. 33:1**), and is used of family disloyalty (**Je. 12:6**) and spiritual harlotry (**Ho. 5:7**).

Illustration: TV test of emergency broadcast system – loud blaring sound to get your attention

Application: Are we paying more attention to what the world is saying than to what God is saying?

Don’t be a hypocrite; don’t be stubborn; don’t be a treacherous rebel

II. (:9-16) UNDERSTAND WHY GOD DOES WHAT HE DOES

A. (:9) Delays His Wrath to Glorify His Name

*“For the sake of My name I delay My wrath,
And for My praise I restrain it for you,
In order not to cut you off.”*

Great danger in misinterpreting God’s patience and forbearance – leads to false sense of security and delusion that you are under no accountability

Principle of divine irrevocable choice

B. (:10) Disciplines His People to Glorify His Name

*“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.”*

Image of fire is not always that all consuming fire of God’s wrath that burns the wicked in hell for eternity; also used of the refining fire of God’s loving discipline upon His own children;

Possibilities:

- “*but not for silver*” – of His own accord; not because He was paid to do this; refers to the paying of a price
- Silver did not result from the process – did not end up with a pure nation at this point in time

God uses affliction to build our character and to test us; don’t try to shortcut the process and pray that you would escape all affliction

C. (:11) Defends His Interests to Glorify His Name

*“For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act;
For how can My name be profaned?
And My glory I will not give to another.”*

God is a jealous God; would that we had such an interest in seeing the reputation of God upheld Shows why pride is so insidious – robbing God of His glory; that is why God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble

Application: We would not have so many problems with accepting what God is doing in our lives if our chief goal = promoting the glory of God

III. (:12-16) RESPECT GOD’S IMPRESSIVE CREDENTIALS

A. (:12-14a) Impressive Credentials -- in 2 Key Regards

1. (:12-13) As Creator

- a. (:12a) Listen to God = the Ultimate Initiator

“Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called;”

When the key speaker is introduced at any large public event, there is always a glowing

presentation of their credentials

They had tried to call themselves the children of God up above in vs. 2 – here we see the true divine calling by way of divine initiation

b. (:12b-13) God's Creator Credentials

*"I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.
Surely My hand founded the earth,
And My right hand spread out the heavens;
When I call to them, they stand together."* **Is. 40:26**

Tremendous *I AM* statement – picked up and amplified in gospel of John

Paranuk: there is no other God – 5th and last occurrence of this expression in Isaiah – used as absolute statement -- all in Isaiah chaps. 41-48 and in **Deut. 32:39**; Greek translation = *ego eimi*

Motyer: As first God was not pressed by any external agency into what he initiated; as last he stands unchallenged by any what he started. At the start, there was his uninhibited freedom to do as he chose; at the end, the untarnished gold of his completed work.

2. (:14) As Predictive Prophet

a. (:14a) Listen to God

"Assemble, all of you, and listen!"

b. (:14b) God's Prophetic Credentials

"Who among them has declared these things?"

**B. (:14b-15) Impactful Sovereignty --
Instrument of God's Wrath Controlled by Sovereign Hand of God**

1. (:14b) Sovereign In Judgment

*"The LORD loves him; he shall carry out His good pleasure on Babylon,
And His arm shall be against the Chaldeans."*

Near term and far term fulfillment in these verses

MacArthur: The pronouns refer to Jesus Christ whom the Lord will anoint to defeat the final Babylon at His second coming and bring Israel to her land and kingdom. "*Lord loves him*" = too strong to refer to Cyrus

2. (:15) Sovereign In Blessing

*"I, even I, have spoken; indeed I have called him,
I have brought him, and He will make his ways successful."*

C. (:16) Incarnate Revealer

1. Intimate Access

"Come near to Me, listen to this:"

Constable: The speaker of the last part of this verse is unclear. God appears to have been speaking in the first part of the verse, but now we read that God sent "Me." This may be Isaiah speaking. If so, the point is that God and His Spirit had sent Isaiah to communicate and to confirm the truthfulness of what God had just said. Another view is that Messiah, the Servant, speaks (cf. v. 12). The point then would be that the Messiah would testify to the truth of what God had just said—empowered by the Spirit. A third view is that the speaker is an unknown leader. I prefer the second view. The Servant speaks again in **49:1-6**. Since the speaker in the context is the Lord, it seems more natural that a member of the Godhead would say these words than the prophet. If true, this is one of the clearest Old Testament intimations of the Trinity.

2. Irrefutable Track Record

*“From the first I have not spoken in secret,
From the time it took place, I was there.”*

- public predictive prophecy
- personal involvement and full knowledge

You can hear intimations of **John 1** here – *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”*

3. Incarnate Mission

“now the Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit.”

61:1-7 reference to Messiah speaking here
Close link to the Messiah and to the Holy Spirit

IV. (:17-21) OBEY GOD’S COMMANDS

A. (:17-19) Blessing Promised for Obedience

1. (:17) Prosperity Taught By the Lord

*“Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel;
‘I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit,
Who leads you in the way you should go.’”*

True prosperity gospel --

2. (:18-19) Prosperity Tied to Obedience

a. One Condition = Obedience

“If only you had paid attention to My commandments!”

Don’t want your life to be one of regret; great potential but missing out on the blessing of God

b. Three Consequences

1) Abundant Prosperity and Righteousness

*“Then your well-being would have been like a river,
And your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”*

2) Abundant Progeny

“Your descendants would have been like the sand,

And your offspring like its grains;”

3) Abiding Perpetuation

*“Their name would never be cut off
or destroyed from My presence.”*

Constable: Israel could also have enjoyed the blessings promised to Abraham more fully, and sooner, than she has. Israel's identity as a nation among other nations ceased because of her sin, but her identity as the chosen people of God did not. This verse does not teach that the *future fulfillment* of the promises to Abraham was contingent on Israel's obedience. God gave those promises unconditionally (cf. Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 15:5; 22:17). It does reflect that the *present enjoyment* of those benefits depended on her obedience (cf. Deut. 28—29).

B. (:20-21) Blessing Experienced in Exodus From Babylonian Captivity

1) (:20) Missionary Proclamation

a. Command to Flee Captivity

“Go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans!”

Remember Lot's wife did not obey the command to flee Sodom and not look back

Illustration: Reference the song The Gambler

b. Command to Trumpet Redemption

*“Declare with the sound of joyful shouting, proclaim this,
Send it out to the end of the earth;
Say, ‘The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob.’”*

2. (:21) Miraculous Provision

*“And they did not thirst when He led them through the deserts.
He made the water flow out of the rock for them;
He split the rock, and the water gushed forth.”*

(:22) WARNING FOR THE HYPOCRITICAL, STUBBORN REBEL

“‘There is no peace for the wicked,’ says the LORD.”

Constable: God's final word that His people needed to hear was a word of warning (cf. 57:21). For the wicked there is no peace (Heb. *shalom*, the fullness of divine blessing, cf. v. 18). The wonderful promise just summarized (vv. 20-21) was no guarantee that Israel would enjoy God's richest blessing if she continued to practice wickedness. The wicked Babylonians would not enjoy His *shalom*, and neither would they.

CONCLUSION:

Look at emphasis in Book of Revelation – book of future predictive prophecy – 8 times: *“He who has an ear, let him hear”* – vitally important; chaps. 2-3 in the messages to the 7 churches; **13:9**

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How sensitive is your spiritual hearing these days?
- 2) In what ways have we been hypocritical?
- 3) In what areas have we been stubborn?
- 4) Why aren't we bolder to trumpet the blessing of redemption which God has accomplished so graciously for us?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Israel doesn't appear to be any better than Babylon in her conduct; yet Lord promises not to cut off His people totally for His name sake; God's salvation motivated by His pure free grace (:9-11);

(:1-2) Commands the people – you falsely call on my name; but God has called them

Discussion of God's credentials – He created all things; He predicts the future (a bakeoff – whose product will be more successful); we have seen these credentials before

His Servant will bear witness to both of these things

Verb “to hear” stands out in this chapter; Gentiles exhorted to come; but Israel is already there; they have the oracles of God; all they have to do is hear; references to the nation in the plural emphasizes the individual members;

- Characterizes them genealogically – descendants of the patriarchs; good stock
- Spiritually they claim the God of Israel as their God – they swear in the name of this God; invoking this God to watch over you and make sure you did what you said
Third commandment: don't take the name of the Lord in vain – don't advertise yourself as identified with Me and then fail to live up to it
- Psychologically they think of themselves as citizens of Zion

Tone shifts in vs. 3; Isaiah speaking in vv.1-2; now the Lord begins to speak; look at pronoun shift in vs. 6; all singular except one little plural piece stuck in the middle – *Will not You proclaim it* – separates the **two portions of the prediction claim** – the *former things* (promises already fulfilled) vs the *new things* (promises not yet fulfilled) – in each of the 2 sections:

- Look at what God has done
- His motives for doing it
- Israel's culpability

Prediction involves God's Word; God can predict because He is the one who carries out what He predicts – controls all things; had to produce good evidence because you are so stubborn; stiff-necked; you can't pull the head in the direction you want them to turn; you display emotion on your brow – unresponsive to any correction; Jer. 3:3;

Where did God make a promise, fulfill it and after the fact Israel attributed it to idol = golden

calf after the Exodus; Gen. 15 = prophecy – I will bring them out rich; prophecy sat there for generations; Ex. 12 is record of fulfillment -- Israelites asked of the Egyptians for gold and silver and precious jewels – take it and leave; Ex. 32:4 Aaron made molten calf – these gods brought you up out of land of Egypt

Israel has no excuse – has witnessed the acts of God; still won't believe or serve the Lord in truth and righteousness

Sarcasm: can you explain it to them; I don't seem to be getting through (the cosmos or the nations?)

(:9-13) In between the 2 presentations of God's credentials (He predicts the future and He is the Creator), you have vv.9-11 Speaks of His saving work for Israel – these 3 verses are a chiasm within a chiasm (Why, What He is doing, Why = motivation)

Vs. 9 -- 3 characs. of God's salvation:

- What are you saved from – what is the risk – that God might decide to wipe us out; need to be more concerned about being saved from God Himself than from our problems
- How can you be saved – **Means of salvation** – a change in God's attitude towards us; I am justified to be angry but I will restrain my wrath; not based on a change in us
- **Motive for His restraint**
 - o For my praise – created to praise God – looking forward; that we might glorify God; worship Him; magnify Him
 - o For my name's sake – looking back from point of salvation – to preserve God's reputation because He has made promises; God cannot lie; Father has given His people to His Son as a gift and will not destroy them

Describes the suffering they have endured and its purpose – picture of refining silver; dross = the junk that comes off; but for the nation, all they have is dross = junk metal

Your suffering has been a purification and refining process;

“*but not for silver*” – you didn't pay me anything to work this improvement process on you

This refining was God's idea; not your idea

Deut. 4 reference – iron furnace originally was Egypt

Vs. 11 brings us back to same theme as vs. 9 – same 2 motives; all the blessing to Israel is wrapped into vv. 9-11; on either side you have the credentials of the Lord

vv. 12-13 -- To get their attention to listen, God has to give His credentials

Come to God's role as the Creator – key is has God called us; they called themselves God's people in vs 2 but this was a false profession; God had chosen them

Concise summary of the theology of chaps. 40-48 focusing on God's creative power

3 claims – all applied to Lord Jesus in the NT – especially in John's gospel and book of Revelation; great proof of claim of Jesus to deity --

- *I am He* – there is no other God – 5th and last occurrence of this expression in Is.
 - o Absolute statement all in Isaiah chaps. 41-48 and in Deut. 32; Greek translation = *ego eimi* – Lord Jesus takes this title to Himself in John; there is none else; John 4; 8:24;
- *I am the First and the Last* – comes before everything else and will be there when everything is gone; other instances in this section of Isaiah; NT refs;
- God made everything (**vs. 13**) – 3 examples
 - o *Laid the foundation of the earth* – on which we stand; hung the earth on

- nothing
- *Spread out the heaven* – **40:12** – span – distance between thumb and little finger spread out; God measured things out and placed them in right locations
- *When I call to them, they stand together* – He calls the stars all by name; **Is. 40:26**

David Thompson:

This chapter explains why the nation of Israel is still in such disarray and under such hardship; you belong in the Promised Land and when you have the opportunity I want you to return there and worship Me; while we are here on earth we should enjoy the good things God has given us; but never forget our pilgrim existence; we are not home

4 main addresses:

I. (:1-11) My prophetic plan that has been revealed includes many hardships that are coming directly from my hand because of your **rebellion**

A. Your prayers and life are not based on righteousness and truth; you talk a good name in terms of doctrine, but your hearts are not right with me; their profession of faith did not match their heart and their practice; you have religion but not relationship

Our nation is not blessed of God because we are not characterized by righteousness and truth

B. God has revealed all of these prophecies ahead of time so they would give Him the credit instead of their idols – these people were given to idolatry; their own way of worship and thinking; how do you get to a place where you are no longer pliable and sensitive to the Spirit of God? Just start condoning things that are wrong; justify what you are doing; rely in a wrong way on grace – you can become as hard-hearted as Israel; a fraud and a rebel against the truth of God

C. God is going to do some new things that He is telling them ahead of time – 2 levels of prophecy

- ancient prophecies – we can see how God has fulfilled them

- new prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled

Things that pertain to both judgment and to grace; I will tell you about a new wrath that you know nothing about – end times world times extermination program; hidden things that you have not known; also there will be a new time of grace in end times

D. God's people need to know that the only reason God has not destroyed them is because of His name being on the line – not because you have been faithful to me; I will do what I have promised to do

II. (:12-16) God calls His people to realize that He is the sovereign God who can deliver either blessings or cursings depending how they respond to His word – makes 6 sovereign statements about Himself

You come near to me and I can deliver you from your stubborn rebellion

III. (:17-19) God calls His people to listen and obey His Word because that is what leads to blessing – 4 powerful points:

- My teaching can lead a person in a profitable way; bible is best book for counseling
- God's teaching leads a person in the way he should go – God doesn't want us to end up as failures
- Obedience to God's commands lead us to a life of overflowing peace and righteousness; some people just can't get the peace and victory they want
- Obedience to God's command leads to an enduring posterity (:19) – God will make your name blossom

IV. (:20-22) God calls His people to listen to Him and flee Babylon so that they can experience peace; if you don't, there is no peace for the wicked

We can become so accustomed to this world that we forget that we are just pilgrims here; our citizenship is in heaven; get committed to truth and righteousness and your relationship to Christ; then out of your life will flow rivers of righteousness

TEXT: Isaiah 49:1-13

TITLE: *SERVANT SONG #2 – GOD’S SECRET WEAPON UNVEILED*

BIG IDEA:

GOD’S SERVANT-KING WILL SUCCEED IN HIS MISSION OF BLESSING ISRAEL AND BRINGING LIGHT TO A LOST WORLD

INTRODUCTION:

The nature of **Progressive Revelation** (God making His plans known over time in an increasingly detailed manner) means that God doesn’t lay all of his cards face-up on the table from day one. That should be no surprise to those who have studied God’s Word for any length of time. Think of all of the prophecies that we have seen just in the book of Isaiah. Think of the concept of mysteries – truths previously not disclosed by God in the OT but now revealed in the NT for our benefit.

In our passage for today we see the **unveiling of God’s Secret Weapon**.

Illustration: When I coached the girls’ soccer teams at CAA, I used to make my daughters a little uncomfortable with my stress on using your secret weapon = screening the opponent away from the ball with your rear end – watching women’s World Cup yesterday with Steve and Jenny – saw a great illustration of this – we were laughing about it

No laughing matter when it comes to God’s Secret Weapon. You didn’t know that God had a special, designated Secret Weapon that He took out of His quiver at just the right time in history.

We are in the second of 4 servant songs:

42:1-9 Servant Song #1 – Justice on Earth is Coming

49:1-13 – today’s passage

50:4-11

52:13-53:12

Oswalt: In subtle but nevertheless clear ways the focus has shifted from the physical captivity of the Judeans to the moral and spiritual captivity of Israel and the whole world.

GOD’S SERVANT-KING WILL SUCCEED IN HIS MISSION OF BLESSING ISRAEL AND BRINGING LIGHT TO A LOST WORLD

- **STRENGTH FOR HIS MISSION**
- **SCOPE OF HIS MISSION**
- **SUCCESS OF HIS MISSION**

I. (:1-4) THE STRENGTH FOR THE MISSION OF GOD’S SERVANT-KING

A. (:1) Strength By Virtue of Divine Commissioning

“Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, you peoples from afar.

The LORD called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me.”

Oswalt: call to hear ties this section back to chap. 48

Isaiah constantly harps on this theme of listening and paying attention – like a horse that should prick up its ears when something important around them is happening – how about that American Pharoah! There’s a horse that listens and pays attention to its jockey

Is. 1:3 “*An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master’s manger, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand.*”

Is. 6:8-10

Key to this section = **Who is speaking here?**

- Could it be Cyrus still
- Could it be the nation of Israel viewed collectively?
- Could it be the prophet Isaiah or another one of the prophets?

We know that it is the **Messiah** – God’s promised Servant-King -- that will become clear as we go through the text – here we can at least say that it is a person somehow distinct from God the Father; it also seems to lend itself more to a person than a nation with the reference to being birthed from his mother’s womb

Beall: Already there is quite a distinction in the status of this Servant, for He commands the people to hear Him, much as God did in the previous chapter (see 48:16). In comparing the previous mention of the Servant in chap. 42, one sees that it was God who introduced the Servant in 42:1 (the Servant Himself did not speak); now, however, the Servant tells the coastlands to hear Him. Implicit in all this is the idea that the Servant is someone worthy of obeying.

Parunak: Pre-birth naming is not as common, but occurs with Ishmael, John the Baptist, and our Lord. (Jer. 1:4-5; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 1:4)
Cf. the sons of Isaiah

We all have been divinely commissioned from before we were born as well – sovereignty of God in Election

B. (:2) Strength by Virtue of Divine Empowering = God’s Secret Weapon – 2 Images

1. Sharp Sword – Hidden in the Hand -- Effectiveness

*“And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword;
In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me,”*

Contrasted to the military power of Cyrus – Here we have the power of God’s Word – the message of truth

Hos. 6:5 “*Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets [did the prophets run around with swords hacking at those who did not repent?]; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And the judgments on you are like the light that goes forth.*” -- You can’t stop the light from going forth

Beall: This statement both echoes back to the messianic king passage in Isaiah, **Isa 11:4** (“*the rod of his mouth*”), as well as the description of the Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation. **Rev 1:16**, describing the Lord, states that “*out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*” (so also **Rev 2:12**; compare **Heb 4:12**). In **Rev 19:15**, with reference to the Lord’s Second Coming, **Isa 11:4** and **49:2** are combined: “*Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword that with it He*

should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron.” As **Young** states, these words indicate that “his is an office of the mouth . . . for he is a prophet par excellence, and his word is the Gospel” (3:268).

Constable: Cyrus' calling was to liberate Israel with the sword, but this speaker's calling was to announce words from God, piercing, incisive words that would cut like a sword (cf. 1:20; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16; 19:15). . . Both the sword and the arrow were offensive weapons, the former used at short range and the latter at longer range. Likewise this Servant's words would be instruments that would defeat enemies.

2. Select Arrow – Hidden in the Quiver -- Accuracy

*“And He has also made Me a select arrow;
He has hidden Me in His quiver.”*

Parunak: Both of these images, the sword and the arrow, are of instruments of destruction. As we move into this section that focuses on the Servant's work of redemption, it's interesting that he is presented first as the instrument of God's judgment. The message of salvation makes no sense unless we first of all understand that we are sinners under judgment. And the one who provides our salvation is also the one who will judge

John 12:48

Grogan: Concealment . . . suggests an eternal purpose manifest at the appropriate time (cf. 1 Peter 1:20).

Oswalt: out of sight until the right moment to be displayed

Motyer: The sharpness of a *sword* is its effectiveness; a polished arrow is rubbed free from roughness or unevenness which might deflect it in flight, hence its accuracy. The *sword* wins victories close at hand (6a); the *arrow* hits distant targets (6b; cf. 57:19; Eph. 2:17).

Certainly the **logos of John 1** is the ultimate fulfillment of this secret weapon revealed here

We all have been divinely empowered with spiritual gifts that bear fruit for the building up of God's kingdom – are we actively using those gifts to glorify God? Do we consider ourselves equipped and empowered by God?

C. (:3-4) Strength by Virtue of Divine Rewarding

How do you measure success? How do you know if your service for God is effective?

How do you know if what you are doing in life has any impact?

In these verses we see God Incarnate – Immanuel – the Messiah – God's Servant-King wrestling with these questions

1. (:3) God's Intent

“And He said to Me,”

a. The Role of the Servant

“You are My Servant, Israel,”

Martin: The Messiah is called Israel because He fulfills what Israel should have done. In His person and work He epitomizes the nation.

Oswalt: it is the function, not the identity, of Israel that is emphasized. This Servant is going to function as Israel. . . to be the means whereby the nations could come to God.

Beall: Is it the nation Israel that is meant here? This would seem to be precluded both by v. 1 (“my mother”) and by the work of the Servant in vv. 5-6 (to restore Israel: how can a nation restore itself?). Rather, the point is that the Messianic Servant is called Israel, because He will fulfill all that Israel was supposed to do and be before the Lord—namely, to be a light to the whole world (v 6). The Messianic Servant is the true Israel, much as Jesus in the NT says that He is the true vine, in contrast to Israel (John 15:1). It should also be noted that the name Israel originally referred to an individual, Jacob, and not a nation. Thus, in a sense, in the Servant-Messiah, the term has come full cycle: the nation, having come from an individual (Jacob), will find its ultimate fulfillment, identity, and purpose in an individual (the Messiah). That the Father is glorified by the work of the Servant/Messiah (specifically, His work of redemption accomplished through the cross) is indicated in various NT passages (for example, John 12:28; 13:31-32; 14:13; 17:4-5).

b. The Reward of the Servant

“In Whom I will show My glory.”

Parunak: The Hebrew verb is reflexive; we might translate, *“I will glorify myself.”*

2. (:4) Servant’s Expectation

“But I said,”

a. The Frustration of the Servant – Results Look Unimpressive

“I have toiled in vain,

I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity;”

b. The Faith of the Servant – Reward Comes from God -- **Heb. 12:2**

“Yet surely the justice due to Me is with the LORD,

And My reward with My God.”

Constable: This verse clarifies that feelings of futility and faith in God need not be mutually exclusive. The Servant trusted God for the final outcome of His ministry, though as He was carrying it out, it appeared to be ineffective. The Apostle Paul took the same view of his ministry (cf. **Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Cor. 4:1-5**).

Key for a servant is being faithful!

1 Peter 2:21

Motyer: despondency arises through listening to ourselves and our self-assessment *etc.*, instead of looking to God, recalling his purposes, living according to our dignity in him and rediscovering in him our source of power."

Oswalt: Trust has ultimately to do with the final outcome, and of this the Servant is fully confident. It is God, the God who called him, equipped him, and is using him, who will make the final adjudication concerning the Servant's work.

II. (:5-6) THE SCOPE OF THE MISSION OF GOD'S SERVANT-KING

Transition to Jehovah speaking

A. (:5) National -- Restoration of Nation Israel

*“And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him, in order that Israel might be gathered to Him
(For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength),”*

Remembers His divine commissioning and empowering that spoke of the strength for His mission

Now He gets more specific regarding the scope of His mission:

- *To bring Jacob back to Him*
- *in order that Israel might be gathered to Him*

Think through the **amillennial approach** and how it just cannot do justice to passages like this – we are in the midst of 2 verses that continue to make a huge distinction between what God will do for the nation Israel and what God will do for the rest of the nations of the world; it would make no sense to interpret Israel here as the church

God is going to come through on all of the specific covenantal promises He has made to Abraham and David and to the Jewish nation

Concludes with a reference to the rewarding that God will accomplish and the testimony once again that all of His strength for ministry derives from God the Father

B. (:6) Global – Bringing Salvation Light to the Lost World

*“He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also make You a light of the nations
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’”*

Beall: This message must surely have been hard for Israel to understand at that time. Yet, how the Lord prepared the way years ahead for the ministry of the Messiah! Shortly after the birth of Christ, the devout man Simeon, who was “*waiting for the Consolation of Israel,*” (Luke 2:25) praised the Lord in the words of this verse (and 42:6): “*For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel*” (Luke 2:30-32). Jesus' proclamation in John 8:12 (“*I am the light of the world*”) surely is the beginning of the fulfillment of this verse. After Jesus' resurrection, Paul and Barnabas cited this verse as evidence that the Lord had told them to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47): the mission of the Servant was carried out by His disciples as well (Jesus told his disciples that they were “*the light of the world*” [Matt 5:14-16]). Finally, the ultimate fulfillment will be in the Millennium, when the whole world will see the Light and the salvation which He brings.

Motyer: The thought is not that the Servant is the agent in communicating salvation but that he is in his own person the salvation the world needs, and, in the same way, the world's *light*.

III. (:7-12) THE SUCCESS OF THE MISSION OF GOD'S SERVANT-KING

Two sub sections each introduced by *“Thus says the Lord”*

A. (:7) Success Defined in Terms of Kingdom Respect

1. Only God is Worthy of All Respect

- a. Unique Sovereign

“Thus says the LORD,”

- b. Only Redeemer

“the Redeemer of Israel,”

- c. Undeified Holy One

“and its Holy One,”

2. Servant-King Despised at His First Coming

- a. Despised

“To the despised One,”

John 1:10 – His own countrymen did not believe Him; His own family did not believe Him; religious leaders did not believe Him

Is. 53:3

1 Cor. 2:7, 14

Matt. 10:24-25 If the world sees Christ in you, here is what you can expect

- b. Abhorred

“To the One abhorred by the nation,”

- c. Submitting to Servant Role

“To the Servant of rulers,”

3. Servant-King Respected and Worshiped at His Second Coming

“Kings shall see and arise,

Princes shall also bow down;”

Constable: This verse distinguishes two aspects of the Servant's ministry: the first characterized by rejection and humiliation (cf. v. 4; 52:13—53:12), and the second marked by acceptance and glorification. The first advent of Christ fulfilled the first aspect and His second advent will fulfill the second aspect. All that Israel had experienced—being despised, abhorred, and used—the Servant would experience (cf. vv. 25-26). And all that God intended Israel to be—admired, respected, and served—the Servant will become.

4. God Exalts His Servant-King According to His Promises

“Because of the LORD who is faithful,

the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.”

B. (:8-12) Success Defined in Terms of Kingdom Blessings

“Thus says the LORD,”

1. (:8-9a) Kingdom Blessing of Deliverance – Freeing the Captives

a. Saving

*“In a favorable time I have answered You,
And in a day of salvation I have helped You;”*

b. Sustaining

*“And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people,
To restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages;”*

c. Shining

*“Saying to those who are bound, 'Go forth,'
To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.’”*

2. (:9b-10) Kingdom Blessing of Provision -- Sustaining Shepherding

a. (:9b) Nurturing Shepherding

*“Along the roads they will feed,
And their pasture will be on all bare heights.”*

b. (:10a) Protective Shepherding

*“They will not hunger or thirst,
Neither will the scorching heat or sun strike them down;”*

c. (:10b) Compassionate Shepherding

*“For He who has compassion on them will lead them,
And will guide them to springs of water.”*

3. (:11-12) Kingdom Blessing of Community -- Road Building for Regathering

a. (:11) Removal of All Obstacles

*“And I will make all My mountains a road,
And My highways will be raised up.”*

Constable: God will also make His mountainous barriers as flat as a road so His people can come to His habitation. He will also build His highways so they will be thoroughfares for His people (cf. 11:16; 19:23; 36:8; 40:3-4; 42:16; 62:10).

b. (:12) Regathering from Distant Regions

*“Behold, these shall come from afar;
And lo, these will come from the north and from the west,
And these from the land of Sinim.”*

Constable: Sinim may refer to Aswan in southern Egypt, which marked the southern border of the civilized world in Isaiah's day.

Oswalt: Syene, or Aswan, at the southern edge of Egypt. We know from the Elephantine Letters that a colony of Jews was well established there in the 5th century B.C., so it is possible that this fact, plus the fact that this was the southern border of Egypt (so Ezek. 29:10; 30:6), and thus of the civilized world, accounts for its use here.

(:13) CALL FOR UNIVERSAL PRAISE

*“Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth!
Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains!
For the LORD has comforted His people,
And will have compassion on His afflicted.”*

Constable: Isaiah concluded by calling on the whole created universe to rejoice because the Lord had comforted His people (cf. 40:1; 47:6) and had shown compassion on His formerly afflicted nation (cf. 42:10-13; 44:23; 45:8; 52:8-9; 55:12-13). This is rejoicing over deliverance from sin, not just exile. When the Servant completes His work of salvation, the whole creation, not just humankind, will experience liberation from the effects of the Fall (cf. Rom. 8:19-22).

Oswalt: The language is that of ecstatic praise. The verbs for *shout* and *exult* occur most frequently in the Psalms, but the book in which both occur next in frequency is Isaiah. This element of exultation is clearly at the heart of what the book is about. The book rings with the certainty of God’s ultimate triumph for the sake of his people, no matter who the enemy is: Assyria, Babylon, or the great enemy, sin. Isaiah knows that God will be the victor and that not only his own people but all people will be the beneficiaries.

CONCLUSION:

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Is it surprising to see the Messiah express what sounds like frustration at his own evaluation of the ministry results associated with His First Coming?
- 2) Do you have a global missionary mindset that fully embraces the Great Commission?
- 3) What are some of your favorite kingdom blessings?
- 4) How are you encouraged by God’s character as one who shows compassion to the afflicted and one who comforts His people?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: With chapter 49 we begin a new section of the book. In chapters 40-48 the ministry of the servant Cyrus was especially in view; now, in chaps. 49-57, a greater deliverer is presented, the Servant-Messiah, who will ultimately redeem both Israel and the Gentiles. Cyrus is not

mentioned or alluded to in chaps. 49-66. This theme is not unique to this section only, because both the Servant and the world-wide mission had been introduced earlier (the Servant in 42:1-9, and the mission in 42:4-7). Now the theme is expanded.

Parunak: The whole nine chapters [49-57] consist of a beautiful embroidery of three main ideas:

- the Servant by whose suffering the Lord will redeem his people,
- the restoration that the Servant will achieve over their humiliation,
- and their responsibility to accept that blessing.

God sends his suffering Servant to deliver mother Zion from her humiliation, and challenges her to receive the blessing that he has thus purchased for her.

Parunak: two ways in which the Servant in vv. 4-5 is distinct from the nation as a whole.

1. In previous references to the nation as the Servant, it is blind and deaf to God's revelation (42:19), sinful and in need of forgiveness (44:22 "*I have blotted out ... thy transgressions*"). Here, the Servant is laboring faithfully in spite of discouragement.

2. The mission of the Servant in previous passages is to bear witness to the Lord, something that the nation does even when it sins and receives the Lord's public judgment. Here, the Servant's task is to restore the nation, something that makes no sense if the Servant is identical with the nation.

David Thompson:

No true happiness (songs of joy) apart from focus on Jesus Christ; very heart of the book; previous chapters about Cyrus; now we see a deliverer far greater than Cyrus; God lays out a program of salvation that included 2 comings of Christ, amazing sacrifice and amazing reign; Rejection of the God's Servant-Savior followed by outreach to the Gentiles; in the end both Jews and Gentiles will honor Jesus Christ;

3 main prophetic messages:

I. (:1-4) God calls the nations of the world to understand His Servant's First Coming

Jesus is laying out His program for both Israel and the Gentiles before He steps one foot in this world;

Listen = carefully understanding and learning; *Pay attention* = perk up your ears and zero in on the message; ongoing activity;

Some people believe that prophecy was not intended to be understood – not the case;

Understand the Person and Work of God's Servant-Savior – 9 observations

1. God's Servant-Savior is God – Jesus speaking here
2. Called from the Womb – come into this world in fleshly human form; born through the womb of a virgin; holy from the womb as opposed to born with a sin nature
3. Named while in my mother's womb – why do we have 2 names?? Population increased so they added a surname:
 - basis of occupation;
 - basis of location;
 - basis of family connection;
 - basis of physical characteristics

Name Jesus given by God to Him – not named by Dad and Mom;

- 4) Would speak the Word of God – baffling the scholars of the world by age 12; never did a man speak this way; with authority and power; something riveting about His speech; the sharp truth of God; cuts open souls
- 5) Would be concealed – When Jesus comes the first time the mass of people will not get it; 2 different Hebrew words – Hiphal stem – God causing this concealment --
 - God the Father hiding His identity
 - His identity would be concealed or veiled
 No clue to His divine nature; Matt. 11 – you have hidden my identity from many people and revealed it to certain sinners
- 6) Be like a sharp arrow – ministry did not look like it was accomplishing much; arrows shoot one thing at a time – not like a machine gun; you target just one thing; specifically aim my work at specific individuals
- 7) Will be identified as Israel – everything that is connected to Israel is connected to Jesus Christ; can give her all the promises of God; I am her link to right relationship to God
- 8) Will glorify God in everything He will do – as we mature we should be more sensitive to how far short we fall of the glory of God;
- 9) Would not see many visible results in First Coming – brought the power of God to this world almost in vain; deserving of worship; but Jesus was not depressed because He knew what He was accomplishing was connected to the judicial program of God (G. Campbell Morgan)
Making it possible for sinners to be made righteous in the sight of holy God

II. (:5-7) God Wants the nations of the world to understand what his second coming would be like

- 1) God's Servant-Savior will eventually gather up Israel and restore her to God – will eventually have very visible results; you better not demean Israel;
- 2) God's Servant-Savior will take salvation to all the earth – vs. 6 – not just King of the Jews – that is too small a thing; putting you in charge of the whole world
- 3) God's Servant-Savior will be honored by Israel and all the nations – vs. 7 –

III. (:8-13) God Calls the Nations to Understand the Final Program of God's Servant-Savior

Discussion between God the Father and Son 750 years before He enters into the world

- 1) God's Servant-Savior's prayer will be answered (:8) – when Jesus was hanging on the cross: *Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing*
- 2) God's Servant-Savior's suffering will be helped – you are never alone
- 3) God's Servant-Savior will be kept (:8) – you will go through some low times; Matt. 26:51ff
- 4) You will be Israel's Covenant – you are the reason I will do what I have promised to do
- 5) Will restore Israel's land – Americans cannot give Israel her land
- 6) Would return captives of Israel to her land
- 7) Transform Israel's land into a glorious land
- 8) Servant-Savior will bring people from all over the world
- 9) Will transform the heavens and the earth (:13)

Jesus knew all of this before He ever came into this world . . . and He did it anyway;
Why would Christ be willing to do all this? Because God loved the world

Clay Curtis – Christ's Resolve, Our Resolve (:4-13)

When Christ came He took the form of a servant; served God; believed and trusted God; served Him in perfect holiness and righteousness; took our place as the one guilty sinner who bore the

wrath of God;

I. Christ Jesus is touched with feeling of our infirmities

Vs. 4 – *I have labored in vain* – we know that nothing that Christ did was in vain;

Is. 53:10 – His death was not in vain; He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied;

He is adding to the church daily such that should be saved; not preaching the gospel in vain;

John 1:10 – speaking of how the Lord was despised and rejected by men when He came;

My Savior has walked where I now walk – gives me comfort when I am despised and rejected

Jeremiah: I will not make mention of Him or speak anymore of His name – but he couldn't stop testifying

II. See Christ as Our Example to Follow

My cause and My mission have been given to me by God; He is pleased with the work He sent me to do; Christ didn't stop preaching Election when people resisted the truth; we have been called to suffer with Him

Impossible for us to fail since Christ did not fail

III. Be a Light to the World

David Bissett: (:1-7) A Light to the World

John Stott: the invisibility of God has long been a problem; God solved this problem in Christ –

John 1:18; 1 John 4:12 – reference now is to the people of God – that is how God makes himself visible today; we must be a community of love

I. God Made His Servant Into a Light – here the focus is more clearly on the mission of that servant; Who is the servant here? Jesus is the Messiah of Light

Refers to the one who would embody true Israel; context 48:1 – some may claim to be Israel who are not truly Israel; this one will regather the nation (vs. 6) so can't be equal to the nation; this servant given a mission of light; effective speech; prepared to do conflict engagement; equipped and armed; preaching message of truth; mission of revelation; would be met with unbelief and ignorance; light is one of the themes of Isaiah; Is. 9:2 “*have seen a great light*”;

Luke 1:76 “*to give light to those who sit in darkness*”; a new light coming into the world; fulfillment of servant prophecies of Isaiah; John 1:4, 7-9; 8:12; 9:5

Widely diffused light; visible all over

II. God's People are to be a Light –

Gen. 12:1-3 Israel called to be a light to the nations

God's purpose always includes that His people should be a blessing to others;

Deut. 7:6-8

Matt. 5:14-16

Luke 16:8

John 3:19 men love the darkness; don't welcome the light

Wayne Joyce: The Mission of the Servant of Jehovah

God's servant is light to the world and comfort to His own people the Jews

I (:1-6) Ideal Servant Speaks

Speaking to distant lands;

John 12:48 God's Word is sharp and cutting

“*Israel*” as ideal Messiah

- Ex. 4:22-23 “*Israel is my son*”

- Hos. 11:1 “*when Israel was a child . . . called my son out of Egypt*”

- Matt. 2:15 applied personally to the individual Jesus; “*spoken of the Lord*”

II. (:7-13) Jehovah Speaks

III. (:14-26) Zion Speaks

TEXT: Isaiah 49:14 – 50:3

TITLE: WHAT CAN SEPARATE ME FROM THE LOVE OF GOD?

BIG IDEA:

THE LORD GOD IS A PARTNER BELIEVERS CAN COUNT ON TO NEVER LEAVE US OR FORSAKE US

INTRODUCTION:

Stories of abandonment tug at our hearts. We might hear in the news of some poor newborn child that has been abandoned by its mother and found in some isolated spot. Our culture has trivialized abandonment when it comes to marriage vows – today a spouse can forsake their covenant partner and obtain a divorce whenever they please. I hate the radio commercial for the law firm Cordell & Cordell that pledges to help men in securing their assets during divorce proceedings – their slogan: “**A partner men can count on!**”

Illustration: During WWII six Navy pilots left their aircraft carrier on a mission. After searching the seas for enemy submarines, they tried to return to their ship shortly after dark. But the captain had ordered a blackout of all lights on the ship. Over and over the frantic pilots radioed, asking for just one light so they could see to land. But the pilots were told that the blackout could not be lifted. After several appeals and denials of their request, the ship's operator turned the switch to break radio contact--and the pilots were forced to ditch in the ocean.

Talk about a feeling of hopelessness and despair

People can have a lot of fear and anxiety regarding the possibility of **spiritual abandonment**. They look at their difficult circumstances and wonder if God has forgotten them and forsaken them. The southern kingdom of Israel, the people of Jerusalem – the city of Zion, found themselves in that position on a number of occasions throughout their history. During the Babylonian Captivity they will be tempted to imagine that the Lord is finished with them. As the end times approach and God brings in His harvest from among the Gentiles, the nation may be tempted to think that God has written off His people Israel forever. This account from Isaiah provides the Lord's response to the insecurities and fears and anxieties of His people.

THE LORD GOD IS A PARTNER BELIEVERS CAN COUNT ON TO NEVER LEAVE US OR FORSAKE US

I. (49:14-21) ISRAEL'S INSECURITY – GOD HAS NOT ABANDONED ISRAEL

A. (:14-16) Refutation of Israel's Complaint of Abandonment

1. Complaint of Zion = Abandoned by the Lord

*“But Zion said,
The LORD has forsaken me,
And the Lord has forgotten me.”*

Constable: Having heard the promises that precede, promises that God will bring the whole world to Himself, Israel, personified as Zion, complained that the Lord had forgotten about her.

What about the special relationship that He had promised she would always have with Him?
That appeared to be over.

Motyer: the complaining voice of Zion contrasts sharply with the world song over the work of the Servant [v. 13].

Parunak: The first statement is theological: YHWH has abandoned me. The second is personal and more emotional: my husband, on whose love I depended, has forgotten me.

Looking at a relationship once thought to be permanent and secure forever, now broken apart to the point where recovery seems impossible

The result is that one is bereft of all resources and left alone to fend for themselves in the midst of very difficult circumstances

2. Refutation by the Lord = Attached to the Lord Forever

a. Refutation by Laws of Nature

*“Can a woman forget her nursing child,
And have no compassion on the son of her womb?”*

Tender tone of rebuttal by God; we might have responded harshly

Think of how unnatural **abortion** is. The ultimate abandonment by a mother

Ps. 27:10 *“If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.”*

Ps. 13:1; 22:1-2; 42:9 (yet expression of confidence in these songs); **Lam. 5:19-22**

b. Refutation by Argument from the Lesser to the Greater

*“Even these may forget,
but I will not forget you.”*

Parunak: Even the closest of natural relations may sometimes break down. **2 Kings 6:28-29** records the pathetic situation of Samaria under siege, when a woman kills her son for food. But the Lord is more faithful than this.

c. Refutation by Divine Promise

*“Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;
Your walls are continually before Me.”*

Constable: Some servants inscribed the names of their masters on their hands in Isaiah's day, but masters did not write the names of their servants on their hands. Yet Yahweh had written (lit. engraved, cf. Ezek. 4:1) the name of Zion on His palms so that He would not forget her, but be reminded of her frequently.

B. (:17-21) Restoration (Regathering) Will Be Amazing and Abundant and Astonishing

1. (:17-18) Amazing Turnaround

a. (:17) Swiftmess of the Regathering

“Your builders [sons] hurry;

Your destroyers and devastators will depart from you.”

Constable: The builders were the sons that Zion thought had been denied her. The Hebrew word translated "builders," *bonayik*, is almost identical to the word translated "sons," *banayik*, and may have been deliberately ambiguous to communicate both ideas. Originally only the consonants, which are identical, appeared in the text.

Parunak: The rest of the paragraph (:17-20) alternates between two themes: your children will return, and your adversaries will leave. The ABABA chiasm places the dominant theme, the returning children, at the center and extremes.

b. (:18) Spectacular Spectacle of the Bejeweled Bride

*“Lift up your eyes and look around;
All of them gather together, they come to you.
As I live,’ declares the LORD,
‘You shall surely put on all of them as jewels,
and bind them on as a bride.”*

Beall: The imagery in v. 18b is that of the city as a bride bedecked with the jewels of her sons coming back—her children are her glory.

2. (:19-20) Abundant Inhabitants – Cramped Confines in the Restored Promised Land

*“For your waste and desolate places, and your destroyed land—
Surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants,
And those who swallowed you will be far away.
The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears,
‘The place is too cramped for me;
Make room for me that I may live here.”*

Beall: Vv. 19-21 indicate that even the desolate places of the land will be too small for all who will come back.

Rich Cathers: Israel will go from being a nation that was mourning the loss of so many people, to being a country with not enough room for all the multitudes coming back.

Martin: when the people returned from the Babylonian Captivity they were a comparatively small, struggling band. The return mentioned in verses 19-21 seems to be much larger and therefore probably refers to Israel’s return at the beginning of the Millennium.

3. (:21) Astonishing Blessing of Abundant Offspring

“Then you will say in your heart,”

a. Question of Origin – Who has originated all of these?

*“Who has begotten these for me,
Since I have been bereaved of my children,
And am barren, an exile and a wanderer?”*

b. Question of Nurture – Who has nurtured all of these?

“And who has reared these?”

c. Question of Origin – Where did all these come from?

*“Behold, I was left alone;
From where did these come?”*

Constable: Her many children will not simply be the product of her own fertility, but a supernatural gift from God (cf. Gen. 18:12-14; Ruth 4:13-17).

II. (49:22-26) ISRAEL’S DELIVERANCE AND EXALTATION – GOD WILL REVERSE THE CURRENT GENTILE SUPREMACY

A. (:22-23) God Will use the Gentiles to Facilitate the Exaltation of Israel

“Thus says the Lord God,”

1. Commissioning of Gentiles to Help Israel

*“Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations,
And set up My standard to the peoples;”*

2. Role of Gentiles in Regathering Israel

*“And they will bring your sons in their bosom,
And your daughters will be carried on their shoulders.”*

Beall: Vv 22-23 state that Gentiles will help bring Jews to the promised land, and Gentile leaders will serve the Israelites (v 23).

3. Role of Gentiles in Protecting and Nurturing Israel

*“And kings will be your guardians,
And their princesses your nurses.*

4. Submission of Gentiles to Israelite Supremacy

*They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth,
And lick the dust of your feet;”*

5. Divine Purpose

a. Glorification of Divine Name

“And you will know that I am the LORD;”

b. Faithfulness to Divine Promises

“Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame.”

Tremendous promise

Think of how the Lord fulfilled that promise throughout history
Look at example of **Ruth 1:16-17**

B. (:24-26) God Will Deliver Israel and Judge Her Oppressors

“Surely, thus says the LORD,” [even though it occurs after first phrase]

1. Nothing is Too Difficult for God

- a. Question Asked – Is God Strong Enough to Rescue His People From Powerful Enemies?

*“Can the prey be taken from the mighty man,
Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?”*

Constable: Isaiah addressed an objection that some in his audience evidently entertained. Is it possible that Yahweh could really overturn the power of the mighty nations that scattered the Israelites and kept them from their land? Of course! God had already rescued Israel from one mighty man at the Exodus. Typically, mighty men and tyrants tenaciously cling to their prey and captives.

- b. Question Answered – No Problem

*“Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away,
And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued;”*

2. It Will Go Very Badly for Those Who Oppress God’s People

*“For I will contend with the one who contends with you,
And I will save your sons.
And I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh,
And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine;”*

3. Divine Purpose

*“And all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior,
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”*

This reversal of Gentile Supremacy would require tremendous power on the part of God – a God who has been grievously wronged by the sins of his covenant nation.

III. (50:1-3) ISRAEL’S CULPABILITY – GOD’S DESIRE AND POWER TO DELIVER NOT COMPROMISED BY ISRAEL’S SIN

A. (:1) God Did Not Abandon Israel – Blame Attributed to Nation’s Rebellion . . . Not God’s Rejection

“Thus says the LORD,”

1. Bondage Cannot be Blamed on God

- a. Did Not Divorce His People

*“Where is the certificate of divorce,
By which I have sent your mother away?”*

- b. Did Not Sell His People

“Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you?”

Cf. Jer. 3:8-9

Motyer: The thrust of the two hypothetical situations, divorce and sale, is to ask if something irretrievable has happened, terminating a relationship. Marriage is a covenant motif (e.g. Je. 2:1-3; 3:1-2; Ezk. 16). Behind it here lies the dreaded possibility that the Lord's covenant with his people may have suffered a final breach.

2. Bondage Can Only Be Blamed on Israel's Own Disobedience

*"Behold, you were sold for your iniquities,
And for your transgressions your mother was sent away."*

Constable: The Lord turned from addressing His "wife" to her children. Both figures describe Israel, collectively and particularly. This pericope is transitional, but it is more of a conclusion to what has preceded than an introduction to what follows. God has both the desire and the ability to save the Israelites from their sin.

Beall: Indeed, in the end time the Lord will restore Israel bountifully to the land with many sons and daughters, and the nations of the world will come and bow down to Israel in their redemption. Such is the ultimate glorious future for Israel. And yet, 50:1-3 goes on to say, in the near term, there has been a separation between Israel and the Lord, but the Lord did not initiate divorce proceedings against Israel; rather, it was she herself, because of her sins, who separated from the Lord. As is common in Isaiah, numerous rhetorical questions are put forth to the nation, in order to bring them to their senses. In vv. 1-2 alone, the Lord asks six such questions.

Here we have **the answer to the question** we posed as the title for today's sermon:

What can separate me from the love of God? Only my sins ... an once we have been united with Jesus Christ and His death has paid the penalty that we deserved to pay ... the answer is Nothing can change my eternal standing of justification – having been completely forgiven by My Heavenly Father who will never divorce me or send me away
My God will never leave me or forsake me

Illustration Wathman Nee: Watchman Nee tells about a new convert who came in deep distress to see him. "No matter how much I pray, no matter how hard I try, I simply cannot seem to be faithful to my Lord. I think I'm losing my salvation." Nee said, "Do you see this dog here? He is my dog. He is house-trained; he never makes a mess; he is obedient; he is a pure delight to me. Out in the kitchen I have a son, a baby son. He makes a mess, he throws his food around, he fouls his clothes, he is a total mess. But who is going to inherit my kingdom? Not my dog; my son is my heir. You are Jesus Christ's heir because it is for you that He died." We are Christ's heirs, not through our perfection but by means of His grace.

B. (:2a) Israel Rejected God

*"Why was there no man when I came?
When I called, why was there none to answer?"*

God the Father has repeatedly come to His people through the message of His prophets; He has called them to repentance and faith but to no avail;

Lord Jesus took the initiative to come to earth; took the initiative to call the Jews to submit to His

kingdom; but there was very little response

C. (:2b-3) God is Still Powerful to Deliver

1. Questioning of God's Power = Are There Any Limits on God's Power

*"Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom?
Or have I no power to deliver?"*

Why would you reject the only God who is powerful enough to ransom and deliver you?

2. Proof of God's Power = His Control over Nature

a. Control Over the Vast Waters on Earth

*"Behold, I dry up the sea with My rebuke, I make the rivers a wilderness;
Their fish stink for lack of water, And die of thirst."*

b. Control Over the Vast Heavens

*"I clothe the heavens with blackness,
And I make sackcloth their covering."*

Constable: The proof of God's strength is His control over nature. The nature miracles of Jesus proved His deity (cf. Matt. 8:27; 14:33). In spite of the vast amount of water in the sea, God can dry up the sea. Even though the sky above is apparently limitless, He can make it dark. The images here recall the Creation and the Exodus (cf. Exod. 15:16; Deut. 26:8, 23-24; Ps. 77:15), but the point is that God has the power to change anything as He chooses.

Grogan: The argument from history is reinforced from nature, itself affected by the events associated with the Exodus. The judgment on the Nile and the clothing of the sky's naked brightness with darkness (vs.3; cf. 45:7) are fit symbols of God's power to judge Israel's enemies.

Addresses both God's desire (Will) and His ability (Power) to deliver His people

Oswalt: God lacks neither the desire nor the power to deliver his people. The only issue is whether they will step forward in repentance and faith to meet him when he comes and answer him when he calls.

CONCLUSION:

Romans 8:35-39

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How has God blessed you and transformed you from a former condition of barrenness to fruitfulness?

- 2) When are we tempted to question the power of God in our lives to accomplish His purposes?
- 3) How can we turn to the Lord's love and faithfulness to dismiss our feelings of insecurity?
- 4) Are we willing to accept the blame for the consequences of our sin rather than blaming God?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: The praise of v. 13 raises an existential crisis for Zion, in view of the suffering she is experiencing. 49:14-26 is a conversation between her (under the figure of a bereaved widow) and the Lord about this crisis. The figure is especially strong in Hebrew, where the second person pronouns are not only singular, but feminine. Then in 50:1-3, with the shift to plural masculine pronouns (you instead of thee), the Lord turns to her children, and he reminds them that they are responsible for her suffering.

Parunak: Israel's God cares for her in three ways, answering chiasmatically to the three chains of Israel's captivity in vv. 24-25:

She was "*the prey of the terrible*" (25), under tyrannical oppressors, but the Lord is her "*Savior*," delivering her from distress.

She was a "*lawful captive*" (24), in bondage because of her sin. Israel's law provided a way for a lawful captive to be released, if a near relative redeemed them by paying a price.

Lev 25:47-49 And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: 48 After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: 49 Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself.

The Lord calls himself Israel's Redeemer, the one who pays the price to set her free from her bondage. In a few chapters, Isaiah will make clear what that price is. The Servant of the Lord

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 everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (53:5-6).

This promise is fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, who died to redeem his people from their bondage to sin, and rose again to prove that his sacrifice was sufficient.

The third characteristic of Israel's misfortune is that she is "*the prey*" of "*the mighty*" (v. 24). As the Mighty One, he is superior to anyone who might stand against him to hinder his deliverance of his people.

Alan Carr: Unforgettable

We might not want to admit it, but there are times when we feel abandoned and forgotten by the Lord too. We wonder why the circumstances in our lives are like they are. We wonder why it seems like life is one trial after another. We wonder where God is in the world and why things appear to be out of control. Sometimes we feel like we have been forgotten!

These verses are designed to teach you that you are “unforgettable”. God cannot and will not forget about you, God cannot and will not forsake you. I want to show you how these verses present our God. We are given four proofs of God’s devotion to us. Let me share those proofs with you today as I preach on the subject: **Unforgettable**.

I. v. 15 GOD’S COMPASSION

God is pictured as a mother. A mother cannot forget the child that nurses at her breast. If she does, the cries of her hungry child and the needs of her own body will remind her. Nothing in this world can compare to the love of a mother for her children.

II. v. 16a GOD’S COMPULSION

God is pictured as a lover separated from his intended, or as an exile separated from Jerusalem. A lover might engrave the name of his beloved on his hands as a constant reminder of that person. Jewish exiles were known to engrave a drawing of the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple into their hands as a reminder of that place. Even though such things were forbidden under the Law, Lev. 19:28, they still occurred. (Ill. The process – Small punctures made permanent using dyes.)

III. v. 16b GOD’S CONCENTRATION

Here God is described as a watchman. He had not forsaken or forgotten Zion, but her walls were ever on His mind and in His vision. He continually remembered His promises to restore her walls. Like a watchman, God would be vigilant and diligent to look after the needs and the welfare of His people. In other words, the nation of Israel and His promises to her were always on His mind.

IV. v. 18 GOD’S COMPLETION

This verse pictures God as a jeweler who adorns the neck of a bride, completing her preparations for her wedding.

Brian Borgman: Inscribed on the Palm of His Hand

:14 – Zion’s complaint – code name for the true people of God; the remnant; YHWH (covenant God) and Adonai (mighty power) referenced; anti-climactic flavor when servant song of vs. 13 is over; repeated metaphor of rejected wife and barren woman; Babylonian Captivity has destroyed everything so that it looks like all is lost; multitudes of this generation had been killed in the invasion; book of Lamentations gives sense of agony of what it meant to be a survivor and see Jerusalem left in ruins;

leave, forsake, abandon – awful word in connection with people; horrible thing to be forgotten; voice of despondency; this cry often heard from Psalmist – honest crying out to God, transparent about how they feel; Lament songs -- **Ps. 13:1; 22:1-2; 42:9** (yet expression of confidence in these songs); **Lam. 5:19-22** affirmations of faith coupled with statements of pain;

These are real feelings from God’s people despite His faithfulness; next trial comes up and we have issues and questions; but complaint though real and honest is invalid

Concordance study of usage of forget and forsake – largely God’s people forgetting and

forsaking Him; God is not like us

Commanded to remember and not to forget; we have such short, feeble memories; Lord doesn't have a memory problem

Deut. 31:6; Ps. 37:25 *I have never seen the righteous forsaken*; **Ps. 94:12-14**

“*Zechariah*” = YHWH remembers

Faith must override our sight and our feelings and our circumstances; this is one of the reasons God has given us His Word

Feelings are not caboose; God transforms the whole of us; just as important as mind and will; affections can be a wonderful gift from God; should be engaged in our worship and in all of life; but our affections are fallen just like our mind and will; need the rock of the Word to redirect our affections and mind and will at times

Rebuts complaint with tender reassurance – poses questions based on deepest attachment known to human beings; that nursing child is deriving its sustenance for life from its mother; totally dependent; amazing bond; logistical annoying reminders so that the mother cannot forget to feed her infant

Uniqueness of a son – carries on family name; provider

Some mothers may be negligent or abusive; ate child; offered child to Molech; we have 1.3 million abortions every year

God's love transcends a mother's love; doesn't suffer from defects or selfishness; not impaired by short-sightedness; permanent, unchanging;

Engraven – what you do to pottery or things that belong to you – word for the palm of the hand; the servant bore the inscription of his master – slave wants to stay with master after sabbatical year of release; piercing of ear; God's ownership – He has put His seal upon their foreheads; Rev. 3:12 – God's name inscribed on their foreheads

Here His people are engraved on palm of His hand; not our name but “you” = everything that concerns you – could never forget us

TEXT: Isaiah 50:4-11

TITLE: SERVANT SONG #3 -- MARKS OF AN OBEDIENT SERVANT / DISCIPLE

BIG IDEA:

FOLLOW THE LIGHTHOUSE OF GOD'S INSTRUCTION OR TORCH YOURSELVES – THE VICTORIOUS SERVANT/DISCIPLE HAS GOD AS HIS HELPER IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PERSEVERING COMMITMENT

INTRODUCTION:

Our daughter Jenny worships at Capitol Hill Baptist Church – one of their key ministries is **9 Marks of a Healthy Church** : might be helpful to review them – check out their website

- I. Preaching
- II. Biblical Theology
- III. The Gospel
- IV. Conversion
- V. Evangelism
- VI. Membership
- VII. Discipline
- VIII. Discipleship**
- IX. Leadership

Important to check up our church and see how we are doing in each of these areas

Focusing in on the area of **Discipleship** this morning from **Isaiah 50**

Motyer: The **third Servant Song** (4-9) is autobiographical like the second, but unlike both its predecessors it contains no reference to the Servant. It is the attached comment (10-11) that reveals who the speaker was. . . contradistinction moving from verses 1-3 to verse 4 . . . There is no single parallel or identity between the Servant and Zion; they are the many, he is the one. The distinction between them has become a gulf.

(also 42:1-9 – Successful mission of the Servant – bringing Justice on earth; 49:1-6 – God's Secret Weapon Unveiled – strength, scope and success of His mission; 52:13-53:12)

Marks of an Obedient Servant / Disciple – what does the ideal Servant of the Lord look like?

The Messiah is actually our Model for being a faithful Disciple – Do you want to know what true Christian discipleship looks like? Look at the earthly walk of the Master!

Business training: importance of **mentoring** – spend time with someone who has the traits you admire

Application: FOLLOW THE LIGHTHOUSE OF GOD'S INSTRUCTION OR TORCH YOURSELVES

I. (:4-5) THE TONGUE AND THE EAR OF A DISCIPLE – EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

A. Tongue of a Disciple – Offers God's Word to the Weary

“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples,

That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.”

Young: uses designation “*The Lord God*” four times in this passage and always at the beginning of a verse (vv. 4, 5, 6, 9). This combined name lends a tone of majesty and impressiveness to the servant’s words. What the servant speaks is truth because of the covenant God who has all power over the creation.

Look at the order presented here in Isaiah 50

First proclaiming God’s Word; secondly receiving more intake

We might think the order would be reversed: you hear something from God and then you proclaim it – Why this order?

God has already taken the initiative to communicate to us and bless us – we need to respond on the pathway of discipleship and then be open to more revelation

The tongue belongs to one taught by God; a learned one

Delivering the gospel message to the weary in a way that meets their need

Young: Matt. 11:28 – The weary are the bruised reed and smoking flax

The message of the gospel is what is needed – the good news that God brings salvation by grace through faith – not by works which we perform

- The unsaved need the gospel
- The saved need the gospel each day

Oswalt: the Servant’s task is a prophetic one; he is to declare God’s word to the world

How did Christ do in offering God’s word to the weary?

- **John 4:13-14** to the Samaritan woman at the well – “*the water I give you . . .*” – how weary was this woman who had bounced around in relationship after relationship
- **Luke 5:13** -- the cleansing of the leper – “*I am willing, be cleansed*” – social outcast
- **Luke 5:20** – the healing of the paralytic lowered down by ropes thru the hole in the roof – “*Friend, your sins are forgiven you . . . Get up and walk*” – severe handicap so that he was at the mercy of being cared for by others
- **Luke 7:48** – prostitute anointing feet of Jesus – talk about a weary woman – “*Your sins have been forgiven . . . Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.*”
- **Luke 9** -- Not just dealing with individuals in need – but feeding the 5,000; gospel of John speaks of Him offering the **bread of life** to the weary

Maclaren: A mission addressed to ‘*the weary*’ is addressed to every man, for who is not ‘weighed upon with sore distress,’ or loaded with the burden and the weight of tasks beyond his power or distasteful to his inclinations, or monotonous to nausea, or prolonged to exhaustion, or toiled at with little hope and less interest? Who is not weary of himself and of his load? What but universal weariness does the universal secret desire for rest betray? We are all ‘pilgrims weary of time,’ and some of us are weary of even prosperity, and some of us are worn out with work, and some of us buffeted to all but exhaustion by sorrow, and all of us long for rest, though many of us do not know where to look for it.

How are we doing in our mission of Proclamation? We have been too quiet for too long!

B. Ear of a Disciple – Listens Eagerly Each Morning to God’s Instruction

*“He awakens Me morning by morning,
He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.”*

Woke me up very early Friday morning (wasn’t really ready to preach this last week – funny how the Lord works that out) – much more motivation from this passage

Do we have a true sense of **Christian discipleship** – awakening each morning as Samuel did to the call of the Lord God -- what do you want me to do in serving you **today**? Can’t afford to wait until evening to ask this important question

Get our Marching Orders from the Lord

1 Sam. 3:9 *“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening”*

Is. 6:8 *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Here am I. Send me!”*

Heb. 10:7 *“Behold I have come to do your will, O God”*

Jesus would awaken early and go off by himself to pray and to communicate with His Father; you can be sure that He was listening eagerly to God’s instruction for the day’s agenda

Who sets your agenda each day?

C. Key = Persevering Commitment to Obey and Proclaim God’s Revelation

*“The Lord God has opened My ear;
And I was not disobedient, Nor did I turn back.”*

Young: By placing the word first in the phrase, Isaiah gives to it a certain emphasis: *Back I did not turn*. No rebellion, no apostasy, no treacherous faithlessness is found in the servant.

Remember the story that **Jesus** told of the disciples who made various excuses (some of them sounded pretty legitimate) and were not willing to pay the cost of discipleship –

Luke 9:62 *“No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”*

Apostle Paul reported on those who turned back and were not faithful to the missionary mission

- He had problems with Mark in this regard
- At one point he was all alone except for faithful Timothy (**Phil. 2:21** – *“they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus”*)

Great temptation not to follow through on being obedient to our mission; great temptation to make excuses and to turn back; Once the Lord has opened our ear, we have a responsibility to respond in persevering and faithful obedience

Beall: the picture is not that of a great warrior, but of an obedient Servant who listens to God’s word and obeys Him.

Constable: The Servant claimed to have always responded obediently to whatever God had spoken (cf. John 8:29). Clearly, the Servant could not be Israel or any mere human person or group of people. Opening the ear is something that God had done for Him; He had given the

Servant the ability and the desire to hear and respond obediently to the Word of God. On the other hand, the Servant had not turned back from it once He had heard it (cf. Exod. 4:13; Jon. 1:3; Jer. 20:9, 14).

Maclaren: Obedience of the servant: *'My meat is to do the will of My Father'; 'For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness'; 'I came down from heaven not to do My own will.'* By His servant's words: *'Obedient unto death'; 'Made under the law'; 'He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.'* It is involved in the belief of His righteous manhood. It is essential to true manhood. The highest ideal for humanity is conscious dependence on God, and the very definition of righteousness is conscious conformity to the Will of God. If Christ had done the noblest acts and yet had not always had this sense of being a servant, He would not have been pure and holy.

II. (:6-9) THE BACK AND FACE OF A PERSECUTED OVERCOMER – PERSEVERING COMMITMENT

A. (:6) The Back of a Disciple – Undeterred by both Physical and Emotional Persecution

1. Physical Persecution – Hurt / Pain

"I gave My back to those who strike Me,"

Undeterred = Not discouraged or not refraining from continuing on the pathway of discipleship

Matt. 26:67ff; 27:26ff; John 19:1ff

Young: beating on the back to punish evil men – Prov. 10:13; 19:29; 26:3; Ps. 129:3

Motyer: a revelation of suffering to come, bravely faced and endured in obedience to the Lord God. Not a suffering because of wrongdoing (as 42:24; 50:1) but through costly obedience; a suffering not merited but accepted, described in terms of the judicial act of flogging, gratuitous torture and personal humiliation.

Christ could have drawn the sword to fight back as His disciples did

Christ could have called 10,000 angels to destroy the world and set Him free

Take your best shot – I am not changing course

2. Emotional Persecution – Humiliation / Shame

*"And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard;
I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting."*

I Pet. 2:22-23

Constable: Disdain and abuse are the inevitable consequences of obeying God consistently by declaring His messages. All the true servants of the Lord experience this to some extent (2 Tim. 3:12 *"all who live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"*). This is only the second reference to the Servant as a sufferer (cf. 49:7). This theme receives major exposition in the fourth Servant Song. The Servant said He gave Himself over to this type of treatment. It is one thing to endure such treatment, but it is quite another to gladly submit to it without defending oneself. These descriptions picture persecution that Jesus Christ endured literally (cf. Matt. 26:67; 27:30; Mark 14:65; 15:16-20; Luke 22:63). If we did not have the fulfillment of this prophecy in the life of

the Lord Jesus, it would be easy to interpret this verse as only a figurative, poetic description of suffering. The literal fulfillment of this and other first advent prophecies should encourage us to expect the literal fulfillment of second advent prophecies. Jesus laid down His life on His own initiative (John 10:17-18).

Young: The Oriental regarded the beard as a sign of freedom and respect, and to pluck out the hair of the beard is to show utter contempt.

Phil. 2 speaks of the humiliation endured by our Savior

B. (:7-9) The Face of a Disciple -- Overcomes by Virtue of Confidence in the Lord's Help and Ultimate Vindication

THE VICTORIOUS SERVANT HAS GOD AS HIS HELPER

1. (:7) Confidence in Divine Help Fuels Perseverance

*"For the Lord God helps Me,
Therefore, I am not disgraced;
Therefore, I have set My face like flint,
And I know that I shall not be ashamed."*

Luke 9:51 set his face to go to Jerusalem; would not be diverted

Heb. 12:2 *"who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame"*

Rich Cathers: When God was preparing Ezekiel for his ministry, He warned Ezekiel that the people would be stubborn and would not pay attention to him. Yet God also promised Ezekiel that He would make Ezekiel just as stubborn as they were. God said He would make Ezekiel's forehead **(Ezek 3:9 NIV)** *...like the hardest stone, harder than flint*

Beall: The expression, *"I have set My face like a flint (i.e., hard rock),"* is echoed in the NT, as Luke records that when it was time for the Lord's crucifixion, *"He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:51). . . All His accusers will grow old as a garment, eaten by moths (see Hos 5:12; Matt 6:19-20; Heb 1:11).

2. (:8-9a) Confidence in Divine Vindication Answers All Attackers

a. 2 Encouragements Regarding Ultimate Vindication

*"He who vindicates Me is near;
Behold, the Lord God helps Me;"*

b. 3 Rhetorical Challenges to Rebuff All Attackers

*"Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other;
Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me.
Who is he who condemns Me?"*

Language sounds like **Rom. 8**

3. (:9b) Confidence in the Coming Wrath of God

*"Behold, they will all wear out like a garment;
The moth will eat them."*

Expression speaks of gradual decay

Maclaren: Two forms of destruction are here named. There is a slow decay going on in the opponents and their opposition, as a garment waxing old, and there is a being fretted away by the imperceptible working of external causes, as by gnawing moths.

(:10-11) APPLICATION: CALL FOR OBEDIENCE VS. REBELLION -- TWO CONTRASTING RESPONSES -- WALKING IN LIGHT OR IN DARKNESS

Another one of these transitional paragraphs

A. (:10) Response of Obedience

1. Description of the Obedient Disciples = Submission

*“Who is among you that fears the LORD,
That obeys the voice of His servant,
That walks in darkness and has no light?”*

Young: Thus, those who do fear the Lord and obey the voice of His true Servant may nevertheless be in darkness. Like the Servant Himself, they too must be subject to afflictions and follow their Lord through affliction, death, and hell that they may come to the celestial city. In this world they will have tribulation; but the Servant has overcome this world, and they have but one recourse, to trust in the Lord who has revealed Himself to them in His ways and works, and to lean for support upon their God, who will never fail them.

Oswalt: Those who follow this Servant may indeed walk with him into the darkness of frustration, injustice, humiliation, and abuse. But this does not mean they should forgo their reliance on God.

2. Call to Continue to Walk by Faith

*“Let him trust in the name of the LORD
and rely on his God.”*

Beall: Obedience to the Servant is paralleled with obedience to the Lord. In vv. 4-9 it was the Servant who was obedient; now, the people are enjoined to obey the Lord and the voice of His Servant (see John 5:23: *“He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him”*; John 14:9: *“He who has seen Me has seen the Father”*). As **Young** aptly states, *“The Servant's word is God's word, for God has set the Servant's mouth as a sharp sword (cf. 49:2)”* (Isaiah, 3:304). Isaiah encourages those who walk in darkness, with no light, to trust in the name of the Lord (compare the Messianic passage Isa 9:2: *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light”*; and John 8:12: *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life”*).

B. (:11) Responses of Continued Rebellion

1. Description of the Arrogant Rebels = Self-sufficiency

*“Behold, all you who kindle a fire,
Who encircle yourselves with firebrands,”*

Motyer: Those who continue in their own way, dealing with life's darkness by a "do-it-yourself" remedy, are doomed. How true it is to this life that those who trust walk in darkness and those who are self-sufficient walk in light! . . . The picture here is of people seeking to equip themselves, out of earthly resources, to deal with earth's dark experiences. They feel the need of nothing they cannot generate for themselves.

2. Call to Continue to Walk in Rebellion

*"Walk in the light of your fire
And among the brands you have set ablaze."*

Young: this command contains a touch of irony, as though the prophet had said, "You have rejected the Lord and kindled your own fire to escape the darkness; well, go now and take your course of life in that very fire. See how it will become not your salvation but your destruction."

3. Warning of Coming Wrath of God

*"This you will have from My hand;
And you will lie down in torment."*

Martin: lie down in torment – **Luke 16:23, 28; Rev. 20:13-15; 21:8**

Beall: Continuing with the metaphor of light, the Lord commands those who seek to provide their own source of light (rather than trust in the Light of the Lord) by lighting a fire, to walk in the light of that fire. The idea here seems to be that they will be the cause of their own destruction (compare 50:1b: "*for your iniquities you have sold yourselves*") by the fire of their own making (so also Rom 1:24, 26, 28: God gave them up to their own sinfulness). Instead of getting help from God's hand (see 50:2 for the hand of God), they will lie down in torment at the fire of judgment, a fire that they themselves have set, rather than trusting in the Light of the Lord.

Oswalt: There is only one light in the darkness of human sin: the one kindled by God in and through his Servant. To refuse that light and to embrace some other is to open oneself to a devouring flame.

Scott Grant: How are we to survive in this place? Isaiah presents us with two options: 1) We can trust in the name of the Lord and rely on our God. 2) We can kindle a fire, encircle ourselves with torches and walk in the light of our own fire. We can rely on our God in the darkness of confusion, or we can try to dispel the darkness of confusion with our own light. By relying on God, we draw close to him, abide by his word and trust that dawn will break. By lighting our own fire, we reject the opportunity to draw near to God, and we devise our own methods to make life more manageable, more quickly. At more extreme levels, this means resorting to deception, manipulation, intimidation and the like. At less extreme levels, it means making the elimination of the confusion a greater goal than drawing near to God.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How could I use my tongue more effectively to proclaim the Word of the Lord to those in

need?

- 2) Do I have a sense of anticipation every morning that the Lord wants to talk to me and communicate to me His marching orders for the day?
- 3) Where is my perseverance being tested?
- 4) What are the implications of viewing man-made solutions to our spiritual problems as torches that will end up burning us up?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

9 Marks: Topic of Discipleship

What is it?

Scripture teaches that a live Christian is a growing Christian (2 Pet. 1:8-10). Scripture also teaches that we grow not only by instruction, but by imitation (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). Therefore churches should exhort their members to both grow in holiness and help others do the same.

Where is it in the Bible?

- Peter exhorted his readers to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18)
- Paul exhorted the Ephesians to grow by speaking the truth in love to one another (Eph. 4:15).
- Many passages in Scripture instruct us to imitate godly leaders (Phil. 4:9; Heb. 13:7).

The point is that, according to Scripture, all Christians should grow in Christ, imitate other godly Christians, and encourage others in their growth in Christlikeness.

Why is it important?

1. Promoting biblical discipleship and growth is important because none of us are finished products. Until we die, all Christians will struggle against sin, and we need all the help we can get in this fight.
2. If a church neglects discipleship and growth, or teaches a skewed, unbiblical version of it, it will discourage genuine Christians and wrongly assure false Christians. On the other hand, if a church fosters a culture of Christian discipleship and growth, it will multiply believers' efforts to grow in holiness.
3. A church that is not growing in the faith will ultimately yield an unhealthy witness to the world.

David Thompson: In these verses, we get an amazing glimpse as to the way God revealed Himself to His Son and the way His Son revealed Himself to Israel. There are seven revelatory facts brought out in these verses:

(Revelatory Fact #1) - God revealed Himself through Jesus Christ and gave to Him an expert level of Divine knowledge and speech . 50:4a

(Revelatory Fact #2) - God revealed Himself through Jesus Christ so that He could sustain weary ones with His words. 50:4b

(Revelatory Fact #3) - God revealed Himself through Jesus Christ every morning . 50:4c

(Revelatory Fact #4) - Jesus Christ was never disobedient to God's Word. 50:5a

(Revelatory Fact #5) - Jesus Christ would never turn away from God's will. 50:5b-6

(Revelatory Fact #6) - Jesus Christ totally depended on God the Father for help . 50:7

(Revelatory Fact #7) - Jesus Christ will be vindicated by God and any who stand against Him will be gone. 50:8-9

Dr. Sinclair Ferguson: Trusting the Lord While Walking in Darkness

Particularly vs. 10 = very well known text; The Child of Light Walking in Darkness; Jews thrust out of Jerusalem because of sin and taken captive to Babylon; people living with sense of spiritual darkness; people feel that God has divorced them; but God is not yet finished with His people; language in vv.2-3 remind us of the Exodus; you need more than a reworking of the political situation; you need a deliverance from your bondage to sin; appearance of the Servant and His songs; the one who will provide this new spiritual exodus that God's people need; this suffering servant = our Lord Jesus Christ;

Why should we trust in the name of the Lord? Why should we listen to the voice of the Lord's Servant?

Describes the Lord's Servant from 3 perspectives:

1. (:4) The Servant Has Been Trained by the Lord to Be His Prophet

Where did Jesus get all His marvelous wisdom and insight into human nature? Awakened each morning by the voice of His Heavenly Father; spoke the words given to Him by His father; man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; Where does this carpenter of Nazareth get this wisdom from? Trained to know what to say to us in every situation

2. (:5-6) The Servant Has Been Appointed by God to be a Priest to Bring a Sacrifice for Us

Brings us the forgiveness of sins and cleansing; speaks of the Son's obedience to the Father; cf. slave who did not want to be set free from his master – had his ear pierced; Ex. 21; obedience in the face of overwhelming suffering; He was wounded for our transgressions; bruised for our iniquities;

3. (:7-9) The Servant as Our King Who Triumphs For Us

He will be victorious in the battle;

Overcomes the last enemy

Similar words to Romans 8

Wayne Joyce:

“*Lord God*” -- *Jehovah Adonai*; God is the owner of each member of the human family and claims the unrestricted obedience of all; used 4 times in these verses; God is the possessor of all; Vs. 4 – learned the Father's word and will; had to learn by study; had a special anointing; **John 5:19** *Father teaches me all things; I will give you rest* of salvation; then we can serve God and gain the rest of service; would rather preach and teach than anything; do what God wants you to do; got up early to go to seminary classes;

Mark 14:65; Matt. 27:26; *He suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God;* Great insult to spit on someone;

Jesus was never confused about His purpose

Our God is able to deliver us but if not we will still not bow down before this image and worship;-- Daniel's friends

Luke 9:51-53 – set his face like a flint to go to Jerusalem; determination; you have to pay the price; it is not easy;

David Guzik: There are two kinds of courage - the courage of moment, which requires no previous thought, and a planned courage, which sees the difficulty ahead and steadfastly marches towards it. Jesus had this kind of courage; He could see the cross in the horizon, but still set His face like a flint.

Spurgeon has a wonderful sermon on this text titled, **The Redeemers Face Set like a Flint.**

These are his headings and points:

1. How the steadfast resolve of Jesus was tested.

By offers from the world.

By the persuasions of His friends.

By the unworthiness of His clients.

By the bitterness of the first few drops of suffering in Gethsemane.

By the ease at which He could have backed out if He had wished to.

By the taunts of those who mocked Him.

By the full stress and agony of the cross.

2. How the steadfast resolve of Jesus was sustained.

By His divine schooling.

By His conscious innocence.

By His unshakable confidence in the help of God.

By the joy that was set before Him.

3. How to imitate the steadfast resolve of Jesus.

When there is something right, stand for it.

When you have a right purpose that glorifies God, carry it out.

TEXT: Isaiah 51:1-8

TITLE: LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT REGARDING THE PAST, FUTURE AND PRESENT

BIG IDEA:

PRESENT PRESSURES MUST NOT DISTRACT US FROM LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT REGARDING THE CONSUMMATION OF SALVATION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

INTRODUCTION:

God goes to great lengths to get our attention. He wants to communicate to us His plans for the future. He wants us to patiently trust Him and rely on His faithfulness to His promises despite the bleakness of our present circumstances. He does not want us to be paralyzed by fear. Here God calls on His people **3 times** to pay close attention and listen to His encouragement regarding the future.

I always like the song "*The Voice of Truth*"

But the voice of truth tells me a different story

And the voice of truth says, "Do not be afraid!"

And the voice of truth says, "This is for My glory"

Out of all the voices calling out to me

I will choose to listen and believe **the voice of truth**

Context:

Book heading toward a **major climax** – lots of imperatives used in this section; some of the commands in the more intensive doubled form; references back to earlier sections in the prophecy – building to a climax

Oswalt: there is more reason to see **vv. 1-8** as a unit separate from what follows than there is to see it as united with what follows (in particular, the thrice-repeated command by God to listen; the repeated emphasis on righteousness and salvation; and the identification of the hearers as those who are seeking God).

Young: God had called Abraham with the understanding that he would bless him. This He has indeed done, in that the nation of Israel has sprung from Abraham; but the epitome of blessing and increase is yet to come. Thus, comfort and encouragement are given to those despairing ones who hear the words of the promise. The ancient promise looks forward to its most glorious fulfillment: God will bless Abraham and multiply him in bringing blessing and increase to his descendants.

Motyer: the **three oracles** [strophes] form a sequence. The first (1-3) makes promises to Zion, but promises which, with their Abrahamic and Edenic orientations, have implications wider than Zion. The second (4-6) reveals the true extent of the promises, they are for the world; and the third (7-8) asserts that no power can prevent the Lord's righteous and saving purposes from being fulfilled. All three sections have in common the topic of "*righteousness.*"

Common 3-part Outline used by many commentators (Wiersbe, etc.):

Look Back / Look Forward / Look Within

Next sections: “*Awake*” (v. 51:9, 17, 52:1, 11 “*Depart*”)

PRESENT PRESSURES MUST NOT DISTRACT US FROM LISTENING TO GOD’S WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT REGARDING THE CONSUMMATION OF SALVATION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

I. (:1-3) LOOK BACK -- LISTEN TO WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT FUTURE BLESSING FOR THE NATION ISRAEL IN FULFILLMENT OF HIS PROMISES TO THE PATRIARCHS

A. Call to Listen – Addressed to Those Pursuing Righteousness and Expecting God’s Blessing by Faith

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, Who seek the LORD:”

Grogan: The prophet calls for maximum attention

Thompson: Now the verb “*listen*” (shamah) in **verse 1** and **verse 7** are the same. The word means to listen in the sense of understanding, applying and obeying the Word of God (**William Gesenius, Hebrew Lexicon**, p. 836). The verb “*pay attention*” (qashab) in **verse 4** is one that means to perk up your ears as an animal would and carefully attend or focus on what you hear (*Ibid.*, p. 746).

Parunak: the Servant’s voice begins to merge with that of the sovereign Lord. . . Both verses emphasize the point of **50:10-11**: human righteousness comes from God. Our relation with him begins with righteousness that he imputes through faith, and continues with practical righteousness that he generates in us.

Motyer: addresses those whose lives are characterized by pursuing righteousness and seeking the Lord; verse 7 reveals their minds (they “*know righteousness*”) and their hearts (they are indwelt by the Lord’s law). In other word, they are the believing remnant who expressed their reverence for the Lord by submitting their minds to, and modeling their lives on, the word of the Servant and following him in the way of faith (50:10).

B. Content of the Exhortation: Remember your roots and take confidence in God’s future blessing

1. Remember Your Pedigree of Faith

*“Look to the rock from which you were hewn
And to the quarry from which you were dug.”*

Go back to your roots to find encouragement

Especially think back to the promises of God that began in **Gen. 3:15** regarding the seed of the woman that would come; these promises became more specific in the Abrahamic Covenant

We might be blessed to come from a family that has roots in the faith (remember Timothy’s testimony) – **2 Tim. 1:5** “*For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well*”

What an excellent Pedigree of Faith!

But others like the Apostle Paul did not have such a background – still we can identify with the common faith of Christians from the formation of the Church on the day of Pentacost down

through the ages -- despite whatever persecutions and difficulties they faced
[song "Faith of our Fathers"]

The Jews are reminded of their *rock* and *quarry* – the solid nature of their spiritual pedigree
They had impressive roots

2. Remember Your Miraculous Origins

*"Look to Abraham your father
And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain;"*

Young: Actually in the birth of Isaac the Israelitish nation was born, for he was the seed of promise. That Isaac was born manifests the fact that the power of God overcame the forces that would withstand the fulfillment of the promise of salvation.

If anyone had cause to **fear the future**, it was Abraham and Sarah – who laughed at the notion that God could remove their barrenness and provide such widespread blessing

Yet the Scripture records that Abraham **believed God** and it was counted to him for righteousness; becomes the father of those who believe God – specifically of true Israel – into which tree of faith the believing Gentiles have been grafted in

3. Remember Your Humble Beginnings

*"When he was but one I called him,
Then I blessed him and multiplied him."*

Think of the calling of Abram – from Ur of the Chaldees; from a background of idolatry and ignorance of the true God – yet transformed by God

God can do a lot with a little (**Zec 4:6-10**)

1 Cor. 1:26 *"For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world"*

Eph. 1:18 *"that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"*

2 Tim. 1:9 *"who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity"*

Beall: The language here (*bless* and *increase*) is the covenant language of Gen 12:1-3, certainly implying that God would not abandon the covenant He made with Abraham—God had blessed Abraham thus far, yes; but even greater blessing was yet to come to Abraham's descendants. v. 3 elaborates on this promise: the Lord will comfort Zion.

Magnitude of the multiplication and blessing: grand scale

Like the sand on the seashore

Like the stars in the heavens

C. Contrast Between Devastation and Blessing; Between Sorrow and Joy

1. Comfort

*“Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion;
He will comfort all her waste places.”*

Beall: The word for *comfort* (used twice in this verse) is a favorite of Isaiah's, seen at the beginning of the section of comfort, Isa 40:1 (found in piel/pual also in Isa 12:1; 22:4; 49:13; 51:12, 19; 52:9; 54:11; 61:2; 66:13[2]), and used five times in this section. In this section its meaning is tantamount to redemption. The language which follows clearly speaks of the millennial period, in which the wilderness and desert regions will be transformed into a place as verdant as Eden, with joy, gladness, thanksgiving, and singing (compare 40:3-4). Though Israel was currently in captivity, she would still inherit the land as promised by the Lord to Abraham (Gen 15:18-21).

Parunak: First he highlights the physical restoration that Zion will experience. We have seen this promise multiple times throughout the book: 44:26; 49:8; 41:18; 41:19. His action remedies two disasters. The “*waste places*” are literally “ruins,” the result of the Babylonian invasion, while the vitalization of the desert reverses the curse imposed after Adam’s sin, restoring the Edenic state.

2. Blessing

*“And her wilderness He will make like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of the LORD;”*

Rich Cathers:

waste places – chorbah – a place laid waste, ruin, waste, desolation

Eden – `Eden = "pleasure", the first habitat of man after the creation

God is promising that He will take a Jerusalem that is a deserted wasteland and make it a thriving garden.

Motyer: *Like Eden* is not simply a figure of beauty and plenty but also one of the absence of the divine curse consequent upon sin.

Grogan: God’s promise to Abraham included a land as well as a people (cf. Gen 17:1-8). The capital city of that land is now in ruins and its environs reduced to a wasteland, but God will comfort her (v. 3; cf. 40:1-9) by transforming her land and giving her a voice to praise him. Genesis has been in view in the reference to Abraham and Sarah (v. 2); and it is mentioned again when the prophet alludes to the Garden of Eden, an allusion incidentally that was clearly meaningful to the first readers of the prophecy.

Young: It is a strong contrast: on the one hand, waste, desert, and desolate places; on the other, joy, gladness, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

3. Joy

*“Joy and gladness will be found in her,
Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.”*

Rich Cathers:

joy – sasown – gladness, joy, exultation, rejoicing

gladness – simchah – joy, mirth, gladness; pleasure

thanksgiving – towdah – confession, praise, thanksgiving; give praise to God; thanksgiving in

songs of liturgical worship, hymn of praise
melody – zimrah – music, melody, song, literally, "psalm".

We don't want to forget our past ... but we don't want to just live in the past either

II. (:4-6) LOOK FORWARD -- LISTEN TO WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT THE COMING MESSIAH AND HIS KINGDOM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WITH ITS WORLDWIDE IMPACT

A. Call to Listen – Addressed to Those Anticipating the Full Inheritance Awaiting the People of God

“Pay attention to Me, O My people, And give ear to Me, O My nation;”

Thompson: We may observe that from **verses 4-7**, that there is a great emphasis on the personal pronoun “Me” and “My.” These two pronouns are used fourteen times in these verses. God is stressing what belongs to Him. Notice that in **verse 4** God calls Israel “My people” and “My nation.” God wants Israel to know that she is His property.

1 Pet. 2:9 *“chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people . . . show forth the virtues”*

B. Content of the Exhortation: Wait expectantly for the coming Messiah and His reign of righteousness

1. Anticipate the Expansion of God's Revelation -- Worldwide

*“For a law will go forth from Me,
And I will set My justice for a light of the peoples.”*

It makes a difference who is issuing the laws of the land – we try to vote into office those who will make wise decisions – here we have God exercising direct control – proclaiming His law; establishing true justice

Parunak: The promise here is that God's kingdom, his rule, is not just for Israel, but extends across all the earth.

S. Lewis Johnson: This is the law in the future. Remember back in the second chapter, he spoke about the law of the Lord going forth from Jerusalem. What is the law of the Lord that shall go forth from Jerusalem during the kingdom age that is to come? Well it is the gospel of redemption in all of its manifestations. It is what Luke calls the knowledge of salvation.

Oswalt: *mispat* is the fair, equitable, and blessed governing of a world by its Creator according to the purposes for which it was created. The opposite of *mispat* is not injustice but chaos, which of course includes injustice but is much more far-reaching.

2. Anticipate the Arrival of God's Salvation and Judgment

*“My righteousness is near,
My salvation has gone forth,
And My arms will judge the peoples;”*

3. Anticipate the Reception for the Long Awaited Messiah

*“The coastlands will wait for Me,
And for My arm they will wait expectantly.”*

Beall: In the Servant passages (42:3-4, 6; 49:6) it was the Servant who was to establish justice on the earth and to be a light to the nations; here, it is the Lord (compare also Isa 9:7). Similarly, in v. 5 the Lord states that *“the coastlands shall wait upon Me”*; while in 42:4 it was said of the Servant that *“the coastlands shall wait for His Law.”* Clearly, the work of the Servant and the work of the Lord are one and the same. . . The *“arm”* of the Lord might also be a Messianic term, especially in light of Isa 53:1 (*“Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”*).

Oswalt: We long for someone who is both strong enough and good enough to rule . . . in justice. Given the realities of human nature, order requires rule, and rule requires power. But power of what sort? Here is the truth God has been trying to get his people to hear throughout the book. It is the power of self-denial, the power of self-sacrifice, the power of innocence, the power of faithfulness, the power of holy love. This is the power for which all the world waits in breathless anticipation.

C. Contrast Between the Temporal and the Eternal

1. The Temporal is Passing Away

*“Lift up your eyes to the sky,
Then look to the earth beneath;
For the sky will vanish like smoke, And the earth will wear out like a garment
And its inhabitants will die in like manner;”*

Parunak: He draws their attention to the most fundamental and enduring elements of their environment, the heavens and the earth.

2. The Eternal is Coming to Stay

“But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not wane.”

Constable: The sky and the earth may appear to be permanent, but the really permanent realities are God's promises of coming everlasting salvation and righteousness (cf. Luke 21:33).

Stedman: Look ahead! A new day is coming! God is at work. We are not headed for darkness and despair, we are headed for peace and light and glory; for power and ministry such as we could never dream. In Second Corinthians 5 the apostle says, *“This light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us an exceeding weight of glory,”* (2 Corinthians 4:17). That is what lies ahead. We must go through darkness here for a while, but it will not last forever. Once in a meeting where people were sharing their favorite Bible verses, I heard a man say, *“My favorite are those verses that begin, ‘And it came to pass. . .’ When I face discouragement, I say to myself, ‘It didn’t come to stay, it came to pass.’ ”* That is what God is saying. It will not last forever. We are headed for light, for peace, and for glory. Verse 7 adds another *“Hearken.”* Do not only look back and look ahead, also look around!

III. (:7-8) LOOK WITHIN -- LISTEN TO WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT REJECTING THE FEAR OF MEN TO EMBRACE BY FAITH THE PERMANENT IMPLEMENTATION OF GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. Call to Listen – Addressed to Those Fearing the God of Righteousness

"Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, A people in whose heart is My law;"

God not impressed by external and hypocritical conformity to His law; He desires truth in the inward parts

B. Content of the Exhortation: Do not allow the fear of man to divert you from taking a stand for the righteousness of God

*"Do not fear the reproach of man,
Nor be dismayed at their revilings."*

Had been instructed to Remember the past

Had been encouraged to Anticipate the future

Now commanded to trust and obey in the present – don't be paralyzed by fear

Persevere in Faith

C. Contrast between the Temporal and the Eternal

1. The Temporal is Passing Away

*"For the moth will eat them like a garment,
And the grub will eat them like wool."*

S. Lewis Johnson: the smallest expression of the power of God is sufficient to overthrow all of the forces of evil. O what a tremendous God we have. I think there is something else in that text too. It seems to me that by this reference to the moth and the worm, we are taught that God's destruction is a destruction that goes on before we know it.

Stedman: we are told again and again in the Scriptures not to fear the bluster and arrogance of cruel and violent people, because God is undermining them. The psalmist says in Psalm 73, "*He has set their feet in slippery places,*" (**Psalms 73:18**). We ought to feel sorry for them, hollow shells as they are for their foundations are being undermined.

2. The Eternal is Coming to Stay

*"But My righteousness will be forever,
And My salvation to all generations."*

Guzik: Knowing that the righteousness and salvation of the LORD are permanent and the opposition and mocking of the wicked is temporary, we should stand strong in faith. This is something to listen to!

CONCLUSION:

Remember Your Past – God has been faithful and will continue to fulfill all of His precious promises to those who are children of Abraham by faith

Anticipate Your Future – Ultimate Salvation and Righteousness are Coming

In the Present, Choose Faith, not Fear – Walk by Faith and proclaim the Righteousness of God -- not intimidated by Fear

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why does God have difficulty getting the attention of those He has created and faithfully cared for?
- 2) What memories from our own roots cause us to praise God for His faithfulness and encourage us with respect to our future?
- 3) Knowing that the world as viewed just from the perspective of the present is blatantly unfair, how are we gaining encouragement from anticipating future righteousness and ultimate vindication?
- 4) Why is fear such a paralyzing force?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

S. Lewis Johnson: Tidings of Salvation to Stricken Jerusalem – The Consolation of Jehovah

- 1) Theme of Israel's gracious past
- 2) Theme of Israel's glorious future
- 3) Theme of Israel's great present

All of Israel's history in a sense was bound up in one man, one lone man, but now while the great majority of the nation has backslidden, still there is the remnant. There is a small company of people who have believed in the Lord far more than one, and though they have suffered, and though they have been diminished by warfare and though they have had a great deal of trial and trouble in Jerusalem, still things are a great deal better than they were when there was only one man, Abraham. So look unto Abraham, your father and unto Sarah, that bare you. I can bring a son out of stone. I called him when he was alone and blessed him, and increased him.

Bethany Bible Chapel: And another encouraging lesson is that God speaks to those He knows. Three times, in the greater context of this passage, God says to His people "Listen to Me ..." The first time (v. 1) and the third (v. 7), He uses a Hebrew word that means "Hearken unto Me!" The second time (v. 4), He uses a different word - one that has the meaning of "Attend to Me" or "Incline unto Me". But in all three cases, God is calling out for the attention of those that He knows belong to Him; because in a dark time of discouragement and seeming despair, He has something very important to say to them.

Dennis Davidson: It is a call to the faithful remnant, to those truly of Abraham, to listen to God. It is a message of hope, of joy, of redemption, of salvation to the righteous, to those who seek the Lord. Even in difficult times, listening to God and remembering our history with Him renews our confidence in His promises and His eternal salvation. Hearing God instills hope for the future.

- I. LISTEN YOU RIGHTEOUS, 1-3.
- II. PAY ATTENTION WORLD, 4-6.
- III. HEAR YOU KNOWING, 7-8.

The Lord is addressing His faithful servants, the remnant that truly seek to obey and follow God's will.

The believing remnant in Israel is to think back, reflect on their background. God is calling them, not to look at their present day situation and give in to despair, but to remember the promises that He made to their forefather Abraham. Look where you came from, who you came from. Find encouragement by looking back in to the beginnings of their history. God brought them forth from those who remained faithful. God will also keep His promises to those who remain faithful.

David Silversides: Almighty Grace (:1-6)

Encouraging the faith of the people in the promises of what He would do – especially through the righteous servant of God; fulfillment seemed so far removed from reality;

1. What God's Grace had done (:1)

The description of those addressed: they pursued righteousness and seek the Lord; *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness* (Matt. 5:6);

- could mean pursuing holiness of life because they have been forgiven
- may also refer to seeking after righteousness from the Lord in His promises of mercy in Christ Jesus

From that unpromising beginning, look what God has already accomplished; do you really think that the rest that God has promised to Abraham will not follow? God brought him out of idolatry and darkness; God will fulfill the whole of His promises to Abraham; more nations remain to be blessed; Christ will come to judge the world in righteousness; many things yet to come; we reflect too little on the past works of God in His grace

2. What God's Grace will yet do (:3)

Promised land was so desolate during Babylonian Captivity; God will transform it into lush gardens like Eden; Ultimately no sin, no curse, no pain, no death, no interruption of communion with God when in glory man exceeds the state of pre-fallen Adam in Eden; amplification of the language of the Garden of Eden – describing a situation that is more than Eden in terms of blessing

3. What God's Grace will Provide (:4)

How shall this great result be brought about? Through the salvation of the Lord; this glorious future of the people of God is important; understand how it will be brought about; this message of salvation comes from God Himself; this salvation is both certain and eternal (:6)

Grogan: This section of the prophecy contains an unusual number of imperatives; and there are several series of verbs and their synonyms, so that there is a call to listen (51:1, 4, 7, 21; 52:8), to awake (51:9; 52:1; cf. 51:17), to look (51:1-2, 6), and, finally, to depart (52:11). Some of these commands occur in immediately doubled form (always an indication of emotion in a writer or speaker); and once the imperative is threefold, though in this case it is addressed to God, not man (51:9). . . The only abiding realities in God's new order are his own righteousness and salvation.

John Martin: the remnant with God's Law (v. 4) within them and eternal hope before them, should take courage and not be disheartened by their enemies' insults. Those enemies will perish like a moth-eaten garment, a metaphor the Servant used earlier (50:9).

Oswalt: When faced with the evil of the world, the seeming delay in the fulfillment of God's promises, and the mockery and hatred of a sinful world, believers should remember the evidence of God's faithfulness in history (vv. 1-3). They should recognize that God is not some local deity who is but a projection from creation; rather, he is the Creator, whose promises of salvation will outlast the cosmos (vv. 4-6), and they should know that those who reproach and revile them,

like all that has not partaken of the permanence of God, are doomed to the slow destruction from which none who have made this world their God can ever escape. . . The believer need not be neutralized by the opposition of the passing world. Those who have made it and its gods ultimate have chosen the way of time: the moth and the insect. Those who have made God and his Servant ultimate have chosen the way of permanence, certainty, and joy.

Wayne Joyce: Exposition #49

Chaps. 51-52 go together; divided into sections;

“*Hearken to me*” (v. 1, 4, 7)

“*Awake*” (v. 9, 17, 52:1, 11 “*Depart*”)

Addressed to faithful remnant of Israel (50:10)

I. Look Back to Their Roots (:1-3)

Abraham called out of idolatry; became a man of faith and a solid rock; the father of our faith; we were all called out of the pit of our sins; Ps. 40;

The progenitors of the Jewish nation; from these two elderly people came a great nation;

Made their seed like the dust of the earth = earthly seed

Number the stars of heaven = heavenly, spiritual seed – includes people of other nations that are included as children of faith (Gal. 3:16)

3 important prophetic scriptures: Gen. 3:15 – promised seed; John 3:16 – Son of God; Gal. 3:16

The best is yet ahead – would restore joy to them

II. Look Forward – Future Coming of Righteousness and Justice (:4-6)

They will be vindicated by the Lord

Personal pronoun “*My*” emphasized here; My people and nation

There is going to be justice and judgment some day

2 levels of fulfillment – deliverance from Babylon and eschatological deliverance

The arm speaks of His power

There are a lot of things we can’t depend upon – heavens and earth will pass away

III. Look Within – Live in Faith or Fear (:7-8)

Don’t be afraid of their anger; Is. 12:2; 8:3

Don’t be afraid of man

Moths and worms don’t work conspicuously but work effectively

TEXT: Isaiah 51:9 – 52:12

TITLE: OUR GOD REIGNS

BIG IDEA:
3 WAKE UP CALLS

INTRODUCTION:

Before the new technology of alarms on our cell phones, when we would stay overnight in a motel, most of us probably took advantage of their wake up call service in the morning. You could always use the radio alarm clock in the room – but you just weren't convinced of its reliability ... so at least for myself I would put in that request for a wake up call at a certain time in the morning. If you were enjoying a good, sound sleep there was nothing more jarring than the ringing of that phone in the darkness of the motel room.

We have arrived at a section in the prophecy of Isaiah that is structured around **3 WAKE UP CALLS: 51:9; 17; 52:1** [follows directly after the **3 Calls to Pay Attention – Listen to God's Word of Encouragement About the Past, Future and Present**]

The first is addressed to the Lord Himself; the other 2 are addressed to the people of God – designated as Jerusalem and Zion. In each case the outline is the same:

- Call to Action
- Comforting Response from the Lord

Oswalt: Thus the thread of thought in the three segments is from question to affirmation: Will God, can God, really deliver us from our enemies (51:9-16); it is the enemies who will suffer now, not you (51:17-23); yes, God has delivered us from our enemies (52:1-12).

The tone is one of gentle and gracious encouragement from the Lord. We are building up to the great climax of that most famous chapter in the book of Isaiah – **Chap. 53** which clearly describes the work of redemption by God's Servant/Messiah – who came to suffer on our behalf and bear in his own body the punishment for our sins so that we could enjoy the blessings of God

3 WAKE UP CALLS

WAKE UP CALL #1

I. (51:9-16) THE PROBLEM IS OUR FEAR – NOT GOD'S FAILURE TO PROTECT AND PROVIDE FOR HIS PEOPLE

A. (:9-11) The Call to Action – Directed to the Arm of the Lord -- to Once Again Restore the Gladness and Joy of Redemption

1. (:9a) Call for Strong Action

*“Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD;
Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago.”*

Young: implies that the arm has been lying asleep and inactive . . . idea of preparation for battle

Close to stepping over the line here in trying to stir the Lord into action

Yet this is often the cry of our hearts – we imagine that the Lord is slow to act and needs to be prodded by our cries; surely He has lost track of the difficulties that we are facing

Ps. 121:3-4 – remnant had forgotten these verses – **the Lord needs no Wake Up Call!**

THE LORD IS OUR VIGILANT HELPER AND PROTECTOR

I. (:1-4) THE LORD IS OUR VIGILANT HELPER

A. Looking for Help in All the Right Places -- "*From whence shall my help come?*"

1. Reminder: The impressive grandeur of the mountains reminds me of the majesty of the Creator

"I will lift up my eyes to the mountains"

2. Answer: "*My help comes from the Lord*"

B. The Lord's Credentials as Helper are Impeccable

1. Lord over Nature = Creator of heaven and earth

"Who made heaven and earth"

2. Personally Cares for Us

"He will not allow your foot to slip;"

3. Vigilant = On Call 24 hours a day [like our generator business]

"He who keeps you will not slumber"

"Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep"

II. (:5-8) THE LORD IS OUR VIGILANT PROTECTOR

A. Looking for Protection in All the Right Places -- "*The Lord is your keeper*"

B. The Lord's Credentials as Protector are Impeccable

1. Lord over Nature = Protector from the elements

"The Lord is your shade on your right hand"

a. From the heat of the sun

"The sun will not smite you by day"

b. From the freezing temperatures of the night

"Nor the moon by night"

2. Personally Cares for Us = Watches over our soul

"The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul"

3. Vigilant = On Call 24 hours a day

"The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever."

Oswalt: One may believe quite sincerely that it is possible for God to do something about one's situation, and even that he will do something, and yet at the same time be deeply troubled that he does not seem to do anything now.

Parunak: The phrase "*put on strength*" (as a garment) appears only three places: here, the third cry, and **Ps 93:1**, which also mentions the Lord's power over the sea (a theme that is developed here).

Motyer: In the Bible the motif of "*clothing*" stands for character, ability and commitment . . . In other words, it is God's character to take issue with his foes; he has the ability to do so, and he

commits himself to the task.

The generations of long ago -- Cf. song "Faith of Our Fathers"

2. (:9b-10) Reminder of Powerful, Supernatural Redemption from Egypt

a. Power Displayed in Judgment – over Egypt

"Was it not Thou who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon?"

Sounds like imagery from some type of Super Hero movie flick of today
Speaks of power and violence and domination and supremacy

Beall: i.e., Egypt (see 30:7; Rahab is a powerful legendary sea monster used to represent Egypt here and in **Isa 30:7**; Job 9:13; 26:12; Ps 87:4; and 89:11; the word for "*serpent*" is a derivative of Pharaoh, and here refers to the Egyptian pharaoh)

Oswalt: just as a contemporary poet might allude to the Iliad or the Odyssey, utilizing imagery familiar to his hearers but that is hardly part of their belief system, so Isaiah uses the imagery of the well-known stories of creation to make his point.

Young: As God once delivered His people from the mighty power of Pharaoh, so now will He again deliver them from whatever powers stand in the way of their salvation.

b. Supernatural Displayed in Redemption – at the crossing of the Red Sea

*"Was it not Thou who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep;
Who made the depths of the sea a pathway for the redeemed to cross over?"*

No matter how powerful the obstacles seem to us, the Lord can deliver as He did in the crossing of the Red Sea

The Lord can make a way – even where it seems like there is no way

"God Will Make A Way" – Don Moen lyrics

God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me

He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength for each new day
He will make a way, He will make a way

By a roadway in the wilderness, He'll lead me
And rivers in the desert will I see
Heaven and Earth will fade but His Word will still remain
And He will do something new today

3. (:11) Joyful Celebration of Restoration

a. Joyful Return

*“So the ransomed of the LORD will return,
And come with joyful shouting to Zion;
And everlasting joy will be on their heads.”*

b. Joyful Rest

*“They will obtain gladness and joy,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.”*

Experience of Apostle Paul -- **Acts 16:25** – joyfully singing from behind the bars of the prison in Philippi – demonstrates to us that God intends for believers to already experience this gladness and joy; our lives should not be characterized by sorrow and sighing – although this life does throw at us things that hurt and cause suffering

Beall: This verse is nearly identical to **Isa 35:10**, also a clearly millennial context.

B. (:12-16) Comforting Response From the Lord – Don’t Fear Man But Remember Your Maker Who Will Deliver You

1. (:12a) Divine Source of Comfort

“I, even I, am He who comforts you.”

Repetition of the personal pronoun responds to the twofold “*Awake, Awake*”

Young: This is in reality the basic theme of the entire prophecy.

This statement by itself should be enough to comfort God’s people

2. (:12b-14) Exposure of the False Foundations of Our Fears

a. (:12b-13a) Three Drivers of the Fear of Man

1) (:12) Overlooking the Impermanence of Man

*“Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies,
And of the son of man who is made like grass;”*

Young: to violate this command [*to fear not*] is to be presumptuous, to assume that God’s command is without meaning. Furthermore, it is to attribute to man a power and ability that he does not possess.

Chuck Smith: Jesus said, “*Don’t be afraid of those that kill your body, and after that have no power. But rather fear Him, that after the body is killed has power to cast your soul into Gehenna; yea, I say unto you, “Fear ye Him”*” (**Luke 12:4-5**). The Bible says, “*The fear of man brings a snare, but whoso will put his trust in the Lord shall be saved*” (**Proverbs 29:25**). And again, why should you fear man who is going to die himself? Son of man whose life is as the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is dried and cast into the oven?

Man is not in control; cannot carry out his threats regarding your future destiny

Contrast with the permanence of the Word of God

Example of Elijah -- **1 Kings 19:3** – fleeing before the death threat of Queen Jezebel
1 Kings 21:23 – death of Jezebel prophesied; fulfilled – **2 Kings 9:33-37**

2) (:13a) Forgetting the Supremacy of Your Creator God

*“That you have forgotten the LORD your Maker,
Who stretched out the heavens,
And laid the foundations of the earth;”*

3) (:13b) Overestimating the Bluster of Your Oppressors

*“That you fear continually all day long because of **the fury of the oppressor**, As he makes ready to destroy?”*

Oswalt: The implication of the question in v. 12 is made explicit here: to live in fear of humans is to have effectively forgotten God. This is the problem. It is not that God has forgotten his people (**49:14**); it is that they have forgotten him. This is the problem of Ahaz, and it will be the problem of the exiles, as it is that of the church today. It is easy to say certain theologically correct things, such as that he is both the world’s and our maker, that he is the one who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth, while giving the lie to those fine words by our continually living as though he can do nothing to prevent humans from doing ultimate harm to us. This is a call to live out the reality of our confession, to make creed and behavior coinhere. If God is the creator, then **we need not fear the anger of any oppressor**, no matter how horrifying his or her plans are. None of this is to deny the horror, the pain, the degradation of oppression. This is not an exercise in self-delusion (imagine you are not being oppressed and you won’t be!). Rather, it is a call to **focus on a larger reality**. If the oppressor fills my horizon, then I have only one option: be ruled by fear and hatred. But if a larger reality fills my horizon, then where is the anger of the oppressor? If we know that it is God who holds our ultimate destiny, then the oppressor no longer holds power over us. Yes, oppressors may hurt us, even kill us, but they do not have the power to make us fear them or hate them. God is the ruler over all.

b. (:13b-14) Imagined Threats Have No Substance

1) Wrath Evaporates

*“But where is **the fury of the oppressor?**”*

2) Dangers Not Realized

*“The exile will soon be set free,
and will not die in the dungeon,
nor will his bread be lacking.”*

Young: The root meaning is *to stoop*, and the participial form here therefore means, one stooping, bending, as though under a burden. Possibly therefore it refers to those who sit in prison bent over, and so may be rendered in English by *prisoners*. Although the Hebrew is anarthrous (for this is poetic language), in English we may render, *The prisoner hastens to be delivered*.

3. (:15-16) Two Encouragements Regarding God's Protection and Provision of His People

a. (:15) Sovereignty of God's Control

"For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar (the LORD of hosts is His name)."

b. (:16) Security of God's Care – Administered by His Servant/Messiah

*"And I have put My words in your mouth,
and have covered you with the shadow of My hand,
to establish the heavens,
to found the earth,
and to say to Zion, 'You are My people.'"*

- **Communicating the Mind of God**
- **Creating New Heavens and New Earth**
- **Continuing the Covenant Relationship**

Young: the means employed [for God to deliver His people] = the revelation of God . . . in light of the nature of the work to be accomplished, it seems best to regard the One in whose mouth God places His words as the Messiah Himself, the One who is to plant the heavens and found the earth and bring a message of comfort to Zion.

Speaking here of the Servant

Oswalt: the segment began with an appeal to God's mighty work in the past, both in creation and in redemption (vv. 12-13a). Then the move was to the present with its assurance that it is possible to live in confidence (vv. 13b-15). Now at the end of the segment, we move to the final state of the cosmos and of the people that God has made. . . for the cosmos is to be remade (65:17), and the people of whom it was said "not my people" shall be called "*my people*" (Hos. 2:23; Isa. 65:19). How is that to happen? It is to happen through the word of the Servant/Messiah.

WAKE UP CALL #2

II. (51:17-23) THE PROCESS OF DELIVERANCE INVOLVES EMBRACING THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD – DIVINE DELIVERANCE FOLLOWS DIVINE DISCIPLINE

A. (:17-20) The Call to Action – Directed to Jerusalem -- to Feel the Sting of Divine Discipline

1. (:17) Expect Divine Deliverance After Divine Discipline

a. (:17a) **Preparation** for the Lord to Deliver

"Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem,"

Reflexive force of the Hithpael stem – Wake yourself; not responsibility of God to wake them

Can't give up and quit under the hand of God's discipline; there will come a time when you need

to get back up off the carpet

Emphasis throughout NT on watchfulness; staying alert – Don't be asleep at the switch

Matt. 24 -- Olivet discourse – emphasis on being alert and watching

Rom. 13:11-14

Eph. 5:14

1 Thess. 5:5ff

b. (:17b) **Proper Perspective** Towards the Discipline from the Lord

*“You who have drunk from the LORD's hand the cup of His anger;
The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.”*

Constable: Drinking a cup of wine is a figure of judgment (cf. 29:9; 63:6; Ps. 75:8; Jer. 25:15-16; Rev. 14:10). Jerusalem now lay in a state of stupor but needed to arise because the Lord had a future for her.

Parunak: Wine is presented as an image of the seductiveness of sin and judgment. Initially, sin is attractive, but it draws people inevitably into a disgraceful state, just as the initial pleasure of wine leads to shameful drunkenness. The drunkard, crazed by alcohol, sucks on the bitter dregs to satisfy his thirst. The sinner is so overcome by his lust that he clasps the judgment of God to his bosom.

The point of the metaphor is that what God gives them is not just the final judgment for their sin, but the withdrawal of his protection from the temptations that draw them deeper into sin.

Motyer: All life's experiences are blended into a cup for us by the Lord but specially the due apportionment of his wrath (Pss. 11:6; 75:8-9; Je. 25:15ff.; Ezk. 23:31ff).

OT examples – **book of Judges** is full of examples – Discipline followed by Deliverance

Ezek. 23 – tale of 2 sisters – *Oholah* (“her own tabernacle” = Samaria) and *Oholibah* (“My tabernacle is in her = Jerusalem”)

Heb. 12 – key passage on Divine Discipline

2. (:18-19a) Don't Expect Human Resources to be Sufficient

a. No Guidance that is Adequate

“There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne;”

David Thompson: That Hebrew word “guide” (*nahal*) is one that refers to one who actually knows the right direction and can lead people in it (*Ibid.*, p. 536). This is the same word in **Psalm 23:2**, “*He leads Me beside still waters.*” As a judgment of God, God sees to it that His own people do not have anyone who can actually take them by the hand and lead them and guide them into His Word, ways, and will.

No human leadership can provide deliverance – apart from the type of Savior the Lord provided in the days of the Judges – types pointing forward to ultimate deliverance by the Savior Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ

Pharisees in the day of Christ described as the blind leading the blind

b. No Help that is Adequate

“Nor is there one to take her by the hand among all the sons she has reared.”

Young: Her own inhabitants, be they ever so strong and willing, nevertheless cannot lead the city at this time when the wrath of God has been drunk by her. Nor can they seize her by the hand to help.

Motyer: no human resource avails against divine wrath (cf. 50:2; 59:16; 63:3; 65:12).

Cf. in the NT the marvelous miracles associated with Jesus simply reaching down to those in need and taking them by the hand and lifting them up

c. (:19a) No Human Comfort that Can Strengthen and Sustain

*“These two things have befallen you;
Who will mourn for you?”*

What 2 things?? Some confusion here – looking forward to 2 groups of 2?? Or looking backward??

Young: it may be that the two things are those just mentioned in the preceding verse, namely, the not being led by the children whom she has borne and the not being seized by the hand by the children whom she has brought up. We set this interpretation forth with some hesitation, merely acknowledging it as a possibility, one that appears to involve less difficulty than to find an equation of meaning between the first words of the verse and the four nouns in the second line.

No human solace is possible; must look to the Lord for comfort

3. (:19b-20) Feel the Sting of Hopelessness – Apart from Divine Deliverance

a. (:19b) **Hurting** Because of the Disaster Impacting Property and People

1) Total Disaster Against Property (**Motyer**)

“The devastation and destruction,”

Jerusalem pictured in ruins – book of Lamentations

2) Total Disaster Against People (**Motyer**)

“famine and sword;”

Slow death by starvation or rapid killing in battle

3) In Need of Divine Comfort

“How shall I comfort you?”

b. (:20) **Helpless** Under the Force of Divine Discipline

1) The Strongest are Powerless

“Your sons have fainted,”

- 2) Panic and Fear are Paralyzing
*“They lie helpless at the head of every street,
 Like an antelope in a net,”*
- 3) The Adversary is All Powerful and Angry
*“Full of the wrath of the LORD,
 The rebuke of your God.”*

No human way out of such a dire situation

B. (:21-23) Comforting Response From the Lord --

1. (:21-22a) Your Relationship with God Brings the Comforting Message of Hope

- a. Tune Your Ears to the Message of Hope
*“Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted,
 Who are drunk, but not with wine.”*

Constable: "Therefore" marks the transition from peril to promise. Isaiah appealed to afflicted Israel to listen to God's message. The Israelites had suffered the effects of intoxication, not from drinking real wine but the wrath of God (v. 20).

- b. Trust Your Lord to Fight Your Battles
*“Thus says your Lord, the LORD,
 even your God **Who contends for His people,**”*

nature of God is such that He calls on His people to stand still and see the salvation He provides
 We have a wonderful Advocate – cf. our system of courts and lawyers that is so unfair
 We have one who pleads our cause

2. (:22b-23) The Sovereignty of God Turns the Tables on Your Oppressors

- a. Discipline is Over
*“Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling;
 The chalice of My anger,
 You will never drink it again.”*

This can only be said in the eschatological context
 Think of the cup of God's wrath which the Lord Jesus drank – never again will He drink that cup

Matt. 26:36ff

- b. Vengeance is Executed
*“And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors,
 Who have said to you, 'Lie down that we may walk over you.'
 You have even made your back like the ground,
 And like the street for those who walk over it.”*

Hos. 1:4; 2 Kings 9:7; 10:30 – **King Jehu** = God's instrument of vengeance against house of Ahab

Constable: The figure of walking on the backs of enemies stresses the victor's desire to humiliate the captives, not to slay them (cf. Josh. 10:24).

Young: The Assyrian monuments show how the victor trampled on the conquered who were lying on the ground.

Sometimes God lets the wicked walk all over His people – for a time – to accomplish His purposes – to fill up the cup of His discipline – **we must embrace that process**

Divine Deliverance follows Divine Discipline

WAKE UP CALL #3 REDEMPTION DEMONSTRATES THAT OUR GOD REIGNS III. (52:1-6) THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IN SOVEREIGNLY REDEEMING HIS PEOPLE BRINGS GLORY TO HIS NAME

A. (:1-2) The Call to Action – Directed to Zion – to Look and Act Like the Redeemed of the Lord

1. (:1) Clothe Yourselves in Holiness

a. Holiness is Our Strength

“Awake, awake,

Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion;

Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.”

Oswalt: While she has no strength to deliver herself, she does have strength to lay hold of God’s promises and must exercise that strength if deliverance is to be realized . . . So although their pride and vanity has reduced them to abandonment, destruction, and filth, that is not how God sees them. He sees them with strength and beauty. In his eyes they are **the Holy City**.

Figure of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ:

Rom. 13:11-14

Gal. 3:27 *“for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”*

Ephes. 4:17-24

Col. 3

What type of Holiness is Beautiful??

- Not the type of external legalism of the Pharisees – nothing either holy or beautiful about whitewashed sepulchers that stink from the inside out
- Not the type of emotional, self-delusional, pseudo-holiness of the charismatic Holy Rollers that imagine they have been elevated to some type of state of perfection due to the Second Blessing
- Not the intellectual, academic holiness of those who have studied the doctrine backwards and forwards but whose character and walk lack the depth of their profession
- But the holiness that looks like Jesus Christ in all of His moral attributes; the holiness that comes through persistent growth towards maturity in the grind-it-out arena of daily life

This type of holiness is not weakness but is our strength

b. Holiness is Our Protection

“For the uncircumcised and the unclean will no more come into you.”

Defilement is something to be feared, not trifled with; we should always be concerned that our worship sanctuary not be tainted with any sinful influences

What a day it will be in the end times when Jerusalem truly lives out its destiny as God's Holy City and the uncircumcised and the unclean are not allowed to enter in and defile God's center of worship and instruction in holiness

Parunak: Note how the invaders are described. Their distinctive feature is not their violence or rapacity, but their **uncleanness**. The real disaster is not that Judah suffers, but that God's holy city is defiled. Throughout Scripture, God's whole concern is for his name and his honor. In ourselves, we are only dust; we are precious to him because **we bear his name**, and when we suffer, it is his honor that he is primarily concerned to remedy.

2. (:2) Live in Liberty

*“Shake yourself from the dust, rise up, O captive Jerusalem;
Loose yourself from the chains around your neck, O captive daughter of Zion”*

How tragic it is when believers who have been redeemed from the bondage of sin by the death of Christ, continue to live as though shackled with the same chains of selfishness and lust and pride and addiction

Much of our growth in Christian maturity comes from realizing in our experience the reality of God's power in our lives rather than believing the lie that we are still in bondage to our sins
Message of **Romans 6-8** – You don't have to still live in sin; yield the members of your body as instruments of righteousness – Celebrate the victory we have in Jesus

Paul rebukes the Galatians for allowing **legalism** to compromise the freedom that they should be experiencing in Christ Jesus – **Gal. 5: 1-6**

Oswalt: Although Zion's deliverance is wholly the work of God and not her own, she is not merely a passive recipient of God's work. Those whom God calls must exercise their own will and effort in response to what he has done on their behalf. This verse makes that plain. Jerusalem is not merely lifted from the dust, but is called to get up and shake off the dust. Likewise, she must remove the chains from her neck for herself. We cannot break the chains that bind us; only God can do that. But when the chains are broken, we must remove them, and only we can do that. This is a critical moment in any recovery: the moment when we cease thinking of ourselves as a captive, that is, as a victim, a helpless chip in the current, and begin to realize that God has placed an opportunity before us that we may seize, if we will.

Young: From her degrading slavery she is to be restored to a position of honor and dignity.

We need this type of wakeup call to look and act today like the people of God

- Clothe ourselves in holiness
- Live in liberty

B. (:3-6) Comforting Response From the Lord -- Redemption is Coming

1. (:3) Redemption Will Be Strictly on God's Terms

*“For thus says the LORD,
‘You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money.’”*

How did you get into this degrading position of slavery and oppression? And how will you be delivered?

Ironic statement since the concept of redemption contains implicitly the idea of the paying of a ransom – How is God going to accomplish this?

In the pagan world of polytheism, if your land was suffering oppression you would desire that your gods would make some type of payment to rescue you; always a great contrast being presented between the one true God and the false pagan gods

Oswalt: Vv. 4-6 form an extended reflection on v. 3. What does it mean that they had been sold without price, and why is it that God is determined to take them back?

2. (:4-5a) Redemption Has Always Been God's Only Solution to Oppression – Oppressors Have No Inherent Rights to God's People

- a. Example of Redemption from Egypt – God's people put themselves under oppression willingly

*“For thus says the Lord God,
‘My people went down at the first into Egypt to reside there.’”*

Nobody forced the Jews to leave the promised land and look to Egypt for help; they had a response of unbelief and disobedience to the pressure of famine in the land; instead of drawing closer to their God they fled to Egypt

- b. Example of Redemption from Assyria – oppressed without cause

“then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.”

Different set of circumstances ... but the same experience of bondage and oppression; the same desperate need for the Lord's intervention;

- c. Current Situation of Redemption from Babylon

*“Now therefore, what do I have here,’ declares the LORD,
‘seeing that My people have been taken away without cause?’”*

Here we go again, says God – the people of God constantly cycle through the same type of bondage experiences

3. (:5b) Redemption Addresses the Fundamental Issue – Captivity Dishonors the Name of the Lord

*“Again the LORD declares,
‘Those who rule over them howl,
and My name is continually blasphemed all day long.’”*

Are the *rulers* here

- the oppressors? – probably this is the best view
- rulers of Jerusalem and Judah? – probably not

The main issue is not that God's people are suffering and need to be delivered;

The fundamental issue is that God's reputation is being blasphemed by pagan rulers

Oswalt: God's name is held in contempt because it appears to the watching world that Israel's belief in God was false. He had been forced by the superior power of the gods to surrender his people. Thus the watchers would assume that the rulers of the people would be wailing over the failure of their trust in God. This is the same point that **Ezek. 36:19-21** makes: God's reputation, his name, is held in contempt because of his apparent inability to defend his people.

4. (:6) Redemption Will Vindicate the Name of the Lord by Establishing His Incarnate Presence

*"Therefore My people shall know My name;
therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, 'Here I am.'"*

Look at the judgments declared against seven pagan nations in **Ezek 25-32** – common refrain:

"Thus you will know that I am the Lord"

The deliverance that God brings about for His people has the same common goal

As God's people today, do we truly know God's name? Do we know Him for who He is – all of his attributes and how He relates to us in love and mercy and grace and compassion; do the sheep truly know their good shepherd?

Motyer: In the exodus redemption and revelation of his name, the Lord set up a mediator to speak for him (**Ex. 6:28 – 7:3; 19:9**), but in the coming day he will speak in person and in such a way as to be able to say, *"Behold me!"*

(52:7-12) THE POSTSCRIPT HYMN OF PRAISE = CELEBRATION OF THE REDEMPTION PROVIDED BY OUR GOD WHO REIGNS

A. (:7-8) Proclamation of Good News of Salvation

1. (:7) Happiness Tied to the Reign of God

a. Commendation of the Messenger (Herald) of Good News

"How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news,"

This is how they communicated in ancient times – by way of messenger – hopefully you sent one who had fast feet – no TV or cell phones or email or social media to spread the word quickly; you had to run to the next city and bring the message – not even as sophisticated as the Pony Express – what anticipation as the watchmen on the city towers would see the messenger approaching – would it be good news or bad?

b. Fourfold Content of the Message of Good News

1) *"Who announces peace"*

As opposed to strife; because the **Prince of Peace** has reconciled us to God
Nothing better after the ravages of wartime than to hear the message that peace has been established

Is. 66:12 speaking of future Jerusalem – *"Behold, I extend peace to her like a river"* familiar words of our famous hymn

Rom. 5:1 “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God”

2) “and brings good news of happiness,”

“Good news of the good” – redundancy in the Hebrew

3) “Who announces salvation,”

Rescue, deliverance

It is our privilege to be entrusted with the gospel message of peace and joy and salvation – need to announce this to the world around us

4) “and says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” Key thought

None of the above can be true unless this is true

Answers the issue of lordship salvation and easy believism

We need to make our boast in the Lord as the one who reigns; are we allowing Him to fully rule in our lives? Or do we still want to be on the throne and live according to our own pleasures and desires?

Oswalt: What does God's rule entail? It entails a condition where all things are in their proper relation to each other, with nothing left hanging, incomplete, or unfulfilled (*peace, shalom*); it entails a condition where creation purposes are realized (*good, tob*; cf. Gen. 1:4, 10, etc.); it entails a condition of freedom from every bondage, but particularly the bondage resultant from sin (*salvation, yeshu'a*). Where God reigns, these follow. Of course, this is exactly congruent with what the Christian faith considers its good news (*euangelion*) to be.

Borgman: Content of the Good News = **Your God Reigns!** – surprising to us – far more comprehensive message than just that God died for sinners
How can that be the gospel?

Hymn: Thy God Reigneth

Trembling soul, beset by fears, "Thy God reigneth!"
Look above, and dry thy tears: "Thy God reigneth!"
Though thy foes with power assail, naught against thee shall prevail;
Trust in Him-He'll never fail:
"Thy God reigneth, Thy God reigneth!"

Sinful soul, thy debt is paid, "Thy God reigneth!"
On the Lord thy sins were laid, "Thy God reigneth!"
On the cross of Calvary, Jesus shed His blood for thee,
From all sin to set thee free,
Thy God reigneth, Thy God reigneth!"

Seeking soul, to Jesus turn, "Thy God reigneth!"
None that seek Him will He spurn, "Thy God reigneth!"
Wandering sheep the Shepherd seeks and, when found, He ever keeps,

For "He slumbers not nor sleeps,"
"Thy God reigneth, Thy God reigneth!"

Join, ye saints, the truth proclaim, "Thy God reigneth!"
Shout it forth with glad acclaim, "Thy God reigneth!"
Zion, wake! the morn is nigh; see it break from yonder sky;
Loud and clear the watchmen cry:
"Thy God reigneth, Thy God reigneth!"

Church of Christ, awake, awake! "Thy God reigneth!"
Forward then, fresh courage take: "Thy God reigneth!"
Soon, descending from His throne, He shall claim thee for His own;
Sin shall then be overthrown:
"Thy God reigneth, Thy God reigneth!"

2. (:8) Hopes Fulfilled When the Lord Regathers His People

*"Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices, They shout joyfully together;
For they will see with their own eyes when the LORD restores Zion.*

Oswalt: Vv. 7-12 express in highly lyrical form a series of images that convey the reality of what God is about to do. This is another example of Isaiah's penchant for concluding a teaching segment with concrete images. . .

As is typical in this part of the book, a major segment dealing with redemption ends with a hymn (cf. 42:10–12; 44:23; 49:13; 54:1ff.). The reality of what God is about to do bursts in on the hearers, and they are called on to celebrate the glory and the joy of it. As wonderful as creation was, and as true as divine providence is, it is redemption that is earth's great song. For without redemption, creation and providence are ultimately abortive. The world is caught in the bondage of sin and destruction; creation is fatally marred and providence makes the bondage only bearable. But if it is possible to be delivered from human sin and its effects, then creation may yet see its children and providence may yet lead us to the Father's house. That is cause for joy, not for humans alone but for the whole cosmos. Here, as previously, nature (the waste places of Jerusalem) is called on to take part in, if not lead, the singing (42:10–11; 44:23; 49:13; see also 45:8 and 55:12). Just as nature has suffered the effects of sin, so one day it will share the benefits of God's redemption, and that is cause for song."

B. (:9-10) Picture of Redemption Brings Joy and Fear

1. (:9) Joy to God's People in Jerusalem Who are Comforted

*"Break forth, shout joyfully together, You waste places of Jerusalem;
For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem."*

Transformation of the waste places of Jerusalem

2. (:10) Joy [and Fear] to the Watching World Who See God's Glory

*"The LORD has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations,
That all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God."*

Rolling up His sleeves and showing off His strong arms = His guns – most specifically, His appointed Holy Messiah

God painting on a global canvas for all to see

Pattern of the good news spreading to all the earth in the book of Acts starting with Day of Pentecost – starting in Jerusalem and Judea and then spreading to all the world

Fulfillment of promise to Abraham – *“In you all the families of the earth will be blessed”*

This is the vindication of the name of the Lord

C. (:11-12) Process of Regathering Involves Special Purification and Security

1. (:11) Purification

*“Depart, depart, go out from there, Touch nothing unclean;
Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves,
You who carry the vessels of the LORD.”*

We need to separate ourselves from the world of sin – we are called to be in the world but not of the world – just as the Jews are called to depart from Babylon and return to the Promised Land (particularly here the priests who have responsibilities to lead the people in corporate worship)

Don’t be tainted by the world in such a way that you would compromise your ultimate goal of worshiping God in the beauty of holiness

2. (:12) Security

*“But you will not go out in haste, nor will you go as fugitives;
For the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.”*

The Presence of God is prominent here – going before and coming after God’s people to provide complete protection and security

Beall: Finally, in vv. 11-12 another dual imperative closes out this section. Here the captive exiles in Babylon seem to be in view, and the Lord tells them that when they are set free (as a “first fruits” of the redemptive promise and plan of God), they are to leave there without taking any Babylonian spoil (as they had done when they left Egypt), and they would not need to leave in haste (as they had left Egypt), because the Lord would protect them thoroughly. It is possible that the reference has in view both the exiles from Babylon and the future regathering of Israel in the end time as well.

Oswalt: This concern for ritual defilement is rare in Isaiah (but cf. 1:10–16 and 65:1–7), and its use here suggests a concern to make clear that the central issue here is release not from physical bondage but from another kind of bondage, the bondage of evil with its corruption and defilement. This larger concern may well be the reason for not specifying that the vessels being carried are those of the sanctuary. It is not merely the priests and Levites who carry these vessels of the Lord—it is all the people of God; and the deliverance in which they are being called to participate calls them all to purify themselves by departing from sin.

CONCLUSION:

The one who came to redeem us is truly **Immanuel = God with us**

In the coming section we are going to learn in graphic detail what it cost the Suffering Servant to accomplish our redemption

Redemption demonstrates that our God reigns

Let's live and act as those who have been redeemed by the Lord

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How are these three wake up calls tied together from a thematic sense? How do they prepare the way for what follows in the coming chapters?
- 2) In what ways does our life fail to reflect the freedom from sin that we should be experiencing in our Lord Jesus Christ? Are we truly living as unshackled, victorious Christians?
- 3) How can we be more faithful in proclaiming the gospel as those who have the privilege of being entrusted with this precious message?
- 4) How can we adjust our presentation of the gospel to include the fundamental tenet that **Our God Reigns?**

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Constable: The presence and repetition of the call to awake (51:9, 17; 52:1) identifies this unit of prophetic material as one. The Israelites were to wake up to the power of God that had not changed (51:9-16), and to the purpose of God, namely: His plan for their life (51:17-23). They should also wake up to the peace of God, since He would not abandon them (52:1-12). The section begins with the question of whether God can and will save His people from their enemies (51:9-16). The answer is that He will cause Israel's enemies to suffer (51:17-23), and that He will deliver Israel from her enemies (52:1-12).

Parunak: Who is speaking in these verses? Who would cry out to rouse the militia, warn of the city's desolation, and call her to rejoice when she is delivered? Isaiah's summary in **52:8** gives a clue:

Isa 52:8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

The people would be accustomed to the role of the watchmen who patrolled the walls of an ancient city, especially during the night, to warn of attack or fire. Three times the watchman cries out, and three times the Lord comments on his call. With a little imagination, we can imagine that the Lord is walking by the side of the watchman, offering his reassurance and commentary as the watchman cries out his warnings. . .

- As the watchman declares Judah's desolation, so we must declare to warn lost men and women of their condition. The NT gospel starts not with a proclamation of God's love, but with a reminder the people have sinned and need to repent.
- As the watchman cries out to the Lord to deliver, so we must pray for the Lord to undertake in bringing unbelievers to himself.
- As the watchman calls on Zion to rejoice in the Lord's salvation, so we must invite our hearers to joyfully receive the Lord's salvation.

Iain Wright: Awake, Awake (51:1 - 52:12)

Context: Prior chaps: Gentleness of God in dealing with sinful men; Next chaps: standing on the brink of chap. 53; gracious work of salvation in the person of Jesus Christ; looks on the travail of his soul and is satisfied;

I. (51:1-3) He points us to Our Experience – Our Yesterday – so we can learn from our past God has the power to take one man (Abraham) and make him many; what has been your experience of the living God

II. (51:4-6) He points us to Our Expectations – Our Tomorrow – our expectation and hope in Christ – what does the future hold for us

III. (51:7-8) He points us to Our Evidence – Our Present = here is where we live God deals with us gently; graciously and tenderly

Vs. 9 – addressing the arm of the Lord; an earnest prayer and petition from the people of God to God himself; extend your arm to bless even me; bold cry;

Vs. 17 – 52:1 – Jerusalem and Zion being addressed; in an echo God cries out for His people to awake; the sovereign Lord neither slumbers nor sleeps; what are the glad tidings = your God reigns; when you feel yourself deserted by the living God – it is you who should awake and listen to the voice of your God

David Thompson:

GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE, WHO ARE PRESENTLY IN MISERABLE CONDITIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES DUE TO THEIR SIN, TO BE INTENSELY COMFORTED . IN KNOWING THAT HE WILL EVENTUALLY VINDICATE HIS PEOPLE AND POUR OUT HIS VENGEANCE ON THEIR ENEMIES.

We may observe that there is a word that shows up four times in Isaiah 51, the word “comfort” (51:3, 3, 12, 19). Piel stem is intensive

THEME #1 – God's nation is presently in a totally depressed condition. 51:12-20

Depressing Reality #1 - Israel lives in constant fear . **51:12**

Depressing Reality #2 - Israel has forgotten God . **51:13**

Depressing Reality #3 - Israel is living in a prison exile out of the land. **51:14a**

Depressing Reality #4 - Israel has lacked food . **51:14b**

Depressing Reality #5 - Israel has experienced the negative chastisement of God. **51:17, 20**

Depressing Reality #6 - Israel has no one to guide her. **51:18**

Depressing Reality #7 - They had been devastated and destroyed by famine and sword.**51:19**

Depressing Reality #8 - Their own sons could not defend them and they were helpless.**51:20**

THEME #2 – God's comfort is presently given to God's depressed nation. 51:12-23

Comforting Reality #1 - God's people may be comforted knowing comfort comes from

God . 51:12a

Comforting Reality #2 - God's people may be comforted knowing God is our Maker . 51:13

Comforting Reality #3 - God's people may be comforted knowing that they will soon be delivered and finally home and flourishing. 51:14

Comforting Reality #4 - God's people may be comforted knowing God is an all-powerful . God. 51:15

Comforting Reality #5 - God's people may be comforted by knowing that God has established His Word in His people and His people on the earth. 51:16

Comforting Reality #6 - God's people may be comforted by knowing that God will eventually stop being angry with Israel and will never be angry again. 51:22

Comforting Reality #7 - God's people may be comforted by knowing that God will wipe out all their tormentors . 51:23

Gene Washburne: Let This Cup Pass From Me (:17-23)

The wrath of God = subject; Rom. 1:18ff;

It is not God who is asleep; children had job to walk their parent home if they had become drunk; Jerusalem will end up face down in an alley somewhere; intoxicated on their sins; can't walk and see straight; as a prophet I have no comforting words to speak to this generation; picture of hopelessness is what is painted; they have brought destruction down on themselves; the only hope is for future generations; extremely dark and bleak picture; we deserve the wrath of God, but we are never going to taste it because God's Son willingly took on Himself the cup of God's wrath that was meant for you and me; Fall on the Rock and be broken instead of the Rock falling on you and crushing you; Jesus did not die on the cross to assure me of the next promotion and of a prosperous life; died to be a propitiation – one who satisfies the wrath of God out of the way on my behalf;

Bowls in Rev. = another term for cups of God's wrath;

Matt. 26:39 – what was worse than the physical suffering of Christ on the cross (which was excruciating)? Taking on Him the sin penalty of the full cup of the wrath of God

I can handle anything this life can throw at me; it is not hell!

Paul said he had learned to be content whatever the circumstances

Phil Pockras: The Cup of Jehovah's Wrath (:17-23)

Time of the year when there is a lot of grass cutting going on; the wicked will be cut down like grass; the grass never wins against the mower

God's salvation and deliverance are forever

Picture of a cup full of wine; little bits of junk at the bottom = the dregs; you drink it all the way to the bottom – these are sinkers, not floaters

They must rouse up from the fainting of hopelessness because of their improper response to God's discipline for their earlier sin; must receive this discipline in faith

Israel's sin had provoked all of this; their horrible wickedness;

She has no earthly help or hope;

God willed difficulty for His children in order to accomplish greater good in them;

Why do parents have doctors give shots to their infants?? Not to inflict pain but to deliver them from worse possibilities

Amos 3:6 God has brought all this to pass; sin does not bring happiness but misery

Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world right now – God's people suffering at the hands of the wicked

God never ultimately casts off His people

God is our Defense lawyer = a fighter for us

God's people may have to endure oppression for a time but joy comes in the morning, Ps. 30
Refusing to drink the cup will only make things worse
The wicked had behaved insufferably – you can't stand it
Our own govt says you must pay for abortions – need to stand up against this

Brian Borgman: God Reigns

Exhortation to God's people to be what you are; you are the holy city ... start acting like it; rise up from place of humiliation (:2); God delivered them over to their enemies out of His sovereign good pleasure – sold for nothing; contrast between Israel's God and gods of the nations; pagan concept = their gods could sell them out; I will redeem you without money also; How is God going to redeem without money??

Redeemed them from willing bondage in Egypt or unwilling oppression to Assyria – now it is happening again; here we go again

(:3-6) commitment of God is to redeem them; what is his motivation? Captors are blaspheming name of God; God will do whatever He does for His own glory

Therefore, my people shall know my name; that brings God glory;

Foreshadowing of incarnational intervention

(:7-12) hymn of praise for salvation

God's mighty deeds lead to the worship of God

You sent messages by people who could run fast and take it over the mountains to the next city; Brings good news and announces peace with God; He is no longer angry with us; has reconciled us to Himself; justification by faith brings peace with God;

Otherwise no good news! Sovereignty of God is the key; otherwise no hope!

Rom. 10:14 – demands the preaching of the gospel and the sending of the preachers

Watchmen stationed on the wall waiting for the news to come – like the role of pastors in the church; shouting with joy when they see good news coming

God's salvation is cause for corporate rejoicing and praise

Worship service needs sense of corporate participation; enthusiasm; joy

:9 – target here is Jerusalem – join with your watchmen in celebration

:10 – universality of the impact of the message – not just for the Jewish people but for the ends of the earth; *“bared His holy arm”* – showing off His power – not restricted to the borders of Israel; *“through your seed [Abraham] all the families of the world will be blessed”* – always a global plan on God's part; Acts 2 is the beginning of this fulfillment – people of every nation there

Simeon: *“Behold my eyes have seen the salvation of Jahweh”* – Matt. 24:14

We have a missionary commission to take the gospel to the nations with the message that our God reigns

Motivation is much more than the salvation of the lost (although that is very important) – fundamental motivation is to see the glory of God manifest among the heathen nations

What motivated William Carey to leave England and go to India ...

:11 – repetition of words – *“Depart, Depart”*

Call to separation and holiness; be consecrated; redemption always demands the urgency of consecration; God saves people with goal of holiness; OT leitical language;

2 Cor. 6:14 – 7:1 this passage in Isaiah is basis for Paul's exhortation here

This redemption will be even better than Exodus

God promises His presence to His people

We should look different – our marriages; our parenting; our compassion to people in need

Shield of St. Patrick – reformed Baptist –

St. Patrick's Breastplate Prayer

**I bind unto myself today
The strong Name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same,
The Three in One and One in Three.**

**I bind this day to me forever.
By power of faith, Christ's incarnation;
His baptism in the Jordan river;
His death on Cross for my salvation;
His bursting from the spiced tomb;
His riding up the heavenly way;
His coming at the day of doom;
I bind unto myself today.**

**I bind unto myself the power
Of the great love of the cherubim;
The sweet 'well done' in judgment hour,
The service of the seraphim,
Confessors' faith, Apostles' word,
The Patriarchs' prayers, the Prophets' scrolls,
All good deeds done unto the Lord,
And purity of virgin souls.**

**I bind unto myself today
The virtues of the starlit heaven,
The glorious sun's life-giving ray,
The whiteness of the moon at even,
The flashing of the lightning free,
The whirling wind's tempestuous shocks,
The stable earth, the deep salt sea,
Around the old eternal rocks.**

**I bind unto myself today
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, His might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need.
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, His shield to ward,
The word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.**

**Against the demon snares of sin,
The vice that gives temptation force,
The natural lusts that war within,
The hostile men that mar my course;
Or few or many, far or nigh,
In every place and in all hours,**

**Against their fierce hostility,
I bind to me these holy powers.**

**Against all Satan's spells and wiles,
Against false words of heresy,
Against the knowledge that defiles,
Against the heart's idolatry,
Against the wizard's evil craft,
Against the death wound and the burning,
The choking wave and the poisoned shaft,
Protect me, Christ, till Thy returning.**

**Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.**

**I bind unto myself the Name,
The strong Name of the Trinity;
By invocation of the same.
The Three in One, and One in Three,
Of Whom all nature hath creation,
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.**

Amen

TEXT: Isaiah 52:13-15

TITLE: *SERVANT SONG #4, STANZA #1*
THE EXALTATION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

BIG IDEA:

FOCUS ON THE ASTONISHING EXALTATION AND DEGRADATION OF GOD'S SUFFERING SERVANT

INTRODUCTION:

These verses form an introduction and summary to the fourth Messiah/Servant song which is detailed in Chap. 53 – here we are entering on holy ground; one of the most remarkable passages in the OT; beautiful in its language and graphic in its representation of agony and suffering of the Lord Jesus as He died for our sins on the cross

What have we seen in the first 3 Servant Songs??

42:1-9 THE PREDICTED SUCCESSFUL MISSION OF THE IDEAL SERVANT OF THE LORD REINFORCES THE PROVEN SUPERIORITY OF THE TRUE GOD TO IDOLS

David Thompson:

GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE COMFORTED BY KNOWING THAT EVEN THOUGH ISRAEL WAS SUPPOSED TO BE GOD'S SERVANT, WHO FAILED TO BRING TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND WORSHIP OF GOD TO THIS WORLD, GOD WILL SEND HIS MESSIAH/SAVIOR/SERVANT INTO THIS WORLD WHO WILL ACCOMPLISH EVERYTHING GOD HAS PLANNED FOR ISRAEL AND THE WORLD.

49:1-13 GOD'S SERVANT-KING WILL SUCCEED IN HIS MISSION OF BLESSING ISRAEL AND BRINGING LIGHT TO A LOST WORLD

God's Secret Weapon Unveiled:

- **STRENGTH FOR HIS MISSION**
- **SCOPE OF HIS MISSION**
- **SUCCESS OF HIS MISSION**

50:4-11 SERVANT SONG #3 -- MARKS OF AN OBEDIENT SERVANT / DISCIPLE -- THE VICTORIOUS SERVANT/DISCIPLE HAS GOD AS HIS HELPER IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PERSEVERING COMMITMENT

Everything so far has been revealed in hints and a little foretaste here and there; now we get to the real meat of God's revelation of how this mission will be accomplished – and it is **astonishing** in every aspect

Borgman: One of the worst chapter breaks in all of Scripture; most remarkable of the 4 servant songs; marvelous beauty of this section; we have had little hints of his suffering and sacrifice and atoning death and work of salvation; now all is brought out fully in this passage; God displays His strength and power through moments of weakness and suffering and humiliation . . .

Quoted directly 7 times in NT; alluded to no less than 34 times in the NT;

Beall: The section may be divided into five three-verse sections. **Kidner's** comments here on the structure of the passage are helpful: “The poem, unusually symmetrical, is in five paragraphs of three verses each. It begins and ends with the Servant's exaltation (first and fifth stanzas); set within this is the story of his rejection in sections two and four, which in turn form the centrepiece (vv. 4-6) where the atoning significance of the suffering is expounded” (**D. Kidner**, “Isaiah,” *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, 618).

Gentile rulers understand how to exert their power and influence; they know how to carry out their agenda and stay on top in the constant struggle to be King of the Hill. What is astonishing in this section is the way in which God chooses to exert His power and accomplish His mission. He acts in a way that stops everyone's mouth in complete astonishment and awe.

FOCUS ON THE ASTONISHING EXALTATION AND DEGRADATION OF GOD'S SUFFERING SERVANT

I. (:13) EXALTATION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

A. Mission Accomplished

“Behold, My servant will prosper,”

Borgman: Vs. 13 – 42:1 first servant song begins exactly the same way; great bookends; God drawing attention to the servant; we should fix all of our attention on him;

- **Matt. 3:17** at baptism of Jesus – *“Behold, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased”*;
- at Mount of Transfiguration – **Matt. 17:5**; *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”*

Oswalt: *Behold* serves not only as a stylistic element to mark the beginning of a new segment but also as a call to pay attention to this one who is going to be described.

Young: . . . includes the thought of both intelligent and effective action . . . In accomplishing his mission upon earth, the servant will be successful.

Oswalt: Josh. 1:8, Jer. 10:21 -- to act with such wisdom that one's efforts will be successful (Isa. 42:1; 49:2-3; 50:7-9)

John 17:4 *“having accomplished all things for which you have sent me”* – viewing the coming work on the cross as already accomplished

B. Status Elevated

“He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted.”

Borgman: Supreme exaltation as a result of success of His mission; *“High and lifted up”* appear 3 other times in Isaiah (**6:1** sees Adonai sitting on throne; **33:10** same 2 words referring to God Himself; **57:15** again used explicitly of God) – clue that the Servant is none other than God Himself;

“exalted” (**Is. 2:11** “the Lord alone will be exalted in that day”; vs. **17**) – **Is. 9:6** – “Wonderful” = only used of God; **Acts 3:13** – *“glorified His servant Jesus”*; **Acts 2:33** – *“having been exalted to*

the right hand of God"; preached Jesus glorified and exalted; **Phil. 2** "*God has highly exalted Him*"

Some people would see here a reference to the resurrection, ascension and sitting at right hand of God the Father

Phil. 2:9-11
Acts 2:33

Contrast Satan's downfall – wanting to lift himself up and make himself equal to God – **Ezek. 28**

Is the Lord Jesus truly exalted in your eyes?

II. (:14-15) REACTION OF ASTONISHMENT TO THE SUFFERING SERVANT

A. (:14a) Standard of Comparison = Unparalleled Astonishment

"Just as many were astonished at you, [My people,]"

The Servant is going to be the subject of the greatest possible astonishment

Parunak: "*Astonishment*" = The attitude of bystanders when they see the results of God's wrath poured out:

- **Lev.26:32**
- **1 Kings 9:8**

B. (:14b-15) Two Points of Comparison

1. (:14b) Supreme Suffering -- Uniquely Disfigured (on the Cross) --

Leads to Reaction of Unparalleled Astonishment

*"So His appearance was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men."*

Grotesque suffering – cannot be harmonized with the understanding of the Messiah as the one most honored and exalted by God; indeed God Himself = Immanuel; God incarnate

Young: As his exaltation and glorification were of the highest, so his degradation will be of the deepest. . .

His disfigurement was so great that he no longer appeared as a man. . . more disfigured than an *'ish* (the better class of men) and his form more than the *sons of men* (ordinary men).

Appearance – 1 Sam. 16:7

Constable: The reader of the promises that God would redeem His people with His mighty arm (cf. 50:2; 51:5, 9; 52:10) could reasonably expect that redemption to come with a great display of overwhelming power. But the careful reader of the previous Servant Songs has picked up some hints that the Servant would not fit the mold of the traditional action hero. In this passage, Isaiah filled out the previously sketchy picture of the Servant with more detail concerning His work,

character, and nature. God's greatest power is evident in His ability to return love and forgiveness for hatred and injustice, not in His ability to crush all opposition.

2. (:15) Surprising Salvation that Extends to the Gentiles

a. Purification of the Nations' Peoples

“Thus He will sprinkle many nations,”

Young: It is the work of a priest that is here set forth and the purpose of this work is to bring purification and cleansing to others. Men regarded the servant as himself unclean and in need of purification, whereas he himself as a priest will sprinkle water and blood and so purify many nations. He does this as a sufferer, whose sufferings are for the sake of an expiatory purification and produce a profound change in the attitude of those who behold him. This is the work that he will prudently perform, and because of which he will be so greatly exalted.

Beall: The verb is used deliberately by Isaiah here, because it speaks of the sacrificial atoning work of the Servant, the passover Lamb of God (John 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7), who sprinkles many nations with His atoning blood. That the lamb imagery is not far removed from the context of this passage is clear from the verses that follow, especially v. 7. The idea, then, is that though others regarded the disfigured Servant as unclean and less than a man, in fact He was Himself a pure priest who sprinkled His blood to purify the nations.

Parunak: Look at change in tenses – like we were standing at day of Pentecost

- His visage was marred – past tense – looking back to the cross
- So shall he sprinkle many nations – in the future – **Rom. 15:20-21** – looking forward to the evangelizing of the Gentile nations

Borgman: Tabernacle was a stinking, bloody mess; each piece of furniture having blood upon it; caked on blood from year after year of the sprinkling; priests would have been covered with blood

Heb. 1:3; 9:11-14; 12:22-24 now Servant is sprinkling not just Israel but all the nations; You have come to the blood of sprinkling; Abel's blood speaks of vengeance against the unjust murderer; the blood of Jesus cries out for forgiveness for His murderers

1 Pet. 1:1; Rev. 5:9

b. Astonishment of the Nations' Rulers

1) Rendered Speechless in Awe of the Suffering Servant

“Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;”

49:7ff rendered speechless with awe and reverence

Beall: V 15b then continues the main thought of v. 14a, explaining that just as many were astonished at the Servant (and looked down upon Him), ultimately even kings would stand in silent awe of Him (compare **Job 29:7-10**). The contrast between the “many” unnamed people and the “kings” of v. 15b heightens the fact of the Servant's ultimate exaltation. Even though “many” did not understand who He was, and belittled Him, ultimately kings would be astonished, too—but astonished because they were in awe of Him (note that the words “at Him” are placed first in v. 15b in Hebrew for emphasis).

2) Blessed with New Insight into the Salvation He Provided

*“For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.”*

CONCLUSION:

Lyrics (J.W. Alexander's version, 1830)

O sacred Head, sore wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown;
How pale Thou art with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish, which once was bright as morn!

What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered, was all for sinners' gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression, but Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor, vouchsafe to me Thy grace.

Men mock and taunt and jeer Thee, Thou noble countenance,
Though mighty worlds shall fear Thee and flee before Thy glance.
How art thou pale with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn!
How doth Thy visage languish that once was bright as morn!

Now from Thy cheeks has vanished their color once so fair;
From Thy red lips is banished the splendor that was there.
Grim death, with cruel rigor, hath robbed Thee of Thy life;
Thus Thou hast lost Thy vigor, Thy strength in this sad strife.

My burden in Thy Passion, Lord, Thou hast borne for me,
For it was my transgression which brought this woe on Thee.
I cast me down before Thee, wrath were my rightful lot;
Have mercy, I implore Thee; Redeemer, spurn me not!

What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend,
For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?
O make me Thine forever, and should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to Thee.

My Shepherd, now receive me; my Guardian, own me Thine.
Great blessings Thou didst give me, O source of gifts divine.
Thy lips have often fed me with words of truth and love;
Thy Spirit oft hath led me to heavenly joys above.

Here I will stand beside Thee, from Thee I will not part;
O Savior, do not chide me! When breaks Thy loving heart,
When soul and body languish in death's cold, cruel grasp,
Then, in Thy deepest anguish, Thee in mine arms I'll clasp.

The joy can never be spoken, above all joys beside,
When in Thy body broken I thus with safety hide.

O Lord of Life, desiring Thy glory now to see,
Beside Thy cross expiring, I'd breathe my soul to Thee.

My Savior, be Thou near me when death is at my

door;

Then let Thy presence cheer me, forsake me nevermore!
When soul and body languish, oh, leave me not alone,
But take away mine anguish by virtue of Thine own!

Be Thou my consolation, my shield when I must die;
Remind me of Thy passion when my last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee, upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfolds Thee. Who dieth thus dies well.

Just as God commands the people of Isaiah's day: "*Behold my Servant*"

So also the writer of Hebrews instructs us today to

FOCUS ON THE ASTONISHING EXALTATION AND DEGRADATION OF GOD'S SUFFERING SERVANT

"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we find joy in serving God as His faithful servant and completing the work that He has for us to accomplish?
- 2)
- 3) What was it that rendered the mouths of the Gentile rulers speechless?
- 4) How is God showing His strength through our weakness?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Young: It is God who introduces and identifies the servant, who belongs to God and serves Him. In **42:1-4** Isaiah had already presented him as one with a mission to perform who would successfully complete that mission. In **49:1-7** he had again been presented, but this time there are great difficulties in the execution of his work. In **50:4-9** the servant himself had spoken, mentioning the suffering that he was to face. Yet no reason was given for this suffering, for it is reserved for the present passage to tell why the servant must undergo severe suffering and degradation.

Constable: The interpretation of the Hebrew word *yazzeḥ*, translated "sprinkle" or "startle," has led students of this verse to two different understandings of the prophet's line of thought. If "sprinkle" is correct, Isaiah meant that even though the Servant was such an unlikely candidate as Yahweh's representative, He would still perform the priestly function of cleansing the world of its sins (cf. Lev. 4:6; 8:11; 14:7; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; Heb. 10:22).

"Men regarded the servant as himself unclean and in need of purification, whereas he himself as a priest will sprinkle water and blood and so purify many nations." (Young)

If "startle" is correct, the prophet meant that since the Servant was such an unlikely candidate as Yahweh's representative, He would shock the world (when He made His claims and when God would exalt Him).

Parunak: **Vv. 13-15** should be opening of chap. 53; Center of gathering for the Lord's people is not to be a single preacher or a building or . . . but the Lord Jesus Himself; focus of Lord's Table is His sacrificial death –broken body and shed blood; Chap. 53 presents this in most detail in OT; Lord speaking to the people about the Servant;

The last of the Servant songs; still have 14 chaps. of book left; all the work of Christ does nothing for those who do not recognize and embrace that work; beginning of book presents the humanity of the coming Messiah; **Chaps. 58-66** – emphasis on the Messiah no longer appearing as the Servant of the Lord but as the Lord Himself; the Redeemer is always a title of the Lord God Himself in Isaiah; God sees the mess and says He will come and accomplish salvation Himself; Work of the Servant is complete at the end of chap. 53; now we are the servant as the church

v. 13 – Summary of entire section; Heart of evangelistic message: "*Behold, my Servant!*" Has conducted himself wisely and accomplished His mission; special terms – **Is. 2:11 ff.** includes all 3 of these same terms; these characteristics belong to God; nothing else gets to be exalted and extolled and be very high;

Cf. **Phil. 2:5 ff.**; all qualities of the wise person in Proverbs; humble and serves others; **2:9-11** – sense of these 3 levels of exaltation; the prudent obedience of God's faithful servant and His exaltation

vv. 14-15 – Two comparative statements -- standard of comparison is first half of vs. 14 – that **astonishment** is the measure of 2 things:

- This amazement on the part of many people measures His disfigurement and suffering He endured – vs. 14b
- Also this disfigurement measures what is described in vs. 15 as well = the work that you accomplished; the salvation that you produced

God is going to pour out His judgment on His servant and all will be amazed;

Your visage was marred away from humanity – you didn't look like a human anymore

Parents have to teach their children not to stare at the deformed and handicapped;

Thorns were like nails, driven down on his head;

How could God do something like this to His servant?

Something extraordinary happening here; but there was a purpose for such suffering

"*Sprinkle*" = a technical term; 2/3 occurrences in Leviticus surrounding sacrificial system and cleansing rituals; He has accomplished cleansing;

“they shall shut their mouths” – Job reference; Mic. 7; Zech. “be silent all flesh before the Lord”; Rom. 3 “every mouth may be stopped” – no protest; no objection
Acknowledging the superior position of someone

Brian Borgman: Fourth Servant Song, First Stanza

Servant language emphasizes incarnation; willing subordination of the Son to the Father for the mission of sin bearing;

To act wisely in such a way as you bring about success; to act with insight and devotion; he shall accomplish my purpose; his efforts will be successful; **Josh. 1:8** “then you will have success”; **John 17:4** “having accomplished all things for which you have sent me”

Luke 24:26 – sums up primary focus of mission of Jesus – not just to come and give ethical teaching; turning point in Luke’s gospel which is structured geographically is when He set His face to go to Jerusalem; He saves those for whom He came to die

Vs. 14 – from the zenith of exaltation to the very basement of humiliation; object of astonishment and horror; Why? Because His appearance was so disfigured; hardly human; “such disfigurement – his appearance hardly human”

“appearance” = nuanced expression for His face; Jesus was beat with the fist of the soldiers; face swollen beyond recognition; beaten with rods (heavy stick); hit with hard, striking blows
“form” = nuanced expression referring to His body; scourged on bare back; whip with leather straps that would have notches with pieces of glass and rock inserted; shred off the flesh from the back; many bled to death before they could be hung on cross;

No expression of compassion or pity in this passage

Cruelty and barbarism here that is expression of wickedness of man’s heart

Vs. 15 – fruit or result of His humiliation – the activity of the priest in Ex. and Lev. especially; the blood becomes identified as the “blood of sprinkling;”

Rom. 15:20-21 Paul quoting this passage – his great missionary impetus

TEXT: Isaiah 53:1-3

TITLE: *SERVANT SONG #4, STANZA #2 – THE REJECTION OF THE DESPISED SERVANT UNKNOWN, UNREMARKABLE, UNPOPULAR*

BIG IDEA:

PEOPLE OVERLOOK THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THREE MAIN REASONS: HE IS LARGELY UNKNOWN, UNREMARKABLE, UNPOPULAR

INTRODUCTION:

Last week Stanza #1 – *THE EXALTATION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT*

This Sunday Stanza #2 -- *THE REJECTION OF THE DESPISED SERVANT*

Once again our nation has launched into a long season of political campaigning for the top office in the land ... a competition that will extend until November of next year. Each candidate tries to put their best foot forward and avoid the gaffes that would knock them out of the race. Perhaps you watched the recent Republican debate where there were too many candidates for the prime time event. They had to divide into two groups – an afternoon and a prime time group – in order to provide some measure of exposure for all. Each candidate seeks greater **name recognition** and publicity for their background, track record, and capabilities. Each candidate seeks to highlight areas in which they stand out as **remarkable** – where they can distinguish themselves from one another. Each candidate closely monitors the polls and hopes to see their **popularity numbers** on the rise so that they can continue to solicit donations and remain a player in the race.

In other nations where the form of government is a **monarchy** instead of via election by a democratic process of voting, the heir to the throne is always presented as magnificent and royal and impressive. He has the best advantages of upbringing and education and social status. He wears the finest clothes and receives the respect and deference and almost worship of all the subjects of his kingdom.

But when *God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, (Gal. 4:4)* His Son looked nothing like these other impressive figures.

- He didn't have makeup artists to prepare him to look great under the bright lights of the TV audience;
- He didn't have a prestigious Public Relations firm to manage his image and always present him in the best light;
- He didn't have \$600 haircuts and beard trimmings and the finest clothes in the land and the most impressive chariot to carry him around in a pope type caravan

When we examine the coming of the Messiah, we do not see the profile of a successful political candidate ... Instead we find one who is largely **Unknown, Unremarkable, Unpopular**

PEOPLE OVERLOOK THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THREE MAIN REASONS: HE IS LARGELY UNKNOWN, UNREMARKABLE, UNPOPULAR

True for the Jewish nation; true for people that we witness to today

I. (:1) BECAUSE HE IS AN UNKNOWN FIGURE TO THEM – ISRAEL’S CONFESSION OF THEIR OWN SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

A. Unknown Due to Lack of Faith

“Who has believed our message?”

You must see Jesus with the eyes of faith

The **nation of Israel** is speaking here – as the believing remnant saved in the day of the Lord that now looks back to confess their former spiritual blindness

MacArthur: When they [the Jewish nation] do turn to Christ, this will be their confession. You notice as I read, all the way down to verse 10 the verbs are in the past tense. Most people think of this chapter as a future prophecy concerning Christ and it is that. It gives us so many details about Christ and His death and burial and resurrection and exaltation, as to be unmistakably a prophecy of Him. But it is not written in the future tense. It is not a prophet prophesying what will happen to Jesus. It is a prophet prophesying the salvation of Israel in the future when they look back and say this about the Messiah they rejected and crucified. It is the **lament of Israel** when they look back on the Messiah that they have long rejected.

Zech. 12:10 *“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”*

Very few believers in the world – even among the Jews, His own people.

Remember Isaiah’s commission (**Is. 6:8-10**) – He was promised that he would get very little receptivity to his divine message

“message” = the thing heard – what the prophets have been preaching

Salvation was of the Jews – it was a message that came first to them and after that to the Gentiles

Parunak: Context: talking about the report that someone brings – How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news; Israel was not sending a message to someone else but **receiving a message**; mentions the arm of the Lord being revealed; **51:9**; Jews look at themselves: we had the testimony of the Scriptures – which among us believed it? We had such an advantage and did not respond like the Gentile kings will; quoted twice in NT:

John 12:37-43 – Greeks seeking Jesus (despite very little information); though He had done so many miracles before the Jews, they had not believed Him

Rom. 10:16-17 – Paul lamenting the state of Israel – my heart is that they might be saved; vs. 10; vs.16 – the Jews have not all believed; confession of Jewish failure to believe despite their advantages

What is the explanation for this lack of faith?

B. Unknown Due to Lack of Connectivity to the Power of God

“And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

Goes back to the issue of Divine Election and God’s sovereignty; only the Holy Spirit can bring a person to the point of repentance and faith

Young: The *arm of the Lord* is used by metonymy for the Lord's strength. The revelation of the Lord's strength and believing what we have proclaimed are two aspects of the same thing. The revelation of God's arm upon a person is one of power (cf. Jer. 17:5), and hence to believe the report proclaimed is evidence that the Lord's power has been manifested. It is the arm of the Lord that brought the nation out of Egypt (cf. **51:9-10; 63:12**), and this arm of power enables a man to believe. The passage clearly teaches that faith is a gift of God and not a work of man's unaided power. It also teaches that unless God manifests His power, men will not be converted.

John 12:37-38; see also **John 1:11**

The message does not lack power --

Rom. 1:16 "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*"

Guzik: In this context of the Messiah's suffering and agony, this line seems out of place. The arm of the Lord is a picture of His strength, power, and might. Yet we will see a Messiah weak and suffering. But the strength, power, and might of God will be expressed in the midst of this suffering, seemingly weak Messiah.

Why was the message so difficult for the Jews to believe?

II. (:2) BECAUSE HE IS AN UNREMARKABLE FIGURE – UNIMPRESSIVE

A. Unremarkable Background – His Origins and Life

1. Known by His Heavenly Father

"For He grew up before Him"

Young: The servant lived the entire course of his earthly life in the presence of God (cf. **1 Pet. 2:4**).

2. Two Comparisons – Inconsequential and Unsubstantial

a. Inconsequential, Weak

"like a tender shoot,"

2 possibilities:

- *Tender shoot* = a suckling off a tree trunk; you usually prune those so they don't suck life from the tree; nothing of significance; this seems more parallel with the following comparison of the root; also the verb that speaks of growing up – **Is. 11:1**
- *Suckling child* – **Parunak** argues for this interpretation -- **Is. 11:8** – "*The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra*"

Scott Grant: A tender shoot is a suckling on a trunk that sucks life from the tree. That's how Jesus was viewed—as leading a renegade movement that threatened the Jewish establishment. Parched ground is a place where you don't expect a root. Jesus came from what was deemed the "parched ground" of Nazareth (John 1:46), Galilee (John 7:52) and a carpenter (Matthew 13:55).

"*Shoot*" and "*root*" are messianic terms in Isaiah's language. Israel, when it is defeated by Babylon, will be like a felled tree whose stump remains, and the stump, the "holy seed," or remnant, ultimately produces Christ (Isaiah 6:13, Romans 1:3, Galatians 3:29). "*Then a shoot*

will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1). Jesse was the father of King David, and that line produced the greater king, Jesus, the messianic shoot and branch

Constable: Instead of appearing as a mighty oak or a flourishing fruit tree, the Servant would grow up before the Lord as a sucker, a normally unwanted shoot that sprouts up from a root (cf. **11:1; 1 Sam.16:5-13**).

b. Unsubstantial

"and like a root out of parched ground;"

Beall: He is as a root out of a dry ground, i.e., with very little promise of amounting to anything in man's eyes. The mention of a "root" recalls an earlier Messianic prophecy, **Isa 11:1**: "*There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of its roots*" (see also **4:2**). . . The Servant did not come in outward appearance as a royal king, but rather as an inconspicuous child. The birth in a stable at Bethlehem is surely a fulfillment of this prophecy.

Motyer: he seemed to have a wholly earthly or natural origin: the imagery of growth out of the soil points to a human "family tree"

B. Unremarkable Bearing – His Presence -- Not a Charismatic, Majestic Presence

*"He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him.
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him."*

Jim Bomkamp: indicates that the coming of God's 'ideal servant' would not be through the normal channels of royalty and royal dignity. Though he would be a physical descendant of King David, as both Matthew and Luke provide for us in Jesus' genealogy, and though he would one day rule over the entire earth for eternity, yet his coming would be amongst very common folk.

Oswalt: Deliverers are dominating, forceful, attractive people, who by their personal magnetism draw people to themselves and convince people to do what they want them to do. People who refuse to follow that leadership frequently find themselves crushed and tossed aside. This man does not fit that picture at all

Candidates now are using humble beginnings as their proud mark of identification with the plight of common man ... but it was not always that way with regards to leadership – especially in monarchies where you had family succession to the throne of power; your pedigree and upbringing were of supreme importance ... more like Downton Abbey

Motyer: Majesty signifies the outward impressiveness expected of an important person.

Guzik: This means that when we try to attract people to Jesus through form or comeliness, or beauty, we are using methods that run counter to the nature of Jesus. These days it appears that we must dress up the gospel to make it attractive. We have to use the methods of technique which must be smart, well-presented, streamlined. There must be something about the

presentation of the gospel that will appeal to people . . . to what is called the modern mind. I wonder if we stop to think that in our efforts to make the gospel message attractive we are drawing a curtain across the face of Jesus in His humiliation? The only one who can make Him attractive is the Holy Spirit. (Redpath)

Alan Carr: The Real Beauty of Jesus

There is, however, an old saying that goes, "You can't judge a book by its cover." This was certainly the case with Jesus Christ. It was not what men saw, but what they could not see that made Him extra-ordinary.

- Born to peasant parents.
- Born in a manger, not a palace.
- Poverty His constant companion.
- His Disciples were just common fishermen.
- Common peasants were His most devoted followers.
- His death was among the condemned and wretched.
- His church, for the most part, is made up of the lowly.

Many might think that such a man is not worthy of our love, devotion and worship. However, with Jesus, His real beauty lies not in what men can see, but in what He has done. It is in the things which Jesus accomplished for you and me that His real beauty lies. So, dismiss from your mind every artist's rendering on Jesus you have ever seen. Forget all illusions you may have conjured up concerning Him and today, just look beyond the Man. Look instead to what He did. For it is in the work of Jesus that His real beauty is seen.

III. (:3) BECAUSE HE IS AN UNPOPULAR FIGURE – REJECTED BY MEN

A. Unpopular by Virtue of His Identification With the Sins of Humanity

*"He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;"*

Young: far from following him, they shunned him.

Scott Grant: In the fourth Servant Song, Isaiah uses several different words for sin, probably to show the different forms it takes and effects it has. The first two of these words are "sorrows" and "grief." The Servant was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." This does not mean that the Servant was a sinner but that sin affected him deeply. The word "sorrow," though used in connection with sin in Isaiah 53, was usually used to convey mental and emotional anguish. He was a "man of sorrows"—to some extent he was characterized by mental and emotional anguish. Because of sin, the Servant suffered mental and emotional anguish. The word "grief," also used here in connection with sin, was usually used to convey illness or weakness. Because of sin, the Servant was "acquainted with grief"—it's as if he's had so much experience with illness and weakness that he knows them personally.

Why was the Servant a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Certainly, it has something to do with the way he was treated. If you're despised, you're likely to experience sorrow and grief. But if you're despised and you love the people who despise you, you will grieve for them. The Pharisees despised Jesus, but he was "grieved at their hardness of heart" (Mark 3:5). And somehow, the Servant also bore the griefs and carried the sorrows of others (Isaiah 53:4). That's

just what Jesus did on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:24). Sin causes sorrow and grief for the sinner and the victim. In his life, and particularly in his death, Jesus felt that grief and sorrow. And if in the end you feel that you are on the verge of being forsaken by God himself, you might say what Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane, just before he was abandoned by God as he suffered for sins (Mark 15:34): "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death..." (Mark 14:34).

B. Unpopular by Virtue of His Ignoble Death on the Cross

*"And like one from whom men hide their face.
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."*

Guzik: Because there was nothing outwardly beautiful or charismatic about the Messiah, mankind's reaction was to withdraw from Him, to despise Him, and hold Him in low esteem. This shows that men value physical beauty and charisma far more than God does, and when we don't see it, we can reject the ones God accepts.

Martin Luther: "We estimated Him at nothing." We counted Him a zero. We didn't give Him a second thought. That is how much we valued Him.

Ps. 118:22 *"The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."* Quoted by Peter in **1 Pet. 2:6-8**

CONCLUSION:

Quite a downer note to stop on for today -- UNKNOWN, UNREMARKABLE, UNPOPULAR

This will be the lament of Israel in the last days – looking back on the Messiah they had rejected. Don't let this be your lament today.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are hindrances to believing in Christ?
- 2) What type of beauty do the saved see in Christ?
- 3) Where do our methods of evangelism and outreach try to make Jesus attractive to the unsaved in a futile attempt based on a misunderstanding of the sovereignty of God in election?
- 4) Why are we not as despised and rejected as Jesus is?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: Thus the revelation of the arm of the Lord that will deliver the Lord's people is met with shock, astonishment, distaste, dismissal, and avoidance. Such a one as this can hardly be the one who can set us free from that most pervasive of all human bondages: sin, and all its consequences. To a world blinded by selfishness and power, he does not even merit a second thought.

MacArthur: **Three reasons** why the Jews for generations have rejected Jesus as their Messiah: 1) He had a contemptible origin. His beginning was irrelevant. It was unimportant, it was insignificant, it didn't matter, He was a nobody from nobodies, from nowhere. We looked at Jesus, what did we see? An insignificant family, Joseph, Mary, an insignificant town, Nazareth, way off the beaten track. Born in an insignificant place in an inn, in a stable placed in a feed trough, and attending His birth were shepherds who were the lowest people on the social ladder. No royal birth, no social status, no family nobility, no formal education. Thirty years a carpenter in Nazareth. No connections with anybody who mattered with the elite, with the important. He's...He's a sucker branch, He's irrelevant. Or He's like a root out of parched ground. As the sun comes down in that part of the world, in the Middle East, the ground becomes parched and dry. And as the ground shrinks because water evaporates out, some of the roots begin to come to the surface, dirty, brown roots in parched ground, not cared for. That would be roots of a tree that nobody cares about, because if they cared about it, they'd be watering it. Again, it's another way to say He's unnecessary, unwarranted, unwanted, unimpressive, no value, no more significant than a sucker branch or a dry root in a parched place that nobody cultivates, that nobody cares for, that nobody waters. Miserable beginnings. And they even said things like, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*"

2) They had contempt for His life, for what He became. He had a contemptible adulthood. He had a contemptible life. Go back to verse 2 again, "*He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.*" They were big into appearance, that's why they picked Saul to be their first king, right? He was more handsome than everybody else and taller. Still seems to be a formula for success. But it was with Him...with Jesus. Wait a minute, maybe He's not tall enough, handsome enough, stately enough, majestic. Again, not much progress from 1 Samuel chapter 9 when they were picking Saul. Nothing royal about Jesus, nothing regal about Jesus, nothing elevated about Jesus.

3) He had a contemptible end. He had a contemptible end. For that you go to verse 3, "*He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised and we didn't esteem Him.*" His end is in view here in the opening two lines. They had not only contempt for His beginnings and His life, but especially His death. Now remember, they didn't think they needed somebody to die for their sins. They were in to self-righteousness. They were going to please God by being good and religious and doing works. And here comes this Messiah, this one who claims to be the Messiah and the King, and instead of being triumphant, instead of His career ending in glory and majesty and triumph and victory and elevation and exaltation, He's despised, forsaken of men. It all ends in sorrow and grief.

Parunak: **vv.1-3** -- Israel's confession of their rejection of the Messiah; speaking as believers but looking back to the time of their unbelief; problem lies not with the Savior but with their lack of reception; vs. 4 is a hinge that joins 2 things together – links section A to section B;
3 Reasons Israel rejected their Messiah: Explaining their rejection

- **He is unimpressive**

They were looking for a second David; He did not present himself that way; tender plant refers to a suckling child not a sucker on a tree; not a weak plant; he went up before him as a suckling child – not as a mighty hero but someone who is weak and unimpressive; Isaiah 7:14 said Messiah would come as a child; 9:6 a child, son; 11 – other reference to suckling child that plays on hole of asp – He has put an end to the dominion of Satan
Root – 11:1 – reminding us of these earlier word pictures;

- **He is unattractive, undesirable**

Recall David's strength as king: "*form*" – "a man of form;" today you can't become President if you don't look good on TV; but this one does not have that attractive form; "*Comeliness*" – Ps. 21 – glory, majesty – Ps. 45 – there is no appearance – we looked right past him; we saw him but did not take notice of him; the problem was they didn't see anything they wanted – wrong value system and orientation of their desires; wanted the wrong things; 1 John 2:16 – he didn't satisfy our lusts; not that there was a beauty there that they had missed; many people seek to package Jesus so that he will be attractive to natural man; we did not come to Jesus because we found him desirable; there is nothing in Jesus that appeals to the unbeliever; He is beautiful to believers -- Holy Spirit must change us; understand the weakness of seeker friendly mentality:

- o Covering up the issue of sin
- o Not dealing with fact that God is angry with us because we have broken His law
- o Trying to make Jesus into a friendly Santa Claus

Don't dilute our presentation of Jesus to try to make him attractive and desirable to unbelievers

- **He is unpopular**

Look at how other people respond to him; attitude: nobody else paid much attention to him so neither did I; speaking first of the upper class, the sophisticated, respectable people; "*not many wise men were called . . .*"; "*grief*" – elsewhere translated sickness; he is a loser = friend of sickness; everybody rejects Him; hiding the face usually used of God hiding his face from sin and sinners; he is like someone from whom God hides the face because he is sinful and under God's judgment; why should we want anything to do with him;

Brian Borgman: What are those things that hinder people from coming to Christ and what are the irresistible motives that drive men to Christ?

v.1 the unbelief of the message – 2 questions asked:

1) expresses dismay – who believes the message
- the message had gone out **52:7-10** – message of salvation and peace and good news; implication is not many at all

2) answer to the first question = only to those to whom God has chosen to reveal His power

- to whom has God demonstrated His power to? Only sovereign power of God brings faith to unbelieving heart; unbelief is the natural response of humans; nobody by nature has the propensity to just believe; we suppress truth, not seek it; Isaiah had ministry of judicial hardening We have the responsibility to preach the gospel and represent the gospel

v.2 – the unimpressive Servant according to human perspective; we have some other standard we use – absolute weakness; not talking about a regal king that comes forward with power and majesty; one born to 2 peasants and laid in a manger; grew up on the other side of the tracks – can anything good come out of Nazareth? Northern area of Galilee looked down on; poor Jewish

trash when viewed by the elite; common ordinary man; no doubt he was epitome of true masculinity and humanity but did not gain recognition for those things; did not stand head and shoulders above everybody else; God works in ordinary, unspectacular way; church seeks after the sports heroes and actors and entertainers – now people will flock to Christ; God doesn't usually choose the big man on campus to use for ministry; church has a celebrity mentality but God did not send His Son as a celebrity; no big image and marketing program

v. 3 – “*despised*” – worthless, useless, simply dismissing something; **Gen. 25:34** Esau despised his birthright – dismissed it; indifference; considering the other person beneath them; not worth considering

“*forsaken*” –

- by his family; **John 7:1ff** sarcasm on part of brothers; Mark 2 – his family thought he was mad;
- by his countrymen; **John 1**
- by the world – **John 1:10**
People think Jesus has no significance for their life; he is just not relevant for them
- forsaken by His own Father

“*a man of sorrows acquainted with grief*” – in our culture everybody has to be well all the time; stupid grin on your face; melancholy people are a drag; you want to be around people that laugh and smile and have a good time; didn't go around laughing and telling jokes; saw reality through lens of truth; did not go around giddy; saw the condition of men's hearts; sober minded; wept at tomb of Lazarus; surrounded by unbelief and hardness of heart = very depressing; must empathize with those who are downcast; focus is on Jesus bearing pain and grief on our behalf as he suffered for us; all of the ramifications for our sins was laid on him; what could a man like this do for us? Apparently weak, unimpressive Messiah who is filled with grief and sorrow

“*like one from whom men hid their face*” – natural response of men was to turn away; He was a constant reminder of our true state; what kind of people are you drawn to? Those who always make you feel guilty; those who accentuate your failures?

Placed no value on him; saw no reason to embrace him; did not esteem him; would have required acknowledging something about ourselves as well as about him; we desperately need help; not just adding Jesus onto a life like a nice little addendum as in things go better with coke; that type of gospel gives false security; we need the wickedness of our heart exposed; it all comes down to unbelief; casting Christ aside; marginalizes Christ; ignores him; our problem is that we are not despised and rejected enough; we are not spiritually faithful or we would be more rejected than we are; cf. Charles Wesley boldly proclaiming Christ in the public square and getting opposition; instead we try to be fashionable;

Heb. 13:13 “*bearing his reproach*”

TEXT: Isaiah 53:4-6

TITLE: THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE PUNISHED SERVANT

BIG IDEA:

GOD HAS PUNISHED HIS SERVANT AS OUR SUBSTITUTE WHO PAID THE PENALTY FOR OUR SINS TO GIVE US PEACE

INTRODUCTION:

Who will pay the penalty of divine wrath for your sins?

- There is no question that each of us has sinned and we are characterized as sinners before a holy God who has established the standard.

Rom. 3:23 “*For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*”

You would be foolish to try to argue the point that you are fundamentally a sinner.

You need to understand the holiness of God and His just and righteous nature.

- There is no question that the penalty for sin is divine wrath.

Rom. 6:23 “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

Divine wrath is a painful punishment that would last for eternity with no escape apart from the provision of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Pattern of **divine imputation** – both of sin in that we all died in Adam and of righteousness in that the second Adam has established a righteousness that can be ours so that when God looks at us He sees Christ.

The only question = **Who will pay the penalty of divine wrath for your sins?**

2 Options:

- You pay the penalty for your own sins – “*the soul that sinneth it must die*”

- Christ, the perfect substitutionary lamb provided by God the Father who has already been sacrificed, pays your penalty

Two weeks ago Stanza #1 – *THE EXALTATION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT*

Last week Stanza #2 -- *THE REJECTION OF THE DESPISED SERVANT*

This week Stanza #3 – *THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE PUNISHED SERVANT*

MacArthur: These three verses may be the most magnificent verses in the entire Old Testament.

The heart of the fourth servant song -- The heart of the NT gospel message – at the heart of the gospel is the Cross of Christ – needs to be at the heart of our gathering together as believers and the focus of our lives as disciples of Christ

GOD HAS PUNISHED HIS SERVANT AS OUR SUBSTITUTE WHO PAID THE PENALTY FOR OUR SINS TO GIVE US PEACE

I. (:4) THE REALITY OF THE SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

What really happened on the Cross?

A. Bore the Weight of Our Sins

“*Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;*”

Transition verse – picking up on the ideas of vs. 3 and moving forward into the realm of His substitutionary, atoning death – all about the personal pronouns – contrast between Him and us – He suffered but we were the ones guilty of sinning

Oswalt: The metaphors take us back to the initial picture Isaiah gave us in **1:5-6**.

As a result of its rebellion, the nation is desperately ill, a mass of open sores and unbandaged wounds. What is to be done? Not more hypocritical worship (1:10-15)! No, what is needed is just and righteous living (1:16-20). But can that atone for the past, cleanse the wounds, destroy the infection? No, writing new words over the old ones will not blot out the old ones. Someone must come to wipe the slate clean (4:4). Someone must take the disease and give back health, must bear the blows and give back wealth (in its original sense of “well being”).

Motyer: Whatever people may have thought about the sorrows and sufferings they saw, the truth was dramatically different.

MacArthur: The word for “*griefs*” is sickness. It’s diseases, infirmities, calamities, pretty broad word. And here sins are viewed from the perspective of their effects. Sins are viewed from the perspective of what they produce, the conditions that come from sin. Life becomes full of sickness, disease, infirmity, calamity. These are the *griefs*. And it’s a word that looks mostly at the objective, the outside, the agonies and struggles and issues that we deal with in life. . . *sorrows* is a word that refers mostly to the inward effect of sin.

Language of *carrying* and *bearing* comes from sacrificial system laid out in Leviticus – look at **chap. 16**

Oswalt: The Servant is not *suffering with* his people (however unjustly) but *for* them.

Scott Grant: Whose *griefs* and *sorrows* is he bearing and carrying? Isaiah, referring to them as “our” *griefs* and *sorrows*, is speaking at least for the **believing Jewish community**, who didn’t at first believe the message concerning the Servant but later owned that message (Isaiah 53:1-3). . . So on the first level, when Isaiah speaks of “our” *griefs* and *sorrows*, he’s speaking of Israel’s *griefs* and *sorrows*. Yet the Apostle John says Jesus is the “propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

Issue = **The Extent of the Atonement** – Universal or Limited and Particular and Definite??

John Greer: The Extent of the Atonement

Atonement: vicarious, necessary and definite – most certainly secured the salvation of all those He represented; acted as their substitute; secured eternal life for those people;

[vs. Arminian notion: Lord’s death just made salvation possible and sinner must secure it by their own efforts]

Really looking at the extent of the atonement – general and universal or definite and particular;

Eph. 5:25 – gave Himself for the church which he loves

John 10:11 – gave his life for the sheep; not the goats as well

What about verses that say that Christ gave Himself a ransom for all??

Verses that refer to the world or all or all men lead some to say it is universal; but a statement must be interpreted in its own context; so you can’t just glibly try to proof text

“world” is used in a variety of ways in bible

B. Suffered the Heavy Hand of God's Wrath – But Why??

*“Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.”*

Unquestioned suffering and punishment – but was it for His own sins or for our sins is the key question

Instead of rejoicing in the Savior's work on the cross we wrongly judge Him as worthy of the punishment – just as **Job's** counselors jumped to the assumption that bad things could only happen to bad people

Man's judgment is a product of his fallen sinful nature; we are inclined to see things incorrectly

Beall: In other words, continuing the imagery of sickness, though He bore our sicknesses, we not only did not recognize what He did, we considered His affliction to be the punishment of God for His own sins.

Oswalt: The very things that made us think him of no account are the things for which we ought to honor him, because it is for our sake he is enduring them.

MacArthur: The word “*stricken*” is to strike violently, a very violent word used in **Exodus 11:1** of the plagues. The word “*smitten*” means basically to beat someone even to death. And the word “*afflicted*” a general word, to be humiliated, to be degraded, to be destroyed. So we thought that when He was being smashed and beaten and degraded and humiliated, that this was God doing it because He was a blasphemer. . .

Now we know all those griefs, all those sorrows were ours. Truly our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried. We had esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. We thought that God was punishing Him for His blasphemy. Now, we know He was pierced through for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, chastened for our well-being, scourged for our healing.” Complete reversal of the estimate concerning Christ. They admit their horrible error in that future day. They will confess. They know the history of Jesus. They know He was pierced; they know He was crushed, or bruised. They know He was punished at the end of a mock trial. They know He was scourged.

David Thompson: Most people in the world think something about Jesus Christ and about what happened to Jesus Christ. Most people make some kind of mental calculation concerning Jesus Christ. But what most think isn't sound or right. Instead of them esteeming Him and loving Him and believing in Him, most have come up with their own pathetic views and philosophies and opinions. In fact, in the history of theology there have been all kinds of faulty notions concerning the value of the death of Jesus Christ:

- 1) Origen (A.D. 185-254) said he thought Christ died to pay a ransom price to Satan to purchase men.
- 2) Pelagius (A.D. 354-420) said Christ died as a moral example to us all so we will be obedient even to God even when we suffer, to show that God loves us.
- 3) Faustus Socinus (A.D. 1539-1604) said that Christ's death was so that He might morally influence sinful men to follow Him.
- 4) Peter Abelard (A.D. 1079-1142) said that Christ's death was designed to show us God loved us.

- 5) Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274) said that Christ's death was not required by God to satisfy our sin problem with God, but it did allow a type of satisfaction. In other words, man can in some ways take care of his own sin problem without Christ's death.
- 6) Hugo Grotius (A.D. 1583-1645) said Christ's death demonstrates to all of us that the justice of God demand we suffer.
- 7) Some invented the idea that Jesus Christ died as a martyr to demonstrate His sincerity to His doctrine.
- 8) Some said that Christ died so He could identify with any person who dies.

II. (:5) THE RESULTS OF THE SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

What did Jesus accomplish?

A. Punished for Our Sins (Transgressions and Iniquities)

1. Pierced Through

"But He was pierced through for our transgressions,"

Zech. 12:10 *"they will look on Me whom they have pierced"*

Ps. 22:16 *"they pierced my hands and my feet"*

Scott Grant: The word translated "*pierced through*" usually meant being pierced fatally. The word "*crushed*" was usually used of being crushed to death (**Lamentations 3:34**). The Servant will suffer a brutal and painful death for "our" sins

2. Crushed

"He was crushed for our iniquities;"

Delitzsch: "*Pierced through*" and "*crushed*" describe extreme distress resulting in death (cf. 51:9 piercing the dragon; Job 26:13 pierced the fleeing serpent; Ps. 109:22; Lam. 3:34). The Hebrew words behind these terms are the strongest ones in that language for violent and excruciating death.

Constable: It was God who was behind the piercing and crushing of the Servant (vv. 6, 10). It was as though the Servant took the whipping that we deserved for being rebellious children (cf. Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 5:8; 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24-25).

MacArthur: "*Iniquities*" = Essentially it's a word that means to bend double, twisted like a pretzel, to bend double. It's perversions.

B. Punished to Secure Our Salvation

1. Our Well-being

"The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,"

Shalom -- peace

2. Our Healing

"And by His scourging we are healed."

Oswalt: This is not a matter of a raging tyrant who demands violence on someone to satisfy his

fury. It is a God who wants a whole relationship with his people, but is prevented from having it until incomplete justice is satisfied. In the Servant he has found a way to gratify his love and satisfy his justice.

Is physical healing promised in the Atonement?

David Thompson: It is true that Jesus Christ, while on earth, did physically heal people, but that is not what this text in Isaiah is talking about. This text is talking about Him be lifted up on the cross so that He could remove the sorrow and sadness from us that has been brought on by the disease of sin. He saw all of the consequences of sin and He went to that cross to settle the sin issue. This is precisely how the Apostle Peter interpreted this text when he said, “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross ... for by His wounds you were healed” (I Peter 2:24-25). As John Calvin said, this is not talking about the fact that Jesus Christ was appointed to be the physician of bodies, but the great physician of souls (*Isaiah*, p. 115).

Borgman:

This text used twice in NT:

Matt. 8:16 – fulfillment language of book of Matthew; healing ministry of Jesus and casting out of demons was cited as a fulfillment of Is. 53:4 – how does this fit??

Quoting **Don Carson:** healing ministry of Jesus is itself a function of his substitutionary death by which he lays the foundation for destroying sickness.

What happens every time Jesus casts out a demon? Point forward to the cross = A demonstration of victory and dominion over the kingdom of Satan – the Cross = the great overthrow of Satan and his kingdom

By faith you need to claim your healing since it has already been provided;

All blessings and all benefits that God’s children experience come through the atoning work of Christ;

Are there times when God heals His children in temporal sense? Yes

What is purchased for us in the cross is not temporal healing but the ultimate healing of the body = resurrection and glorification of the body

Physical healing is not the main focus of the text or even central to our redemption; you don’t need to experience physical healing to be saved

We cannot and should not demand temporal healing as if it were our right due to the atonement;

Still we pray for healing

God uses sickness as a sanctifying influence in our lives (cf. David Brainerd who died at 29);

Talking about a far greater healing than God helping you to get over whooping cough;

Sickness won’t send you to hell but your sins will

III. (:6) THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

Why did Jesus have to die on the cross and suffer God’s wrath?

Keep asking the **Why question** until you get down to the root cause

A. My Rebellion = Choosing to Go My Own Way

*“All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;”*

Constable: Sheep are notoriously shortsighted; they go after the next clump of grass without regard to where their feet may lead them. They are also self-centered; their only thought is how

they can satisfy themselves with no concern for the welfare of other sheep. Consequently sheep often get lost. Humans are the same.

Prov. 16:25 *“There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”*

John 14:6 *“Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life”*

B. My Iniquity = Perversion

“But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.”

Scott Grant: Each of the other sections in this stanza contained four lines. The final section contains three lines. The abrupt ending causes our minds to focus on this last line: *"But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him."*

Required a perfect sacrificial lamb; one who had lived a life of righteousness Himself and in Him was no sin

MacArthur: You remember in **Leviticus 16** that when atonement was made, one animal was killed and one animal was kept alive. And the priests would lay their hands on that one animal, the scapegoat, as if to place all the sins of the people on the scapegoat and he would be sent out into the wilderness, never to return again, never. Jesus is the scapegoat. He picks up all our sin, pays the penalty in full. He's the sacrificial animal as well, and He's the scapegoat and carries them all away.

David Thompson: He hung on that old rugged cross from 9 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon. For the first three hours, men did everything they could do to Jesus Christ to make things miserable. Men laughed at him, insulted him, spit on Him, sat down by His cross just to watch Him die. But then at noon, God turned the world dark, shutting off from human vision the transactions that were actually taking place between God the Father and God the Son. At this point, Jesus Christ, who knew no sin was made sin for us and He took on Him the full wrath of God.

CONCLUSION:

The gospel is quite simple. If you get this concept of **substitutionary** atoning death of Christ, you get it.

MacArthur: There's only one way to understand the death of Christ and that is under the principle of penal substitution. He was our substitute to take the penalty for our sins, to satisfy the justice of God. The New Testament affirms this, doesn't it? Second Corinthians 5:21, *“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”* Peter puts it this way, *“He bore in His own body our sins.”* And Paul says in Galatians 3, *“He was a curse for us.”* That's the New Testament affirmation of the truth of Isaiah 53. God has then not dealt with us according to our iniquities, He has not dealt with us according to our transgressions. But nor has He overlooked our sins, rather He has punished His Son, the Servant, the Messiah in our place and grace reigns over righteousness.

David Thompson: If you can walk away from this passage and reject Jesus Christ, you deserve to go to hell, because this text informs us that Jesus Christ paid the total price for your sin so you do not have to go there.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What caution must we exercise about our faculties of judgment and discernment?
- 2) How does this imagery of the intensity and destructiveness of the Servant's suffering heighten our appreciation for our Savior's death on the cross for us?
- 3) What benefit can we gain from studying the difficult book of Leviticus?
- 4) Why do sheep tend to go their own way and become lost?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: Five times in that chapter the word “*many*” appeared, five times. Many, in this chapter, refers to the beneficiaries of the Servant's astonishing atonement. They are the many; He is the one. Down in verse 11, He is the Righteous One. There are many who are sinners. There is One who is righteous. There are many who are guilty, there is one who provides a satisfactory atonement for them.

Many is a word picked up by the New Testament writers, as well. Both Matthew and Mark refer to Christ as having given His life a ransom for many. Paul in Romans 5:15 speaks of the sacrifice of Christ for many. The writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 9:28 refers again to the fact that Christ gave His life for many. And the idea there is many in contrast to one. And all those writers, Matthew, Mark, Paul, and the writer of Hebrews are reaching back to Isaiah 53, without necessarily quoting it, where you have the contrast between the One in verse 11 who is righteous and the many who are sinners. And many are guilty, but only One is righteous.

Motyer: Thus the Servant suffers in isolation from humanity and in distinction from the Lord; he suffers under our sin and under the Lord's hand.

Parunak: In English poetry we rhyme sounds; in Hebrew you rhyme thoughts (the meaning) – 2 lines that say essentially the same thing; the very last line is not paired = gets your attention; the servant suffers because of our sins; His suffering produces healing for us; confessing that it is all about our sin; final line explains that it was the Lord who punished Him;

Big Idea: The Lord causes his servant to suffer because of our sins so that we might find peace

Borgman: Substitutionary Atonement of Christ

This is the very heart of our faith; vicariously = as our substitute; might later survey the various views of the atonement; died in our place to pay the penalty of our sins; not just to provide a good example of what it means to love our neighbor or how much God hates sin; in order that the wrath of God could be averted from us as it finds its mark on Him

Vs. 4 – “*Surely*” – for emphasis; by way of contrast; the reality is in the midst of being despised

and rejected He was doing something so special on our behalf;

“*grief*” – sickness

“*sorrows*” –pains

Metaphors for the ravaging and destructive effects of sin;

Look at word usage in other texts:

Ps. 32 – David’s sin could have made him physically ill; **vs. 10** – *many are the “sorrows” of the wicked*

Ps. 38:18

Jer. 30:12-15 -- “*wound and injury*” – tied to sins and iniquities – What does God do to remedy their sins? Puts it in terms of healing

Jeremiah and the psalms full of this imagery;

We are sin-sick souls; we suffer the misery and agony of the sickness of our sins because we have forsaken God’s ways

Somebody outside of us has come to help us and carried all of this away; stood in our stead

Leviticus – “*bearing iniquity*” – 5:1 – the sacrifice then bears away the iniquity; Lev. 16:20-22;

one goat is sacrificed to symbolize the payment of death and the other goat is sent away into the wilderness to symbolize the removal of sin

But instead of us rejoicing in this glorious good news of these two opening statements, we have the absolute irony of a reaction of **wrongly assessing** the Servant as accursed by God for sins of his own

He looks that way because He is being punished for sins – but for our sins

Job = classic example of being stricken by God – with all sorts of personal tragedies and plagues and disease; his counselors had same misconception; we tend to think that bad things can only happen to bad people

Smitten, afflicted, oppressed, humiliated

Vs. 5 – punished in our place; fatally wounded – pierced through in a violent death; notice the pronouns;

Sin pictured as revolt, rebellion against the God of the universe; we cannot say the devil made me do it; we revolt all by ourselves; don’t need the devil’s help to be rebels;

Broken, crushed to dust; pulverized

Chastened – broad range of meanings like our word discipline; punished is the connotation here; punishment implies guilt but presupposes a standard of justice that has been violated; a law has been broken; for our Shalom = peace = well being (plural = intensified form); our completeness and wholeness intensified; implies that before this we did not have peace or well being;

With His stripes we are healed – His scourging; a welt and open wound caused by a lash; implies what rebels get – they get lashed; brutal and grotesque; 40 stripes save one – law only allowed for 40 and Pharisees did not want to break the law so in case they counted wrong they only used 39; rescued from the ravaging effects of our sin; not only forgiveness and no more

condemnation, but delivered from the ruinous effects of our sin; certainly there are time we have to live with some of the consequences of our sin in temporal sense; great Physician can cure you from the disease of sin; wonderful healing and cleansing so that we are changed people

1 Pet. 2:24 quotes this text – to be healed is to die to sin and to live to righteousness (just the opposite before we are saved); you were continually straying like sheep

We are no longer punished for our sins

Wil Pounds: The Divine Substitute

The listeners to Isaiah’s poem did not want to face the consequences of their sins. They pointed their finger and said we regard Him as being punished by God with this loathsome and horrible

disease. They looked upon the punishment as the punishment for His own sins. They measured the sin of the Sufferer by the sufferings that He endured. They reasoned like Job's friends, He must have been suffering for His own great sins. They saw Him as the one stricken with a "hateful, shocking disease."

Those who gather around the cross shouting their insults had come to the same conclusion in their biased minds. "*Let's see if God will deliver Him*" (**Luke 23:35**). The implication is that if He is innocent God will deliver Him. If He doesn't deliver Him from the cross we will know He is guilty. They believed the lies of the religious leaders who claimed He was guilty of blasphemy. They had no idea that it was for their sins He was dying.

<http://www.abideinchrist.com/messages/isa53v4.html>

Dr. John Whitcomb: The Atonement of the Servant of the Lord

God is telling us what really happened during the last 3 hours that Jesus was on the cross; land totally plunged in darkness; healed our sicknesses; not a proof text for faith healers; we will be healed by glorification which is the final phase of our salvation; if God heals us now it will be providentially rather than supernaturally; believers would not die if we were guaranteed perpetual healing; absolute absurdity: if you don't get well it is due to lack of faith; Healing miracles happened at the beginning of church history to attract attention and verify the message; paid the price for our redemption physically on resurrection day;

Sorrows = emotional tragedies because of sin

What did we Jews think of him? We thought God was punishing him for blasphemy; Deut. 13 Cf. imagery of Psalm 22; piercing = crucifixion – had not even been invented yet;

When He cried out "It is finished" ... it was finished.

Jesus paid it all; *laid on Him* = to cause to strike on Him; an awful blow; Jesus called out in agony, "*My God, My God why have you forsaken Me?*"

Oswalt: the measure of how seriously God takes our rebellion and crookedness. We typically wish to make light of our "shortcomings," to explain away our "mistakes." But God will have none of it. The refusal of humanity to bow to the Creator's rule, and our insistence on drawing up our own moral codes that pander to our lusts, are not shortcomings or mistakes. They are the stuff of death and corruption, and unless someone can be found to stand in our place, they will see us impaled on the swords of our own making and broken on the racks of our own design. But someone has been found. Someone has taken on himself the results of our rebelliousness, and we have been given the keys of the kingdom (2 Cor. 5:21; 8-9; 1 Pet. 2:24).

TEXT: Isaiah 53:7-9

TITLE: SERVANT SONG #4 – STANZA #4
SILENT SUBMISSION OF THE SACRIFICED SERVANT

BIG IDEA:

THE PERFECT SERVANT OF GOD WILLINGLY LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR SINFUL SHEEP IN SILENT SUBMISSION TO SUFFERING AND OPPRESSION TO ACCOMPLISH GOD’S PLAN OF REDEMPTION

INTRODUCTION:

We are familiar with the OT background of prescribed animal sacrifices. What was **different** about the sacrifice of Christ? We know from the book of Hebrews that it was very different in terms of its effect – look at Hebrews 10. “*It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*” The sacrifice of Jesus was the sacrifice of a man, not an animal. But not just a man, but a perfect man who had lived his life fulfilling all righteousness – so by His **active obedience**, God could impute to redeemed sinners such as us His righteousness. Not just a perfect man, but the very Son of God who could experience the eternal wrath of God for all of those whom He intended to save.

But what really stands out in our passage this morning that makes the sacrifice of Christ so unique is his willing, voluntary, silent submission to that act of sacrifice – knowing full well the entirety of what was involved. The slaughtered lamb did not choose its death. The slaughtered lamb did not understand what lay ahead of it as it blindly followed the rest of the flock to the butcher’s knife. But our Lord Jesus, the precious Lamb of God, set his face resolutely to go to Jerusalem, fully understanding what lay ahead on the cross. Not just the experience of a violent, barbaric, grotesque, publicly humiliating death ... but the unleashing of the full wrath of God against him because he died in our place to pay the penalty for sins that we deserved to pay. He would cry out, “*My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me*”

Motyer: though he did not deserve to die he was willing to do so. In a word, the fatal flaw in existing substitutionary procedures was exposed and met in one stroke. For the point where animal substitution failed was also the point where sin is most serious. . . sin as **willfulness** is the thing God cannot overlook. It is the very heart of our sinfulness that we sin because we want to. We do not want “*this man to reign over us*” (Luke 19:14). Because of this, no animal can do more than picture substitution: only a person can substitute for a person; only a consenting will can substitute for a rebellious will.

THE PERFECT SERVANT OF GOD WILLINGLY LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR SINFUL SHEEP IN SILENT SUBMISSION TO SUFFERING AND OPPRESSION TO ACCOMPLISH GOD’S PLAN OF REDEMPTION

I. (:7) HIS INACTION HIGHLIGHTED – PASSIVE OBEDIENCE -- CAPTURED AND PROSECUTED AND SLAUGHTERED WITHOUT RESISTANCE

A. Silent Submission to His Capture and Prosecution

1. Summary Statement

“*He was oppressed*”

Wield power; throw down, overthrow; harsh physical treatment at the hand of others

Parunak: “*Oppressed*” – what a lender does to a debtor (Deut. 15); (Ex. 3:7; 5 -- Pharaoh’s taskmasters) what a slave owner does to a slave; what a tyrant like Assyria does to a subject nation (Is. 14:4 “*How the oppressor has ceased*”) = puts you at the bottom of the pile; this man was always at the bottom of the pile; other people were always lording it over him; How did he respond? Did he try to complain and take them to court? Did he mount a protest?

The word “*oppress*” is one that means He was pressed or harassed to the point of being totally weary and fatigued (**William Gesenius**, Hebrew Lexicon, p. 533).

Normal human response – defend yourself; this is not right; false accusations; extreme injustice

2. Two Responses

- a. Submissive – No physical resistance
“*and He was afflicted,*”

Allowed himself to be afflicted

Parunak: “*being afflicted*” – passive verb – but even the normal form has this meaning so this is like a double passive; an idiom (more meaning that just you would get from the word itself); **Ex. 10:3** same form of the verb “*How long will you refuse to be afflicted before me?*” Not just something that happens to you but something you allow to happen to you; he didn’t fight back; didn’t occupy temple square; **John 18** at time of his arrest – “*shall I not drink it?*” refused to allow Peter to resist on his behalf

Motyer: he, for his part, humbled himself (reflexive) submitted to be struck down; This is the emphasis of the present stanza: the clear-headed, self-restraining voluntariness with which the Servant approached and accepted what happened. The human eye saw him at the mercy of hostile, and even divine, forces; the theologically instructed eye saw the hand of the Lord fulfilling the Servant’s death as a sin-bearing exercise. Now, however, we stand on a very sacred spot indeed, within the Servant’s own consciousness, and we see him, not caught in a web of events, but masterfully deciding, accepting and submitting. . . deliberate self-submission

Luke 9:51 – set his face to go to Jerusalem

- b. Silent – No verbal resistance
“*Yet He did not open His mouth,*”

Parunak: He didn’t speak against his mistreatment; treated absolutely unjustly but didn’t try to defend himself; Matt. 27:12-14 before Sanhedrin; Mark 15:5 before Pilate;

In fact He stood before these authorities as their Sovereign – actually in control, even in these events; not being forced down a path he did not want to travel

Acts 2:23 “*this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death*”

Acts 4:27-28 “*to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur*”

B. Silent Submission to His Slaughter – 2 Illustrations

*“Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.”*

Parunak: Illustrations: sheep are meek animals; they tend to follow other sheep; know how to eat grass and follow other sheep; very docile; they let you cut their hair off without a whimper; this is earliest place in bible where Messiah is compared to a lamb; Isaiah has already used image of sheep to describe us back in 53:6; this is the passage NT writers had in mind when they point to the parallel

Look at how John the Baptist introduced the promised Messiah

- Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world
- same at his baptism

Constable: In spite of God's punishment for sin, the Servant would bear it without defending Himself (cf. 42:2-3; 49:4-9; 50:5-7; Jer. 11:18-20; 12:1-3; Matt. 26:63; 27:12-14; Mark 14:61; 15:5; Luke 23:9; John 19:9). He would allow others to "fleece" Him and even kill him without even protesting (cf. Acts 8:32-33; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Israel protested God's shearing of her (40:27; 49:14; 63:15). He would not be a helpless victim but one who knowingly and willingly submitted to death (cf. Luke 9:51). Jeremiah used the same figure to describe himself—but as a naive person who did not know what would happen to him (Jer. 11:19). The sheep metaphor is apt because the Israelites used lambs as sacrificial animals to cover their sins (cf. Gen. 22:7-8; Exod. 12:3, 5; Lev. 5:7; John 1:29).

Beall: v. 7 especially speaks of the Servant's patient, passive acceptance of his unjust punishment. Though he was oppressed (the verb is used of the Egyptian taskmasters pressing the Israelites to the task) and afflicted (same root as at the end of v. 4), he did not resist. Instead, just as a lamb led to the slaughter, he did not open his mouth. He was willingly doing the Father's bidding. The use of the word “lamb” here also reflects the sacrificial imagery of the OT, as Christ, the sacrificial Passover lamb of God, died for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29: “Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world”; 1 Cor 5:7: “Christ, our Passover lamb, was sacrificed for us”). This verse was literally fulfilled when the Lord did not seek to answer the charges of his accusers at his trial (Matt 26:63).

MacArthur: And when the dramatic moment came, and John the Baptist and Jesus came face-to-face, eye-to-eye in a public place, and Jesus was about to launch His ministry. It was at the Jordan and all Jerusalem and Judea, it says, were going down there to be baptized by John because John was saying the Messiah’s here, Messiah’s here, prepare your heart, prepare your heart. And he was preaching the Kingdom and righteousness and telling people to get ready, and he was offering this baptism, which was a symbol of their desire to be cleansed, and masses of people were there. And one day Jesus shows up, and how does John introduce Jesus? He doesn’t say, “Behold your King.” He says, “*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” And that is right out of Isaiah 53.

Beall: vv. 7-8 are cited in **Acts 8:32-33** by the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch rightly wondered whether the prophet could be speaking these words of himself, or someone else. Philip then began at this Scripture and “*preached Jesus to him*” (Acts 8:35).

II. (:8) HIS INJUSTICE ENDURED WITHOUT PROTEST – CONVICTED AND EXECUTED WITHOUT JUSTICE OR SUPPORT

A. Injustice in His Capture and Conviction and Execution

“By oppression and judgment He was taken away;”

MacArthur: This is all talking about processes, legal processes. Oppression, His arrest, confinement; judgment is the judicial proceeding, and the final verdict taken away means exactly what it says, from the court, from the trial to be executed.

Oswalt: His treatment was unjust from start to finish

Constable: The Servant's treatment at the hands of others would be unjust from start to finish. Oppressive legal treatment and twisted justice would result in His being taken away to suffer and die (cf. Matt. 26:59-61; Luke 23:2-4, 13-16). This was not the case in Israel's suffering in captivity. That suffering was in harmony with what justice prescribed. However, it was for the transgressions of the prophet's people that the Servant would suffer a fatal blow (cf. Gen. 9:11; Exod. 12:15; Dan. 9:26; Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 1:13-14, 19-20). This does not rule out His dying for Gentiles as well. Perhaps Isaiah identified Israel as the beneficiary of the Servant's death here because Israel's sins had been so great and Isaiah's ministry was to Israel. Miscarried justice would be only the means to that end.

B. Indifference Towards His Execution – No Support on His Behalf by Others

“And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living,”

NIV *“who of his generation considered”* – better meaning than cut of without children

MacArthur: Who considered that He was violently executed? Who stepped up and protested? That's what it means. Who saw it for what it was? Where was the high priest in protest? Where were the Sadducees or Pharisees or somebody who was a fastidious adherent to the Jewish order and tradition and Law? Where were the rabbis? Where were the scribes? Where was anybody? Here we find in the prophecy 700 years before it ever happened, the pronouncement that no one will defend Him, no one will defend Him.

Where were His disciples? Well, they were living out **Zechariah 13:7** *“strike the shepherd and the sheep will be – ”* What? – *“scattered.”* They were long gone. They had fled. Matthew says that they fled and Mark says the same thing that the Shepherd was struck and the sheep were scattered. Who was there to speak in His behalf?

Parunak: *“the land of the living”* – a desirable place to be because you could experience God's **presence and blessing and goodness** (they did not have much of a theology about the place of the dead); **Ps. 116:9** *“I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living”*; to be taken away is a severe judgment; **Ps. 52:5** – curse on Doeg – rooted out of the land of the living; you don't deserve to be here; anticipates the spiritual aspect of the Lord's death – deprived of the presence and blessing of the Father

Quite a destiny for the **Prince of Life**

Yet He **willingly** lay down His life for the sheep

John 10:17-18 *“I lay it down on my own initiative”*

C. Insight: Substitutionary Atoning Death for the Elect Jews

“For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?”

Third line added here for emphasis [structural elements always a key to emphasis for Isaiah]

“my people” -- Not denying here that He died for elect Gentiles as well; but the focus is on the saved nation of Israel in the end times that looks back and makes this confession as they mourn for the one they had formerly pierced.

No escaping where the guilt lay; who was actually culpable and deserved to be executed
This was a heavy stroke indeed

**III. (:9) HIS INNOCENCE VINDICATED – ACTIVE OBEDIENCE --
CARRIED OFF AND BURIED WITHOUT DEFILEMENT**

A. Protection From Defilement -- Paradox of Specific Prophecy

1. Expected Anticipated Burial -- Normal Disrespect Shown to Traitors

“His grave was assigned with wicked men,”

The parallelism here is not synonymous but antithetical

What type of burial could such wicked men expect in that society?

How you were buried said a lot about your status in life;

[don't see a lot of cremations back then unless you were disrespecting the body]

These criminals along with Jesus were viewed as insurrectionists; traitors

Not just buried in some unmarked grave, but in a garbage heap; a landfill – body mixed in with all the stinking refuse of the land – that was the expectation

David Thompson: Man had his plan but God overruled. God wanted His Son to have more honor than being burned or devoured by vultures. So God raised up a man named Joseph to take care of His son's body. The Romans authorities would grant the body of Jesus to Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57). God would not allow His Son to be buried in some shameful place. He would not allow His son's body to be burned or eaten.

Joseph, a rich man, would get the body and would bury it in his own grave (Matt. 27:57-60). Even though Christ would die with and for the wicked, God would not let Him be buried with the wicked.

2. Unexpected Actual Burial – Surprising Respect Accorded to Jesus

“Yet He was with a rich man in His death,”

Very cryptic statement that seems out of place until we understand the specific events that transpired; then we see the awesome detail of Messianic prophecy

You can't make this stuff up!

MacArthur: Jesus was crucified between two criminals, Luke 23:33; Matthew 27:38. And here would be the normal disposition. They would die on the cross of asphyxiation, and they would

leave Him there. Leave Him there dead and rotting, leave Him there for the birds to pluck out their faces. And they would leave them there like road kill for animals that could climb up the cross to chew their flesh. They would leave them there for the purpose of warning everybody who was watching of what happens to people who violate the Roman power and the Roman law. That's what was planned for Him. Eventually they would have taken the rotted corpses down and thrown them in a dump.

The Jerusalem city dump was in the Valley of Hinnom; you can go there today. It's not the dump anymore but the Valley of Hinnom on the southeast side of Jerusalem was the city dump, and it was a fire that never went out, a constant fire there. It is a very interesting place, historically. It was the place where apostate Jews and followers of Baal and other Canaanite gods burned their children to the god Molech. You find that back in 2 Chronicles 28:33. Jeremiah talks about it, Jeremiah 7. But this was the place where they offered babies to Molech. It was there that King Ahaz sacrificed his sons, 2 Chronicles 28. It is the place that Isaiah identifies at the end of his prophecy as the place where the worm never dies. And Jesus said it's a depiction of hell, in Mark, where the worm never dies...Mark 9. And he says that three times. Horrible place where they threw what was left of the corpses. The rabbis describe it as a perpetual fire to consume the filth and the cadavers that are thrown there. So He was executed with criminals. He would end up like criminals.

But God wasn't going to let that happen. Psalm 16 says that He would not allow His Holy One to see corruption. God would never let that happen. So verse 9 says there's an amazing turn. "His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death." How did that happen? He was with a rich man in His death because all along there was a man by the name of Joseph from a place called Arimathea.

1 Cor. 15; **Acts 2:29** – importance of burial in the detailing of what constitutes the gospel message

B. Proclamation of His Innocence – Vindicated in His Burial

1. Innocent in His Actions

“Because He had done no violence,”

Ps. 16 – the Father would not let the Son see corruption in His burial

This vindication begun in his burial would be consummated 3 days later in his resurrection; important that he be buried in a tomb so that there could later be an empty tomb for his followers to visit

2. Innocent in His Words

“Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.”

Constable: since Jesus' corpse received honorable treatment after His death, this suggested that He was unworthy of such an ignominious martyrdom [being buried among the wicked]. Isaiah seems to have meant that somehow wicked people and a rich man would be involved in the Servant's burial (cf. Matt. 27:57-60). This is somewhat paradoxical.

Motyer: Like the other enigmas of this Song, this too is written so that when the turn of events provides the explanation we shall know for certain that we stand in the presence of the Servant of the Lord."

Beall: The phrase indicates that though he was crucified with the wicked (Matt 27:38), and thus his body would normally have been assigned the same ignoble burial as theirs, in the Servant's case, when he died he was buried with the rich. This prophecy literally came true, since though Jesus died with criminals (and was doubtless originally assigned to be buried with them), wealthy Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus in his own newly made tomb (Matt 27:57-60). In light of the fact that Jesus was crucified with two criminals, and buried in the grave of one rich man, it is noteworthy that ("wicked," referring to the criminals) is plural, but ("rich," referring to Joseph of Arimathea) is singular. . . a contrast between the first and second phrase is intended.

CONCLUSION:

1 Peter 2 – to what extent are we willing to embrace the will of God as His servants today? Jesus left us an example – not that we can be involved in the work of redemption – that is totally the work of the Lamb of God who **willingly** suffered and died in our place – but we also need to suffer in accordance with the will of God

BY THE GRACE OF GOD, THE PERSECUTED CHURCH FINDS VINDICATION AND VICTORY THRU LIVING FOR ETERNITY, MAINTAINING COMMENDABLE CONDUCT, AND ACCEPTING SUFFERING AS THE WILL OF GOD

Remember, his own generation did not even care that Jesus was cut off out of the land of the living. How are we showing that we acknowledge and appreciate His great sacrifice for us? Let's live today as true servants of God following in the footsteps of the Perfect Servant, the Lamb of God who came to take away our sins.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When have we been able to exercise self control and not defend ourselves and assert our rights when wrongly accused or suffering unjustly?
- 2) How do the harsh words used in Isaiah 53 bring out the severity of the suffering and oppression experienced by the Lord?
- 3) Is it important to show respect in how we bury the dead?
- 4) What is the significance of the righteous life of the Lord Jesus in word and deed?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: They lived in ancient times in an agrarian society, a society made up of crops, grain in the flat places, and vineyards on the hillsides. And they were very familiar with animal husbandry and particularly with sheep. Sheep were a staple part of their life. For the sake of

wool, they were vital, and for the sake of food, they were vital. They were not only sheared but they were eaten. They were sheared and they were slaughtered. And that was a very familiar part of life in ancient times in the land of Israel. They killed sheep to eat them. They sheared sheep to make their clothes. . .

All through history the Jews were very familiar with sacrificial animals. All through their history from Leviticus on, when they were instructed in the book of Leviticus that God wanted them to offer blood sacrifice, which was not new, not at all. That goes all the way back to Abel offering to God a blood sacrifice, and all the way back to Abraham, where Abraham is told to offer his son on the altar. And as Abraham lifts the knife to plunge it into Isaac's heart, his hand is stopped, and God provides a sacrifice. They had been instructed that sin causes death, that the soul that sins, it shall die, as the prophet said. And that there must be a penalty paid for sin. Someone must die. And the demonstration of that is in every sacrificial animal that was ever slaughtered through the history of Israel.

It wasn't that salvation came by the death of the animal; it was that the animal symbolized the fact that sin required death and that God was willing to provide an innocent substitute who would die the death for the penitent sinner. No forgiveness of sin would be granted by God apart from an acceptable, substitutionary sacrifice of an innocent victim. They had known from Abraham, Genesis 22, that God would provide a sacrifice. Even that early, as early as Abraham, they could look forward to who that sacrifice would finally be.

Parunak: chapter structured around changes in speaker; vs. 11 picks up Lord speaking again; vv.1-6 nation Israel speaks; their confession and then their recognition; vv.7-11a – first half deals with suffering of Messiah and second half with His vindication; at end of vs. 9 things begin to turn positive; provides transition to the next verses just as the first part of vs. 10 provides link back to vv.7-9

Sequence of events: arrested, confined, tried, led out bearing his cross and crucified and abandoned by God the Father; buried in grave of a rich man

The people of that same general family group; “as for his generation, who among them shall consider that he was cut off out of the land of the living” – nobody of his generation understood what was going on; they were all clueless; you would think that someone would stand up for him; maybe put up a memorial to him;

Vs. 8 – “for” – because of – it was a sinful thing for them to put Jesus to death; that was not right; not really speaking to substitutionary atonement here??

“*the stroke belonged to them*” (plural) – not “*he was stricken*” – they are the ones that should have felt the wrath of God;

Acts 8:32ff – Gentile, man of great authority in Ethiopia; has submitted himself to the God of Israel; chauffeured chariot with entourage of soldiers; where did he get this scroll of Isaiah? Why did he choose to purchase this book? Reading it as he goes along; people did not read silently;

Vs. 9 – 2 types of companions in his death; one appointed his grave with the wicked; that was the intention; instead of that he received an honorable burial – prepared with spices; Luke 23 – 2 other malefactors put to death with him; Matt. 27 records Joseph of Arimathea; a complete reversal of fortune

“*violence*” = evil doing or wrong doing; not just physical abuse; lawlessness (LXX);

“*deceit*” – James 3 – if any man can control his speech, everything else will be in order
Speak no evil; do no evil; thorough-going exoneration of the servant; **Rev. 14:5** “guile” or “lie”
1 Pet. 2:18ff esp. **v. 22** – suffer patiently; submit to authority even if it is unjust; endure
inappropriate accusation; our calling is to be like Jesus

Vs. 10 – making the transition from suffering to reward; fit together like Lego blocks; third time
that the song emphasizes the Father’s agency -- vs. 4; vs. 6; this was not an accident; Jewish
priesthood and Romans were just God’s instruments – they were wicked and guilty; but God did
it; and did not just do it reluctantly or allow it to happen – No, he was pleased to do it;

David Thompson:

The will of God for Jesus Christ was filled with sorrow and grief. The will of God meant that
He would come to this earth and be mocked, brutalized, and executed. God’s will meant that
Jesus Christ would physically die in the prime of His life. It meant that He wouldn’t appear to
be successful at all. It meant He would be deprived of a good long life. It meant that He would be
very lonely, even deprived of most normal family and friends. It also meant He would be
deprived of justice. But in spite of how nightmarish His assignment was, the one thing Jesus
Christ could say that none of us will ever be able to say is, “I always did My Father’s will.”

**This section in Isaiah is all about the will of God in the life of Jesus Christ in providing
an amazing sacrifice for a sinful nation and for sinful individuals.** What happened to Jesus
Christ was no accident or case of simple misunderstanding. Everything that happened to Him
was the will of God.

**GOD’S PERFECT SERVANT/SAVIOR/SON, JESUS CHRIST, SILENTLY AND
WILLINGLY SUBMITTED HIMSELF TO TERRIBLE OPPRESSION AND DEATH IN
ORDER TO FULFILL GOD’S WILL THAT WOULD SAVE US FROM ALL OUR SINS.**

All judgments against Christ were oppressive and wrong. He went through six mock trials. They
took place during the middle of the night. No jury, no justice. There were times in those trials
when it was clearly stated this man is innocent. Think of that, the leaders could find no fault in
Him. He was innocent yet He was confined and He was brutalized and He was taken away.

Borgman: The Lamb for Sinners Slain

Language of sacrifice in this song – especially in this fourth stanza; this is a willing sacrifice;
voluntarily submits himself to not only unjust judgment, but sacrifice;

Vs. 7 – *oppressed* -- harshly treated; Ex. 3:7;

Afflicted – to be bowed down – not in worship – but under an unbearable weight or load; verb
stem means burdened himself; actually yielding to the harsh treatment voluntarily;

Human nature rises up against being falsely accused; we have a sense of judicial sentiment;
oppression and injustice always give rise to protest;

He says nothing in his own defense; before the Sanhedrin; before Pilate; demonstrated great
patience; self control in the face of self injustice; His great love for us was greater than his desire
to defend himself;

Sheep imagery had been used earlier in vs. 6 – here does not depict lostness and wandering but
his non-defensive submission in silence; completely passive and docile; the sheep does not know
what is awaiting him at the end of the line; Servant knows exactly what awaits him at the end of
the line = slaughter

As Jesus stood there bound, he did not stand there as a prisoner, but as the servant of the Lord in

his sublime silence, willing to suffer for us; stood there as the Sovereign – in control of Pilate’s heart; lays down his life on his own initiative

Vs. 8 – Servant’s submission to death – taken away to death; his own generation did not even give a thought that he was killed; couldn’t care less; Prince of Life cut off from the life of the living and nobody cared; his death was violent, substitutionary;

Vs. 9 – Servant’s submission in burial – detailing of the gospel in 1 Cor. 15 contains the mention of his burial; Roman citizens were never crucified; cruel, barbaric way to kill someone; public scene – people look at you and say “Common criminal, scum”

Discarded bodies not into unmarked graves but into a garbage heap

In his deaths (plural of majesty and intensity) – the magnificence of what he had just done

There is something about his death that is glorious; put into the tomb of a rich man;

The initial vindication by the Father – completed 3 days later at the resurrection (cf. stanza 5);

TEXT: Isaiah 53:10-12

TITLE: *FOURTH SERVANT SONG – FIFTH STANZA –
THE EXALTATION OF THE SATISFIED SERVANT*

BIG IDEA:

**INSTEAD OF FUTILITY, GOD’S SERVANT FINDS SATISFACTION AND
EXALTATION THROUGH BEARING OUR SINS ON THE CROSS**

INTRODUCTION:

The life and death of Christ seem like such a **tragic waste** when viewed apart from the **results** He accomplished. How could the Son of God come unto His own and not be received as the royal, majestic Sovereign that He was? How could His miracles and works of love and compassion and mercy be so misinterpreted that they were attributed to the power of Satan? How could He be rejected so violently by the religious leaders who swore such loyalty to God’s revelation? How could He be abandoned by all men, especially his close disciples as He went to the cross to suffer a humiliating and painful execution at the hands of sinful men? The answers to these questions get back to the fundamental question of all: **Why did Jesus have to die?**

Review: All of these threads of the first four stanzas

come together in the concluding stanza which circles around to the theme of **Exaltation**

52:13-5 The **Exaltation** of the Suffering Servant

Coupled with extreme suffering and degradation

53:1-3 The **Rejection** of the Despised Servant

Overlooked as largely Unknown, Unremarkable, Unpopular

53:4-6 The **Substitution** of the Punished Servant

Paid the penalty for our sins to give us peace

53:7-9 The **Submission** of the Sacrificed Servant

Voluntarily laid down his life in silent submission

53:10-12 The **Exaltation** of the Satisfied Servant

Reading of Text – substituting the personal pronouns

But the Lord was pleased

To crush Jesus Christ, putting Jesus Christ to grief;

If Jesus Christ would render Himself as a guilt offering,

Jesus Christ will see His offspring,

Jesus Christ will prolong His days,

And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

As a result of the anguish of Jesus Christ’s soul,

He will see it and be satisfied;

By his knowledge the Righteous One,

My Servant, will justify the many,

As Jesus will bear their iniquities.

Therefore, I will allot Jesus Christ a portion with the great,

And Jesus Christ will divide the booty with the strong;

Because Jesus Christ poured out Himself to death,

And was numbered with the transgressors;

Yet Jesus Christ Himself bore the sin of many,

And interceded for the transgressors.

INSTEAD OF FUTILITY, GOD'S SERVANT FINDS SATISFACTION AND EXALTATION THROUGH BEARING OUR SINS ON THE CROSS

I. (:10) COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF THE DIVINE SATISFACTION

A. Intent of the Father – Surprising Crushing of the Righteous Servant

*“But the LORD was pleased to crush Him,
putting Him to grief;”*

Lord is emphatic subject

in spite of his sinlessness – his perfection in deed and word

John Piper: You know someone's heart when you know their deep desires and what satisfies them. That's what this text is about—knowing the **heart of God** and his Servant, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Parunak: He is faced with the **moral dilemma** of undeserved suffering that the Lord not only tolerates, but actually takes pleasure in bringing about! How can this paradox be resolved?

Lord, I'm confused. Here is a righteous man, suffering at the hands of wicked men, yet suffering patiently. He is not guilty. They are. And you, who should defend the righteous and punish the wicked, not only allow this to happen, but are bringing it about! How can this make any sense? Hmm—it would make sense, if you were trying to provide a guilt-offering. That would then bring great blessing to your Servant, in compensation for the suffering he has borne. . .

The rest of this paragraph consists of the consequences that will result if the Lord provides the Servant's soul as the reparation offering that his people need to make amends for their offenses against the Lord.

Constable: The Father did not find the sufferings and death of His Son something pleasurable (or enjoyable) to behold, but they pleased (satisfied) Him because they fulfilled His great purpose of providing redemption for humankind.

MacArthur: In other words, the Lord is doing something to Him that is horrific. Men, of course, are unjustly crushing Him. We saw that, didn't we, in the earlier verses. Men are doing the worst that they can do with an unjust trial and brutality and abuse and harassment and punching and slapping and hitting with sticks and crowning with thorns and nailing and piercing. Men are doing the worst that they can do, the worst that sinners can do, and they're pleased to do that. But here, God is pleased and God is delighted to crush Him. While men are doing the worst that they can do, at the very same time God is doing the best that He can do. . .

It's a very powerful phrase, *“putting Him to grief,”* because it has the idea of making Him sick...not sick with an illness or sick with a disease...but, literally, such an excruciating experience as to completely debilitate His entire being. God not only crushes Him in the sense that kills Him, but He makes it as excruciating and painful as conceivable or inconceivable. He is crushed agonizingly, painfully, excruciatingly. And God is doing the crushing. . .

Jesus died under divine wrath unmitigated. No comfort, only divine fury. Jesus died tasting hell. “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” No believer ever died like that. And every unbeliever dies like that. Every believer dies tasting heaven. Every unbeliever dies tasting hell. Jesus died tasting hell. He died the death of an unbeliever with no comforts and no grace and no mercy. . .

God’s delight and God’s pleasure in crushing His Son in this way was not in His pain, but in His purpose. It was not in His agony; it was in His accomplishment. It was not in His suffering; it was in His salvation. And that’s what it says. Why was the Lord pleased? Why pleased to crush Him, putting Him to that grief? Literally in Hebrew, “*Because He would render Himself as a guilt offering. Because He would give His life to save sinners.*” It was the outcome that pleased God, not the pain. But the pain and the agony were necessary. He had to die under the full, unmitigated, unrelieved, comfortless realities of divine law and wrath.

B. Results of the Crushing of the Righteous Servant

1. Benefits to God the Father -- Reparations Satisfied by the Guilt Offering

“If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,”

Oswalt: What is the condition that must be met for the realization of God’s purpose in putting the Servant to such grief and humiliation? The Servant’s life (not merely he, but his person, his *nepes*) must be offered up as a sacrifice! This then is why the Servant could accept what came to him with such submission. It was not that he lacked character or self-esteem or courage, but that he knew these things came to him from the hand of his God, and that the purpose for which he was undergoing all these things was a great and good one.

Beall: Note that the Servant voluntarily sets His *soul* as a trespass offering; no one forces Him. The voluntary obedience of the Servant to the will of the Father in offering up Himself as an offering for our sins is again emphasized here (see also 50:5, 7).

MacArthur: There were five offerings the Jews gave, according to Leviticus, when they had their sacrificial system laid out by God. There was the burnt offering, and then there was the grain offering and the peace offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering. Three of those were sacrifices. The first one, the burnt offering, and the fourth and fifth the sin offering and the guilt offering, were animal sacrifices. The other two, grain and peace, were not. . .

the guilt offering, or sometimes called the trespass offering...it’s the same one...it was the offering that added the dimension of **restitution, or satisfaction or propitiation**, which is a verb that means to be satisfied. It is the last of the offerings in Leviticus in the first seven chapters. It is an advance from the others.

Motyer: guilt offering for reparations – satisfied the requirements of God in relation to his broken law and offended holiness.

2. Benefits to God the Son -- Results of the Voluntary Sacrificial Death

a. Result #1 – **Spiritual Offspring**

“He will see His offspring,”

Parents love to take pictures of their children; as they grow older they love to see their children

who may have moved away to distant places; Grandparents now get to facetime with their beloved grandchildren; think of how we are a delight to the Savior – the Shepherd rejoices in seeing His beloved sheep

Constable: Seeing one's offspring was a blessing on those whom God favored (cf. Ps. 127:3-5; 128:6; Prov. 17:6), as was living a long life (cf. Ps. 21:4; 34:12; Prov. 3:2). The Servant would also accomplish Yahweh's good purpose for His life (cf. 52:13; 55:11; Josh. 1:7; 2 Chron. 20:20; Ps. 1:3; John 17:4). **Thus the Servant's life would not be futile after all.**

Thompson: One of the results of Christ's sacrifice is that He would continually *see* His offspring. The verb "*see*" is in the imperfect tense meaning that Jesus Christ would continually be able to see His offspring come into His family because of His sacrifice. He would see millions and millions of people come into the family of God. . .

What is actually amazing is that the thing that would enable Him to see His offspring would be **His death**. This is such an odd thing because most people who die cannot see their offspring. But in this case, His death would lead to Him seeing all of His offspring.

John Piper: When the servant dies, he doesn't just provide the basis for justification; he also provides the basis for new birth—the new birth into God's family. His death and resurrection produces not only justified sinners, but offspring—new born children.

Or another way to put it would be: the death of Jesus not only solves the problem of guilt, but also the **problem of alienation or loneliness or estrangement**. His death and resurrection not only give us forgiveness, they **give us family**. We are not just OK before the law in a legal sense; we are at home with the Father in a personal, relational sense.

b. Result #2 – **Resurrected Life**
“He will prolong His days,”

Parunak: OT examples:

Gen 25:8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a **good old age**, an **old man**, and **full of years**; and was gathered to his people.

Jdg 8:32 And Gideon the son of Joash died in a **good old age**, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites

1Ch 29:28 And he [David]died in a **good old age**, **full of days**, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead.

Job 42:17 So Job died, being **old** and **full of days**.

Young: Refers to the promise God gave to David and his seed (cf. Ps. 21:5; 2 Sam. 7:13, 16; Ps. 89:4 and 132:12).

c. Result #3 – **Worthwhile Mission**
“And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.”

52:13 “Behold my servant will prosper” will successfully accomplish the Father’s mission
Key phrase in our stanza for this morning

Thompson – quoting Hebrew Lexicon: Everything Jesus Christ would do would please the Lord and prosper the Lord’s work. That word “*prosper*” is one that means everything Jesus Christ would do would continually cause the work of God to succeed and flourish.

Beall: the Lord's pleasure included the marvelous redemption wrought by the offering of the Servant and the Servant's exaltation.

II. (:11) EXPLANATION OF PROPITIATION AND JUSTIFICATION

A. Explanation of Propitiation

1. Required Paying a Steep Price

“As a result of the anguish of His soul,”

No minimizing of the cost of propitiation

2. Resulted in the Turning Away of God’s Wrath

“He will see it and be satisfied;”

Some ambiguity regarding this personal pronoun – is it God the Father (our expectation theologically in the study of the doctrine of propitiation) ... or more consistently with how the pronouns are used in this section, God the Son – He is the one who ends up satisfied here (as well as the Father)

B. Explanation of Justification

1. Consistently Executing the Divine Plan [God starts speaking again]

“By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many,”

Piper: It means that the Servant was not taken off guard by the will of the Lord to crush him. He knew it. And he agreed with it.

Parunak: How about the subjective sense, “*by the knowledge that he has*”? This clause lies between two others, the first emphasizing what the Servant knows, and the second pointing out what he does. The second half of the clause summarizes what he does, so it makes sense to understand the first half as summarizing what he knows.

Beall: [takes the other view] “*knowledge of him*” is probably to be construed in this way [knowledge that people have regarding Jesus Christ], rather than the Servant's knowledge, though both are possible grammatically

Motyer: the knowledge which he alone possesses regarding what God requires in relation to sin and what to do about it

Importance of the righteous character and life lived on earth of God’s servant; as the Second Adam, he did not fail the test of obedience; he alone stood in the position of being able to justify sinners

Again the scope is “*the many*” – not every person in the world down through the ages, but the elect of God from before the foundation of the world – including both Jews and Gentiles who would subsequently repent and believe

2. Voluntarily Enduring the Penalty for Sin

“As He will bear their iniquities.”

Beall: Thus, the gospel is clear: the Servant bore our sins for us in order to provide justification, if we but come to know Him. He has borne our iniquities, but we must accept the justification His death offers us by coming to know Him personally.

MacArthur: Starting in the middle of verse 11, **God speaks**. The pronouns all change. They go from being plural to singular. The verbs go from being past tense to future. It goes from the Jews as a nation, looking back to the cross, to God speaking, looking forward to the cross. And what is God’s view?

Oswalt: The reason the Servant has the power to make people righteous before God is that he himself bears their iniquities – the entire book has been about the persistent sin and unbelief of the chosen people, not to mention the world at large. This man will change all that in a sentence

III. (:12) EXALTED RICHES REALIZED THROUGH HIS SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE

A. Reward Shared with the Redeemed

*“Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;”*

Rom. 8:16-17 *fellow heirs of Christ*

Oswalt: far from being despised and rejected, an unknown, the Servant will be given a place at the very forefront, dividing spoil with the victors.

B. Resolve to Suffer Shame and Death –

Followed through on His commitment to go to the cross

1. Sacrifice of Death on the Cross

“Because He poured out Himself to death,”

Language of sacrifice – cf. apostle Paul: poured out as a drink offering

Rom. 12:1-2 we are to offer our bodies as a sacrifice –dedicated to performing the will of God

2. Shame of Death on the Cross

“And was numbered with the transgressors;”

C. Redemption Accomplished by Substitutionary Mediation

1. Substitution

“Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,”

2. Intercession / Mediation

“And interceded for the transgressors.”

Luke 23:34 *“Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”*

Beall: Note that while the first three verbs in v. 12b were in the perfect tense, expressing completed action, **the final verb is in the imperfect, indicating a continuing action:** He has died, numbering Himself with transgressors, and has borne the sin of many, but He is still making intercession for the transgressors (all major English translations miss this point and translate the four verbs with the past tense). In the NT, Heb 7:25 and Rom 8:33-35 express this glorious truth (**Heb 7:25:** *“He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them”*; **Rom 8:33-35:** *“Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies, who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died and is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”*).

Constable: The reason for the Servant's exaltation is that He would surrender Himself to death (cf. Matt. 26:38-39, 42) and consent to being numbered among the rebels against God; He would take His place among sinful humans (cf. Matt. 26:50-54; Mark 15:27; Luke 22:37). Yet He would do more than simply identify with the rebels. He would bear their sin (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21) and intercede for them (cf. Heb. 7:25). This intercession is more than prayer; it would also involve intervention (cf. 59:16; Heb. 9:12-14). This final promise of exaltation returns to the thought with which this passage began (52:13). The Servant's exaltation is for accomplishing redemption.

MacArthur: The word means mediated. It means to mediate, to go between, to stand between. And this is the statement of God, that Christ is the One who is between God and man. **First Timothy 2:5**, *“There is one” – what? – “mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus.”* Yes, in that mediation, He is the intercessor. He is the One who pleads our case. He is the One who is the bridge to God, the bridge to heaven. . . . But His intercession is imperfect because it goes on. *“He ever lives to make intercession for us.”* He's ever our defender. He's ever our intercessor. He's ever and always our mediator until we finally get to heaven. **Hebrews 7:25, Romans 8:34** celebrate the mediating, interceding work of Christ.

Motyer: The base meaning is “to cause to reach” and hence to “cause someone's plea to reach someone's ears” (to intercede) or to “introduce someone into someone's presence” (to mediate). The Servant is thus a go-between, interposing between two parties, not as a barrier but as a bridge. In verse 6, the Lord put his Servant in between, using him as a means of disposing of that (our iniquity) which alienated him from us. Here the Servant comes voluntarily to stand with us so that when he had borne our sin he might bring us to God.

Charles Simeon: The intercession of Christ was that part of his work which he was to carry on in heaven, after he should have finished the work which was committed to him on earth. The high-priest, who typically represented Christ, was first to kill the sacrifice, then to carry the blood within the veil, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and then to burn incense before the mercy-seat: nor, till this last ceremony was performed, was the rest of any avail: it was not till after he had covered the mercy-seat with the clouds of incense, that he had any authority to bless the

people. Thus was our Lord, not only to offer himself as a sacrifice for sin, and to enter into heaven with his own blood, but he was to make intercession for us at the right hand of God. This was stipulated between the Father and him as one part of the condition, on which the conversion of sinners was to depend; “*Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession* [Note: **Psalms 2:8**.].” Now the prophet, seeing this part of Christ’s office, as it were, already fulfilled, declares its efficacy towards the salvation of men, and represents it as another ground for the performance of the Father’s promise. In this view the intercession of Christ is often mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. It is put altogether on a par with the death of Christ as the procuring cause of our salvation: it is said, “*He died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification* [Note: Romans 4:25.].” In one place a decided preference is given to it, as being, if possible, even more influential toward the acceptance of men than the death of Christ itself; “*Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again., who also maketh intercession for us* [Note: **Romans 8:34**.].” His death is spoken of as effecting nothing without; “*If Christ be not risen, we are yet in our sins; and they, who are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished* [Note: **1 Corinthians 15:17-18**.].” nor is this all: his sufficiency for the wants and necessities of his people is represented as turning upon this hinge, and as standing altogether upon this ground; “*He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them* [Note: Hebrews 7:25.].” Let his intercession then be considered in this view: did the Father hear him always when he was on earth, and will he not hear him now that he is in heaven? Did Moses, a sinner like ourselves, arrest, as it were, the arm of Omnipotence, and avert God’s vengeance from the idolatrous Jews [Note: **Exodus 32**.], and shall not the prayers of Jesus prevail for us? Did the efficacy of his intercession appear on the day of Pentecost in the conversion of thousands, and shall it not be further manifested in the salvation of all whose cause he pleads!

Ray Stedman: When I first came here as a pastor, many years ago, we had an unusual opportunity to have in our home a Japanese man who had become a Christian evangelist. His name was Captain Mitsuo Fuchida, the commander of the squadron that bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He told us in his broken English of that event and how he felt at the time he gave the command to drop the bombs. After the war he became a hero in Japan, yet he felt his life was empty. Then he heard the amazing story of one of the American fliers, Jacob DeShazer, one of Doolittle’s bombers, who had been captured and put in prison in Japan. At first he was a very intractable prisoner, but someone gave him a New Testament and, reading it, his whole life was changed.

Fuchida heard about that change in the life of DeShazer, and Fuchida himself began to read the New Testament. When he came to the story of the crucifixion, he told us that he was so moved by the prayer that broke from the lips of Jesus as he hung upon the cross with his torturers and tormentors gathered about him, “*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*” (**Luke 23:34**), that his own heart broke. He could not understand how anyone could pray for his enemies and ask for them to be forgiven. In that moment he opened his heart to Christ, and ultimately became a Christian evangelist. For some years he traveled throughout this country, speaking especially to young people about the grace that could come into a life through One who was “*numbered with the transgressors . . . and made intercession for them.*”

CONCLUSION:

Jesus did not die a heroic martyr's death as we have seen with many of the heroes of the faith down through church history who testified of the peace and presence of God. For example, He didn't have the inner peace of Stephen who passed from this life enjoying the vision of close fellowship with His exalted Savior standing at the right hand of his heavenly Father. Instead He suffered the full penalty and agony of our sins, dying as our substitute and crying out, "*My God, My God, Why have you forsaken Me?*" Isaiah 53 fully explains the Why question – Why did Jesus have to die. But it fast forwards to show us as well the **Satisfaction** and **Exaltation** attained by our Savior through bearing our sins on the cross.

MacArthur: So the promise of Isaiah is a future generation of Israel will be saved finally in the end, and this will be their confession. And God Himself affirms that this confession is a true understanding of the work of Christ on the cross. But this confession must be your confession. To repent of your sin, to know what Christ has done, to embrace Him in faith as the substitute who took your place, to confess Him as risen Lord is to be saved. Whoever calls on His name will be saved and escape eternal hell and enter eternal heaven.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some of the things that the Lord has been pleased to introduce into your life that have caused you pain and suffering?
- 2) How much does the Lord Jesus delight in believers as His spiritual offspring for whom He suffered and died?
- 3) What is the portion and reward that we will share with our victorious Savior?
- 4) How does the intercession and mediation of our Lord Jesus continue to minister to us today?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: They [Jews] had a theology of messianic glory that the Messiah would be a king and a great ruler, but no theology of suffering. But Jesus reminds them that the prophets said He would suffer, He would die, He would rise, and He would be glorified. That's the full career of the Messiah. There are those two great realities in His work. He suffers and dies; He rises and reigns. Peter understood this. In 1 Peter chapter 1 in verse 10, he says, "*As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted, the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.*"

He comes the first time as a sacrifice for sin, the second time as a reigning King of kings and Lord of lords.

David Thompson:

JESUS CHRIST IS FULLY VINDICATED AND WILL BE HIGHLY EXALTED

BECAUSE HE COMPLETELY SATISFIES GOD AS HIS SOVEREIGN . SERVANT/SAVIOR/SON.

According to Eusebius, when Polycarp was about to be burned at the stake, he prayed a prayer that actually thanked God that he was considered worthy enough to be martyred. Then many eyewitnesses said that when the flames were first lit, the fire was like a wall around Polycarp and his body wasn't even burning and, finally, someone came with a spear and killed Polycarp (Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, p. 173).

These martyrs died heroic deaths praising God, singing and testifying of the presence and help of God. But it was not that way with Jesus Christ. When Jesus died, something very mysterious was happening, because He did not speak of the presence of God but the abandonment of God. He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He spoke of being forsaken by God. Jesus had been perfect, so why is He dying so miserably. No man has ever died like Jesus Christ died. No man could die like Jesus Christ died. What was happening here? What was this all about? It was all God's judicial Sovereign plan to save sinners. God the Father working in perfect harmony with God the Son and both had Sovereignly planned and executed everything. This death was the Father's work and it was the Son's work and the end result is glorious.

That is exactly what is revealed in these final three verses. There are a series of Sovereign theological realities brought out in these verses. What is specifically grammatically interesting about these last three verses is that in Hebrew, Isaiah uses a series of imperfect tense verbs which speak of continual, unfinished, repeated, and sequential action (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 125). What this means is that in many of these things the action is still taking place.

SOVEREIGN REALITY #1 – The Lord was pleased to crush Jesus Christ. **53:10**

SOVEREIGN REALITY #2 – The Lord will be completely satisfied with Christ's sacrifice. **53:11**

SOVEREIGN REALITY #3 – The Lord will completely reward and exalt Jesus Christ. **53:12**

Wil Pounds: Outline of Fourth Servant Song:

- 1) The Divine Servant (52:13-15)
- 2) The Divine Sufferer (53:1-3)
- 3) The Divine Substitute (53:4-6)
- 4) The Divine Sacrifice (53:7-9)
- 5) The Divine Satisfaction (53:10-12)

Brain Borgman: **The Suffering Servant**

Last stanza mirrors the first;

delight, take pleasure in; revels, rejoices in Is. 42:1 "*God delights in His servant*"; there is a connection between God's pleasure and His will; Ps. 115:3 "*Our God is in the heavens and He does whatever He pleases*"; whatever He wills He delights in and the opposite *crush* used in intensive stem – to break in pieces or pulverize *putting to grief* – put to extreme pain, deep misery, extreme sorrow

Why did God do this to His Son? To resolve dissonance between His love for His glory and His

love for sinners;

Sin that dishonors God could not be ignored because God loves the honor of His name; could not act like sin does not matter or sweep it under the rug;

Not sadistic pleasure in Son's pain, but immense pleasure in what the Son was accomplishing on the Cross

Guilt offering – for reparation – made to satisfy God's broken law; render his own soul – not just the immaterial part of man but the totality of his being;

Promised by the Father that he would experience 3 things if he would offer himself up in this way as guilt offering

1) Spiritual *offspring* in view – Zion is like a barren woman who has not brought forth children; who are the servant's offspring; who will he see? The beneficiaries of his suffering and sacrificial death; those whom He redeemed

53:6 we are the sheep who have gone astray; now in vs. 10 we are the spiritual children who have returned

How is he supposed to see his offspring if he in fact dies? Allusion to resurrection

2) *Prolong his days* – common OT expression; but the Servant most definitely dies a violent death; look at all the references in the passage to his death and burial; speaks to life after death;

3) *good pleasure of Lord will prosper in his hand*

52:13 began with prosperity and exaltation of the servant and now ends with that

From outward evaluation the servant's ministry was a failure – but only from human perspective – the servant's work will be blessed and it will accomplish its purpose; he did not die in vain; his death satisfied divine justice; the propitiation for our sins; accomplished something glorious and magnificent; Father blessed His work

Motyer: Isaiah 53:11 is one of the fullest statements of atonement theology ever penned.

(i) The Servant knows the needs to be met and must be done.

(ii) As "*that righteous one, my servant*" he is both fully acceptable to the God our sins have offended and has been appointed by him to his task.

(iii) As righteous, he is free from every contagion of our sin.

(iv) He identified himself personally with our sin and need.

(v) The emphatic pronoun "*he*" underlines his personal commitment to this role.

(vi) He accomplishes the task fully. Negatively, in the bearing of iniquity; positively, in the provision of righteousness.

Charles Simeon: the import of it is much the same with that which the Apostle uses, when he says, "*With such sacrifices God is well pleased:*" in conformity with which idea, Jehovah is said to smell a sweet savour from those sacrifices which prefigured the crucified Jesus.

Reasons:

1) He was pleased when he bruised his Son, first, because the bruising of him was pleasing to his Son.

2) Another reason may be this: God was pleased with bruising his own Son, because it would prove so beneficial to man.

3) A third reason we may assign is this; the Father was pleased with bruising his own Son, because it would put great honour upon the divine law.

4) The last reason we shall assign is this; the Father was pleased with bruising his own Son, because he himself was thereby transcendently glorified.

TEXT: Isaiah 54:1-17

TITLE: 3 ROCKS OF SECURITY FOR THE REDEEMED PEOPLE OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

RESPOND TO GOSPEL TRUTH WITH JOYFUL EXPECTATION OF THE GLORIOUS FUTURE THAT AWAITS THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD

INTRODUCTION:

Isaiah 53 addressed the great fundamental question of “Why did the promised Messiah, the faithful Servant have to suffer and die on the cross?” The great gospel doctrines of redemption and justification and propitiation were addressed in that mountain-top chapter of epic significance. Now as Isaiah comes to **chaps. 54-55**, he presents the intended response to such glorious truths. How should the redeemed of the Lord respond? Revelation always demands a response. How are we going to apply the great truths that we now understand?

Certainly God does not intend for His children to live lives of fear and insecurity. He has given us precious promises so that we can live in confidence and have assurance regarding the blessings that lie ahead. We need to be rejoicing right now and worshiping God with thankful hearts for the riches of all the spiritual blessings that we enjoy through Jesus Christ.

RESPOND TO GOSPEL TRUTH WITH JOYFUL EXPECTATION OF THE GLORIOUS FUTURE THAT AWAITS THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD

3 ROCKS OF SECURITY FOR THE REDEEMED PEOPLE OF GOD

[Rock is something solid that you can count on; immovable; provides secure foundation]
Presented in simple motifs of everyday living that we can easily relate to:

- **Fruitful, Growing Family**
- **Committed Love in Marriage**
- **Glorious Fortified City**

I. (:1-5) ROCK OF A FRUITFUL, GROWING FAMILY

3 Commands = The Response to the Gospel Message – each followed by a word of assurance

Parunak: The structural marker here is the alternation of imperatives with motive clauses: “do A, for B.” The focus is on the change in attitude in a woman who has been ashamed.

A. (:1) Command #1 – Shout For Joy – Instead of Desolation Great Fertility

1. Command – Exuberant Worship

*“Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child;
Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed;*

Paul quotes this verse in his allegory of Hagar and Sarah: **Gal 4:22-27**

Right at the beginning we have to decide **how broad is the scope** of the redeemed people of God in Isaiah 54? Certainly it includes the promises made to redeemed Israel – but it seems to go beyond the physical nation to include even the Gentiles that would later come to believe in the

church age = children of Abraham by faith – as opposed to the Judaizers who were only children of Abraham according to the flesh and not part of the seed of promise:

- Note the reference to the illustration of Noah – before the call of Abraham and the establishment of the Jewish nation
- Note the reference to the city at the end of the chap. is not just rebuilt Jerusalem in the Millennial kingdom but the New Jerusalem pictured in Rev. 21.

Beall: In **Gal 4:27**, Paul cites this verse to show how Sarah eventually triumphed over Hagar (and thus grace would triumph over law). Israel was in a state of barrenness and mourning, but because of the work of the Servant, she would soon be fruitful indeed.

Borgman – makes strong case for reference to **Gentiles** being grafted in as the people of God – but he concludes that the church has replaced Israel as the target of all the OT promises of regathering and future faith; continuity in the people of God does not imply identity and sameness; there can still be distinctives

Certainly a command for exuberant worship and rejoicing

John 4 – Father seeks worshippers

2. Word of Assurance

For the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous than the sons of the married woman,' says the LORD."

Constable: Here we have another instance of rejoicing because God would miraculously bless those who, because of unbelief, were formerly spiritually barren and unproductive (cf. 51:1-3; 1 Sam. 2:1-10; Gal. 4:27). They would become more fruitful than those who enjoy blessings apart from a relationship with God.

Oswalt: Just as God could make a barren Sarah more fruitful than a fertile Hagar, so he can take those who are "*dead in trespasses and sins*" (Eph. 2:1, AV) and use them to bring abundant blessings to the entire world.

B. (:2-3) Command #2 – Enlarge Your Tent in Anticipation of Growth

1. Command – Anticipate Abundant Blessing From God – Be Prepared

*"Enlarge the place of your tent;
Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not;
Lengthen your cords, And strengthen your pegs."*

Oswalt: the use of the tent imagery here, long after Israel had ceased literally to dwell in tents, may be a purposeful allusion to the years in the wilderness, when Israel was on its way home from bondage in Egypt. If so, the sense may be that just as God guided and protected his people in that return, keeping his promises alive despite the loss of an entire generation, so now he can do the same again, and Israel will not only survive but prosper.

Illustration: When our family grew, we needed to add an additional floor for more bedrooms – it was either enlarge the tent or move to a new tent.

Motyer: Tent life is a picture of the ideal (cf. Je. 2:2-3) when the people walked with God (cf. 16:5, where Isaiah envisages the Messiah reigning “*in the tent of David*” and 33:20 where Jerusalem is described as a “*tent that will not be moved*”; the comparable reference in Am. 9:11 suggests that the tent may also be a Davidic motif). The wilderness days (for all that the people failed at every hand’s turn) were ideally days of separation unto the Lord, exclusive fellowship, walking under his care and independence on him.

2. Word of Assurance

*“For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left.
And your descendants will possess nations,
And they will resettle the desolate cities.”*

Beall: Israel will have a pre-eminent position among nations in the Millennium (see also 49:7, 19-23)

Psalms 2:8 – Messiah promised the nations for his inheritance

C. (:4-5) Command #3 – Fear Not For You Will Not Be Disgraced

1. (:4a) Command – Live in Confidence

“Fear not,”

Constable: Sarah initially felt ashamed because she did not believe the Lord would give her a child (Gen. 18:12-14; cf. Gen. 16:4; 1 Sam. 1:6, 25; Luke 1:25). Nevertheless, God stood by His promise, gave her a child, and she had no reason to feel ashamed. The relative barrenness of God's people throughout their lifetime would end, and their reproach would pass away. Israel's youth included Egyptian slavery (cf. Jer. 2:2-3), and her widowhood involved Babylonian captivity.

Parunak: Throughout the book, Israel has been at the center of a struggle between the Lord and the idol gods. With the Babylonian captivity, it seemed as though the idol gods had won, and Israel was humiliated. But throughout the book God has warned us that it is the idolaters who will be put to shame, in keeping with David’s three-fold prayer, and now the Lord assures Israel that her shame shall come to an end.

2. (:4b-5) Word of Assurance: Security Tied to Covenant Relationship

a. (:4b) No Shame of Widowhood

*“for you will not be put to shame;
Neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced;
But you will forget the shame of your youth,
And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.”*

Shame of your youth – bondage in Egypt for 400 years

Reproach of your widowhood – captivity in Babylon for 70 years

b. (:5) Glory of Divine Husband

*“For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts;
And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all
the earth.”*

Key Verse – Provides transition – Security tied to Covenant Relationship

5 Supreme Identifications of Our Life Partner:

- *Your Maker* – knows us intimately
- *Lord of hosts* – all resources at His disposal; commands forces of the universe
- *Your Redeemer* – Our precious Savior – when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, made us alive by satisfying God’s wrath and buying us back out of the marketplace of sin and slavery and bondage
- *Holy One of Israel* – Absolute transcendence of God and yet has made it possible for sinful men to dwell with him and have fellowship on His holy hill
- *God of all the Earth* --

Truly this is a partner you can trust!

Cf. **Jer. 31:31-34** also speaks of the husband analogy in the context of the New Covenant

Oswalt: The Lord is not only our husband but also our Redeemer. Inevitably, this juxtaposition reminds us of the story of Ruth. She is a childless, foreign widow, as humiliating and hopeless a position as it was possible to reach in Israel. But the man who falls in love with her is also just the man who is able to redeem the land and name of her dead husband. This is our God, the one whose love is able somehow to salve the sting of the past and turn even bitter water to sweet. Who is this Redeemer? He is the Holy One of Israel, that favorite term of Isaiah to express both the absolute transcendence of God and his unbelievable condescension. . . **It is one thing to have the desire to redeem, but it is quite another to have the power to do so.**

II. (:6-10) ROCK OF COMMITTED LOVE IN MARRIAGE

A. (:6-8) Illustration of Hosea -- Commitment to Lovingkindness and Compassion

1. (:6) Recalled After Having Been Rejected

*“For the LORD has called you, Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
Even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected,’ Says your God.”*

Wiersbe: The image in this chapter is that of Jehovah, the faithful husband, forgiving Israel, the unfaithful wife, and restoring her to the place of blessing.

Oswalt: Here we think automatically of the story of **Hosea**. . . the law of *hesed* (love). No single English word can encompass all the connotations of this Hebrew word, but its basic idea is of passionate loyalty, especially of a superior to an inferior. In its basic usage it refers to the obligations of covenant, but in the biblical experience of God it comes to express that loyalty which goes far beyond any legal obligation in a passionate concern for the well-being of the other. It is this that God has for his people, which expresses itself in “grace,” “mercy,” “unfailing love,” “kindness,” and several other similar English words.

2. (:7-8) Favored After Having Been Forsaken

*“For a brief moment I forsook you,
But with great compassion I will gather you.
In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment;
But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,”*

Says the LORD your Redeemer.”

Contrast between **brief moment** of experiencing God’s hand of discipline and the **everlasting lovingkindness** that we will experience forever and ever

B. (:9-10) Illustration of Noah -- Commitment to Lovingkindness and Compassion

1. (:9) Promise of No More Judgment – Noahic Covenant

*“For this is like the days of Noah to Me;
When I swore that the waters of Noah should not flood the earth again,
So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, Nor will I rebuke you.”*

Oswalt: Just as his compassion prevented him from completely destroying the world then and led him to bind himself from that sort of destruction in the future, so here it is his compassion that leads him to bring the exile to an end and to swear not to pour out his anger on them.

Grogan: The writer to the Hebrews lays special stress on the great assurance the oath of God gives us (Heb 6:14-20; 7:20-28).

2. (:10) Promise of Eternal Security – Covenant of Peace

*“For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake,
But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you,
And My covenant of peace will not be shaken,’
Says the LORD who has compassion on you.”*

Key Verse – Security tied to God’s Enduring Lovingkindness

Oswalt: The hearers are called to sing for joy, to expand their tents, and to live in confidence. For what reason? Because the childless, rejected wife is going to be restored to the arms of her loving husband, who promises that nothing can prevent him from loving her, and she will have enough children to fill the earth. Here indeed is cause for praise: abundance for emptiness, honor for shame, and eternal love for lonely despair. This is our God. . . peace (*shalom*) in Hebrew is much more than the absence of hostilities; it describes a condition of wholeness.

Gene Brooks: the focus of this covenant is on security. God will throw a protective covering over His people so that they will be safe. While this covenant speaks to the end-times, it has present application for us.

III. (:11-17) ROCK OF GLORIOUS FORTIFIED CITY AS THE HERITAGE OF THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD

A. (:11-12) Illustration of a Secure City Built With Precious Jewels

1. Deliverance From Insecurity Pictured as Precious Jewels

*“O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted,
Behold, I will set your stones in antimony,
And your foundations I will lay in sapphires.”*

Insecurity described in 3 ways:

- *Afflicted one* – What nation has been more afflicted than Israel?

- *Storm-tossed* – nothing conveys more the sense of life being out of control than this image of being tossed around on the waves
- *Not comforted* – this second half of the book of Isaiah is all about the comfort that God provides to His redeemed people

Security illustrated by focusing in on a **foundation** of precious jewels:

- *antimony* – dark mascara – highlighting the beauty of the stones
2 Kings 9:30 Jezebel putting on black eye liner

Jer. 4:30 “*And you, O desolate one, what will you do? Although you dress in scarlet, Although you decorate yourself with ornaments of gold, Although you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you make yourself beautiful; Your lovers despise you; They seek your life.*”

- *sapphires* – vivid blue stone – maybe symbolic of heaven

Constable: Isaiah changed his illustration from a restored wife to a rebuilt city, but the point remains the same. The contrast between the city of man and the city of God is one that Isaiah developed quite fully (cf. 1:26-27; 2:2-4; 4:2-6; 12:1-6; 24:10; 25:1-9; 26:1-6; 35:10; 47:1; 52:1; 66:10-14). The people of God can anticipate a glorious future. The prophet was not describing the rebuilding of Jerusalem following the Jews' return from exile. He was using the image of rebuilding a city to convey the joy and security that lay in the future **for all God's people**, particularly Israel. . .

Presently God's people were wretched, but they would be redeemed. They were bereft of support, without stability, and in despair, all of which God in His compassion noted. They would enjoy richness, abundance, completeness, and variety. **Antimony was a black powder that masons added to mortar that held stones in place. It set off the beauty of the stones by providing a dark edging for them. Women also used this powder as mascara to color their eyes** (cf. 2 Kings 9:30). Foundations of sapphires (lapis lazuli, a prized dark blue stone) would be foundations of the highest quality and greatest beauty. The battlements Isaiah saw were bright red rubies. The gates were clear crystal, and the walls were a mosaic of other precious stones. This description recalls the picture of the New Jerusalem in **Revelation 21:9—22:5**.

Motyer: This present “city” passage, the third stanza of the poem, is linked with the first stanza by the theme of Zion’s sons (1, 13) and with the second stanza by the note of *peace* (10, 13). In this way it is a summary and conclusion to the whole. It is linked with the foregoing Servant Song by the concept of *righteousness* (53:11; 54:14, 17).

2. Fortifications Pictured as Precious Jewels

- a. Battlements – Rubies – sparkling red stones
“*Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies,*”
- b. Gates -- Crystal
“*And your gates of crystal,*”
- c. Wall – Precious Stones
“*And your entire wall of precious stones.*”

Rev. 21 – picture of **New Jerusalem** – not just rebuilt Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom

B. (:13-15) Secure City Provides Environment for Instruction and Righteousness

1. (:13) Environment Encourages Instruction and Prosperity

*“And all your sons will be taught of the LORD;
And the well-being of your sons will be great.”*

Young: the proclamation of the truth in itself is not sufficient, for many who hear the truth reject it. In addition there must be the internal work of the Spirit. Unless the Spirit of God makes one willing and able to believe, he will not believe. We become living and precious stones for building the Temple of God, says **Calvin**, “when the Lord has formed and polished us by his Spirit, and has added to the external preaching of the word the internal efficacy of the Spirit.”

2. (:14-15) Environment Encourages Righteousness and Protection

*“In righteousness you will be established;
You will be far from oppression, for you will not fear;
And from terror, for it will not come near you.
If anyone fiercely assails you it will not be from Me.
Whoever assails you will fall because of you.”*

C. (:16-17) Ultimate Security – Over Weapons and Enemies

1. (:16) Security Tied to Sovereign Control Over Every Weapon and Every Enemy

*“Behold, I Myself have created the smith
who blows the fire of coals, And brings out a weapon for its work;
And I have created the destroyer to ruin.”*

Constable: Whatever happens to the redeemed in that era would be by the will of God, who not only raises up destroyers to destroy, and provides the weapons that they use, but creates the blacksmiths who make the weapons. All that the people of God would experience would be part of God's good intention and design for them.

Young: This verse is very instructive for the study of divine providence. It teaches that nothing occurs, not even the destroying acts of the enemies of God's people, apart from God Himself. At the same time we are not to blame Him for the evil that men do (cf. the express statement of the previous verse), but in His secret providence God governs the efforts and actions of men and employs them as the instruments of His anger."

Oswalt: Since God is the Creator who creates not only the warrior (*the destroyer*) but the weapon in his hand, and not only the weapon but even the blacksmith who made the weapon, we should not think that anything can come to us that will contradict God's purposes for us.

Young: The warrior does not act independently of God, even though he may think that he does. This verse is very instructive for the study of divine providence. It teaches that nothing occurs, not even the destroying acts of the enemies of God's people, apart from God Himself. At the same time we are not to blame Him for the evil that men do (cf. the express statement of the previous verse), but in His secret providence God governs the efforts and actions of men and employs them as the instruments of His anger.

2. (:17) Security Tied to Sovereign Protection Against Every Weapon and Every Enemy
(Ray Lewis Super Bowl verse)

*“No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper;
And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn.
This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,
And their vindication is from Me,’ declares the LORD.”*

Key Verse – Security Tied to Sovereign Protection

Ultimate vindication comes from the Lord

Protected not only against physical attacks but against verbal accusations that would falsely try to smear their righteous character

Note plural use of “*servants*” here as we are identified with the Servant himself

Constable: Even though opponents might arise, they would be ineffective against God's invincible people. Hard steel or a hot tongue, two forms of antagonism that represent all forms of it, would not prosper.

Beall: Thus, while the enemies will not be from God, righteousness and a secure inheritance will come from Him in the Millennium.

Oswalt: The *inheritance of the servants of the Lord* is primarily expressed here in relational terms. . . The purpose then in the shift to the plural at this point seems to be to finalize the distinction between the “servant” of the Lord, who receives benefits, and the “*Servant*” of the Lord, who makes those benefits possible.

CONCLUSION:

“A Mighty Fortress is our Lord, a Bulwark never Failing”

New Jerusalem – **Hebrews 11:10, 16; 12:22-24; 13:14**

3 Rocks of Security for the Redeemed People of God

- **Fruitful, Growing Family**
- **Committed Love in Marriage**
- **Glorious Fortified City**

Preparation for participation in the Lord’s Supper

**RESPOND TO GOSPEL TRUTH WITH JOYFUL EXPECTATION OF THE
GLORIOUS FUTURE THAT AWAITS THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD**

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can our worship rise to the level of exuberant, rejoicing, celebratory expression?
- 2) Do we expect the Lord to bring about growth and fruitfulness; do we expect the gospel to have success as it is faithfully proclaimed?
- 3) Are we secure in the enjoyment of the Lord's lovingkindness and compassion that is new to us every morning?
- 4) What have we to fear when our security is so abundant and dominant?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: So, for Paul, Isaiah is here comforting Sarah, the first case of barrenness described in the Bible, and the ancestress of the promised people, Abraham's seed. The comfort in ch. 49-50 is addressed to physical Zion, under the covenant of Sinai, but the comfort in ch. 54 is addressed to all of Abraham's seed, under "the promise" that we studied at Christmas, the central promise of the entire Bible.

Methodologically, we need to be careful. We should always read later Scripture in light of earlier, not the other way around. Paul may suggest this interpretation to us, but is it consistent with Isaiah's own emphasis? There's evidence that it is.

First, as we have seen, this woman stands in contrast with the woman in ch. 49. She is not a mother bereft of her children, but a woman marked by barrenness.

Second, the language of 54:1 suggests that Isaiah has Gen 11:30 in mind.

Third, this would not be the first time that Isaiah draws his readers' attention to Abraham and Sarah: Isa 51:1-2 . . .

Isaiah anticipates, and provides the Scriptural foundation for, his contrast between earthly Zion and heavenly Jerusalem, between those born after the flesh and those born according to promise, between Abraham's physical descendants and those, whether Jew or Gentile, who are his descendants by faith. This distinction is not new with Paul. It is grounded in Isaiah 54.

Oswalt: The promises of security must be understood in at least three ways. The first is the one that has just been mentioned. It is the righteous who are secure in the love and the good purposes of their God. This security holds them fast, even when the world is falling down around them (cf. **Lam. 3:21-26**). The second has to do with the exilic community. How precious these promises must have been to them in the years when their very existence as a people seemed to be threatened from one day to the next. Theologically speaking, their restoration to God's favor was made possible by the sacrifice of the servant. But historically speaking, the Servant had not yet come, and God bound himself to keep the community safe until the Servant's work could be completed. Finally, these promises speak of the end of history, "*when time and change shall be no more,*" when the Creator will call all things to an end and the

Holy City, the congregation of those made righteous by the blood of the Lamb, will dwell securely forevermore.

Brian Borgman: The Wonders of Redeeming Love (4 part message)

The 4th servant song puts us right beneath the cross of Jesus while chaps. 54-55 tell us of the wonders of God's redeeming love;

Motyer: chaps. 40-55 = The Book of the Servant (all 4 of the servant songs); chaps. 56-66 = The Book of the Anointed Conqueror.

After the gospel has been set forth, God calls for a **response**. Cf. 55:1 great words of invitation

Vs. 1 -- *Shout for joy* is the first call for a response. Exuberant praise; loud words here; words that pulsate with energy of praise and worship; phrase reiterated many times in Isaiah; John 4 – God is seeking not converts but worshippers; True conversion always creates worshippers; not half-hearted, mumbling, comatose singing; God's redeeming activity should draw forth from us exuberant, rejoicing praise; some ethnic groups are not overly expressive people; don't let the charismatics have a corner on exuberant worship

Barrenness was seen as a curse = lack of God's blessing in your life; a reproach to be barren; she ends up bringing forth a number of sons she has not borne through her own labor; Zion now entering in to Messiah's labor; remember when Ruth has her baby; Naomi breaks into exuberant praise – enters into the fullness of joy of Ruth's labor;

Look at the abundance that will be brought forth – the imagery is Sarah (barren one, unable to bear) vs Hagar (takes the husband and becomes fruitful);

Ps. 87 – Gentiles being grafted in to the people of God;

Gal. 4 – problem with Judaizers trying to promote that the pathway to salvation must go through Judaism; Christian believers must be circumcised and keep all the festivals and feasts; cast out the bondwoman and the son – [takes Is. 54:1 as Zion giving birth to the church]

Vs. 2- – the enlarged tent – it was the woman's responsibility to keep the tent; William Carey's text; to exiled Zion, these promises sound foolish and impossible; **Jer. 10:20** what Zion says as she is in captivity = language of failure and desolation = my tent is falling down and pegs are broken; language of promise of faith; **Is. 26:15**; called to act urgently and diligently and by faith; don't be conservative; make the tent as big as possible; Phenomenal language to an exiled people

Vs. 3 -- Language of conquest next; conquest accomplished by the Messiah; make room for everyone, this place will be packed; who would believe this?

Example of **William Carey** – Should there be evangelism of the heathen? God has his elect all over the world – even in India; **John 10:16** promise; took this text to preach on before Baptist Union before heading off to Calcutta – “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God”

Text has implications for missions and therefore for eschatology; always linked together in the bible; cf. Olivet Discourse – this gospel shall be preached to all the nations and then the end shall come; cf. Lord's Prayer – God's name sanctified among the nations . . . then prayer for advancement and consummation of the kingdom;

Lessons we can learn from vv.1-3:

- At times Christ's church may seem dismal and weak and barren, but God is constantly working; filling his people with missionary zeal that is tied to the advancement and consummation of his kingdom; much was actually happening during what we call the Dark Ages; God is working right now in third world countries in amazing ways; God maintains His purpose and His people

- Gospel will succeed in toppling powers of darkness; we should be filled with God-based kingdom optimism; He shall reign forever and ever
- Every generation has its own obstacles; Carey's obstacle was hyper-Calvinism; we have the obstacle of Islam – Muslims have not become Westernized; locations of 7 letters to 7 churches are now Islamic strongholds (except Ephesus that is under water); but more Muslims are coming to Christ

Vs. 4 – most common response we have when we are called to act in faith = fear = faith killer; What are we afraid of? You will not be put to shame; barren Zion had been disgraced; sow the Word in confidence that it will not return void;

Parunak:

Section Summaries	Overall Summary
1-4, Zion's Attitude: Zion's fear should become joy at the children God is giving her.	God promises to enrich barren Zion by restoring and enlarging her family, and to end her chastisement by making her righteous.
5-10, God's Attitude: God solemnly promises that his chastisement is over and he will bless her.	
11-17b, Coming blessings: God will reverse her poverty, lack of witness, and military defeat.	
17b, Summary: God both enriches her and enables her to satisfy him.	

TEXT: Isaiah 55:1-13

TITLE: COME, SEEK AND CELEBRATE

BIG IDEA:

GOD OFFERS JOY AND PEACE AT NO COST TO ANYONE WHO WILL SEEK HIM IN REPENTANCE BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

INTRODUCTION:

[Begin with aside from **Matt. 23** about the Pope's visit this week to the United States – what would Jesus say of the Pope and the message of salvation offered by the Roman Catholic Church?]

Chapters 54 and 55 are the response that God calls for to His completed work of redemption accomplished by His faithful Messiah/Servant on the cross of Calvary. Remember what we studied last week from chapter 54:

Review – chap. 54

**RESPOND TO GOSPEL TRUTH WITH JOYFUL EXPECTATION OF THE GLORIOUS FUTURE THAT AWAITS THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD
3 ROCKS OF SECURITY FOR THE REDEEMED PEOPLE OF GOD**

- Fruitful, Growing Family
- Committed Love in Marriage
- Glorious Fortified City

Now in Chapter 55 – let's read the entire chapter to see how it all fits together; then today we will spend our time on the first 5 verses

THREE SUPERIOR ASPECTS OF THE GOSPEL OF GOD

I. (:1-5) GOSPEL INVITATION -- COMMAND TO COME

Who is invited to come to God? -- Graciousness of God

The Gospel of God is Superior in terms of its Universal and Grace Oriented Invitation

II. (:6-11) GOSPEL EFFICACY -- COMMAND TO SEEK (VIA REPENTANCE)

How can anyone be saved by God? -- Wisdom and Power and Sovereignty of God

The Gospel of God is Superior in terms of its Power to Save

III. (:12-13) GOSPEL CELEBRATION -- OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE

What will be the outcome of God's saving work? -- Majesty of God

Our God Saves and Our God Reigns Forever!

The Gospel of God is Superior in terms of its Outcome

Jer. 2:13 *“For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”*

GOD OFFERS JOY AND PEACE AT NO COST TO ANYONE WHO WILL SEEK HIM IN REPENTANCE BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

**I. (:1-5) GOSPEL INVITATION – COMMAND TO COME
GOD’S SALVATION FREELY AVAILABLE TO ALL NATIONS THROUGH THE
MISSIONARY WORK OF THE MESSIAH**

Who is invited to come to God? The Graciousness of God

The Gospel of God is Superior in terms of its Universal and Grace Oriented Invitation

A. (:1-2) Free Universal Gospel Invitation

1. (:1) Everything You Need Offered Without Charge – No Salvation for the Self Righteous

a. Free Water and Bread of Life

*“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, **come** to the waters;
And you who have no money **come, buy and eat.**”*

3 Prerequisites:

- You must recognize that you have need
- You must recognize that you are bankrupt and cannot afford to pay to have that need satisfied
- You must have the desire to come to God for salvation

Motyer: Yet alongside this emphasis on freeness, the verb *buy* is repeated. The thought of purchase is not set aside; this is no soup-kitchen, even if the clients are beggars. There is a purchase and a price, though not theirs to pay. They bring their poverty to a transaction already completed. . . There is enough for all but each must personally respond.

b. Free Wine of Joy and Milk of Nurturing

*“**Come, buy wine and milk**
Without money and without cost.”*

David Thompson: There are three different drinks mentioned in **verse 1** - water, wine, milk. The waters represent that which gives life; the wine represents that which gives joy; and the milk represents that which gives growth. God offers every sinner a full abundant life. God offers every sinner a fulfilling, joyful, and purposeful existence. He offers any sinner a refreshing, fulfilling, and happy, and developing life. All He asks is that you be honest enough to admit you thirst for it. In the Middle East, water was a premium commodity. Having an abundance of water was considered to be a special blessing of God (Isaiah 41:17; 44:3). Wine and milk and bread were staples of the diet. What God does is offering them a free everything. Everything they were working for, God offers to give them by pure free grace.

Ladies and Gentlemen, see what God is saying here because this is totally foreign to every false religion. Every false religion presents the idea that you can be saved and fulfilled if you give it your best and if you try your hardest. The Pharisees in Jesus day had all kinds of things you could do to be right with God. The Islamic religion in our day has a strict list of demands which include prayers and pilgrimages and bizarre rituals to be saved. The Catholics have a merit system they have invented that if you follow, such as masses, money and candles, you will be saved. Many Protestants have developed their laws and rituals for guaranteeing salvation. All of these systems are based on the idea that sinful man can make a bargain with God. Salvation becomes, as **Spurgeon** once said, “an auction mart, where each man bids as high as he can . . . to procure salvation” (*Spurgeon’s Sermons*, Vol. 10, p. 93).

God does not make deals with men. He offers free grace. God offers infinite, free grace without any

cost to you at all. God doesn't require your promises, your commitments, your works, or your pledges. All He requires is that you recognize your sinfulness; and if you have a thirst for God, the moment you believe on Jesus Christ or turn back to Jesus Christ, that thirst will be fully quenched.

Piper: Water corresponds to the need for refreshment. When you are most thirsty and most desperate, most dehydrated, it's water that you want and nothing else. "He leads me beside still waters, he restores [refreshes] my soul." God invites you this morning to receive refreshment, restoration, reviving, a new beginning.

Milk corresponds to the need for ongoing nourishment. When someone is gasping for life, you give them water. But when you want a little baby to grow day after day, you give it milk again and again. God is not just for emergencies and mountain peaks. He is for health in the long haul. He invites you not only to come alive with water, but also to be stable and strong with milk.

Wine corresponds to the need for exhilaration. We want to live and not die. We want to be strong and stable instead of weak and wavering. But that is not all we need in life. No matter how stoic, unemotional, phlegmatic, laid-back, or poker-faced we may seem to others, there is a child inside of every one of us that God made for exhilaration—for shouting and singing and dancing and playing and skipping and running and jumping and laughing.

Parunak: If Zion is issuing the invitation, **the Gentiles** are the guests. **v. 4** offers the Messiah, not to the "people" singular, but to the peoples, an expression that Isaiah uniformly applies to the Gentiles. The nation, now restored, turns her message toward the Gentiles. . .

The story of Joseph reminds us of a time when the Gentiles provided physical food to Israel and his family. Now Isaiah anticipates a time when Mother Zion, restored from her folly, offers spiritual food to the Gentiles. . .

When Joseph loads their sacks on the second trip, again he returns the silver they have brought:

Gen 44:1-2 *And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and **put every man's money in his sack's mouth.** 2 And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, **and his corn money.***

Israel was hungry for physical food. They sought to buy food from the Gentiles, but in fact, they received it "without money and without price." Try as they might, they couldn't pay for it. Now Isaiah anticipates a day when the tables are turned, and Israel invites the Gentiles to come and buy food without payment.

2. (:2) Only God Can Satisfy – No Salvation for the Self Sufficient

a. Futility of Seeking Satisfaction From Fleshly Striving (Broken Cisterns)

*"Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?"*

Piper: Describes the **Self Sufficient** -- So two kinds of people are invited by the Lord: the thirsty who are broke and cannot pay; and the thirsty who think they can pay and work their way to satisfaction. The first kind of person is spiritually bankrupt and knows it. They are thirsty and broke. But the second kind of person isn't there yet. He's got money and he is spending it. He's got strength and he is laboring.

- b. Fulfillment of Receiving Satisfaction From God's Grace
*"Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And delight yourself in abundance."*

Constable: After getting their attention, Isaiah, speaking as God and for God, called the thirsty to come and drink freely, and to the hungry to enjoy a free meal (cf. Prov. 9:5-6; Matt. 5:6; John 4:13-14; 6:32-35; Rev. 22:17). Water, that formerly represented the Holy Spirit (cf. 32:15; 44:3), was now available to the people because of the Servant's work. Jesus extended a similar invitation to those in His day to come to Him to receive this water (i.e., eternal life through the Spirit; John 4:10-14; 7:37-38). The Lord's offer was to buy what was free. The only way to do this is to use someone else's money to purchase it. It was the Servant's payment for sin that made salvation free for those who count His "money" good.

Oswalt: The first section (vv.1-5) calls the people to listen to and receive God's wonderful promise of a new covenant based on the earlier Davidic one. Part of the wonder of that covenant is that it is free. Whereas the gods of this world require a high price for what is ultimately dust and ashes, the Lord offers for free a relationship that will never end and that has universal implications.

Application: God is a very Inviting God

B. (:3-5) Missionary Vision for the Messiah and His Followers

1. (:3) Messianic Missionary Provision for the Gentiles

a. Invitation Issued

*"Incline your ear and **come** to Me.
Listen, that you may live;"*

Commanded to come to God who alone can grant life; who alone can satisfy

b. Promise Confirmed

*"And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
According to the faithful mercies shown to David."*

Inclusion in God's gracious everlasting covenants – initially with Abraham; but here the emphasis is on the Davidic covenant

2. (:4) Messianic Missionary Posture (Roles) Towards the Gentiles

a. Witness

"Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples,"

Beall: The pronoun "*him*" in v. 4 could thus refer either to David or to the object of the "*faithful mercies of David,*" namely the Servant Himself. It is difficult to decide for sure. If it refers to David, it refers to his future role in the Millennium (see also Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25). The term ("*leader*") used here is also used of David in 1 Sam 13:14 and 25:30; but it is also used of the Messiah in Dan 9:25. In light of the overall context (and the work of the Servant so in view in these chapters—see esp. 49:6), it is probably **best to see v. 4 as referring to the Messiah.** Because of the work of the Servant, Israel would summon nations from afar (nations she did not know), and nations that did not heretofore know Israel would run to her. Salvation would be open to all, and thus all nations would come to Israel to learn of the Lord, Israel's God and the

Holy One of Israel, who had glorified her. The picture is that of Israel and the nations in the Millennium, similar to that of **Isa 2:2-4**.

Motyer: The idea of world testimony is rooted in the Davidic psalms (e.g. **9:11; 18:49; 57:9-11; 108:3-4; 145:21**).

Young: He is a witness, not in the sense of a witness in court, but as one who through his life and words proclaims the truth to the nations. He will be a witness both against sinners (Mal. 3:5) and on behalf of the truth (John 18:37). To the nations the truth was not known as it was to Israel, and hence it is to them that the Messiah is a witness.

b. Leader and Commander

“A leader and commander for the peoples.”

Parunak: **Ps 89** describes this promised seed as *“a faithful witness in heaven.”* Zion goes on in v. 4 to recall that promise, quoting God (chart). Here’s a paraphrase:

I [Zion] offer to you Gentiles an everlasting covenant, the same one that God promised to David in Ps 89. Here is God’s promise: “Behold, I have given him, the Davidic king, for a witness to the peoples, by which I mean a leader and commander to the peoples.”

We will study this promise in more detail, but we should pause to grasp the flow of the thought. The literal food and drink that Zion offers her guests is the Messiah. God’s covenant promise to her through David is not for her to hoard selfishly. As Gentile Egypt once fed Israel with physical food, she is now to feed the Gentiles with spiritual food, the promised Messiah. As Egypt’s corn was purchased by others and provided free to Israel, so the spiritual sustenance that the Gentiles crave is available to them *“without money and without price,”* because another has purchased it at great price.

The heart of the covenant is a Person, who is described in the next verse. This notion of covenant-as-person recalls the Lord’s words to his servant in 49:8,

Isa 49:8 *I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people.*

“leader” -- The word literally means *“the one who is in front”*

“Commander” -- The emphasis here is that the promised Davidic seed will not only rule his people as leader, but also instruct them as Moses did.

Motyer: *Leader* is used thirteen times of the kings of Israel and Judah (of which seven refer to David) and is predominantly used to stress the **divine appointment** of the king. It is probably used for that reason here. *Commander* is used only here as a title, signifying the **authoritative nature** of the royal voice.

3. (:5) Messianic Missionary Promises Relating to the Gentiles

a. **Inclusion** of Gentile Nations

*“Behold, you will call a nation you do not know,
And a nation which knows you not will run to you,”*

Motyer: Such will be the magnetism that not even the jingoistic barrier of having to acknowledge the God of another nation will prevent the ingathering of the world.

b. **Invocation** of the Name of God

*“Because of the LORD your God,
even the Holy One of Israel;”*

c. **Intention** of Glorifying the Messiah

“For He has glorified you.”

Piper: The missionary thrust of the church will be most successful when the glory of God is most evident in the daily life of the church. When we let our light shine and when people see our good works, they will glorify our Father who is in heaven. . . The beautification of the body of Christ is an invitation to a broken world.

I intend that unknown peoples around the world be called to the banquet of salvation. And I intend that when they are called, they will come running. I will accomplish this by sending my church to call them to the banquet, and by beautifying the church with holiness and grace. And I have appointed the Son of David as witness and leader to the peoples—he will go forth in word and power, and his word will not return empty but accomplish that for which I send him. To join him in this great work is not a burdensome caboose behind the boxcars of blessing. If one box car is full of water to give life, if another is full of milk to give growth, this is the boxcar full of wine—the most exhilarating cause to live for in the world.

APPLICATION:

- What a gospel message we have to proclaim to the world!
- Why would someone want to hew out for themselves **broken cisterns** that cannot hold the water of life and of peace and of joy?
- Why would someone refuse the gracious offer to Come to God who has paid the price in full and graciously gives salvation **at no cost**?
- Why would someone not want to participate in the blessings of the covenant that God made with **David** – allowing us to live in an environment where God reigns in peace and righteousness?

INTRODUCTION – PART 2

Last week we looked at the first 5 verses and answered the question: **Who is invited to come to God for salvation?** The gospel of good news is truly a “*whosoever*” gospel. It doesn’t matter if you are Jew or Gentile. It doesn’t matter if you are black or white. It doesn’t matter if you are rich or poor. It doesn’t matter if you are well-connected or a nobody. You are invited – in fact commanded – to come and buy the water of life, the milk of nourishment and the wine of a joyful, fulfilled life. And to buy without any cost to you; in fact it is futile to carve out for yourself broken cisterns that cannot satisfy. Only God can provide salvation.

The Gospel of God is Superior in terms of its Universal and Grace Oriented Invitation

GOD OFFERS JOY AND PEACE AT NO COST TO ANYONE WHO WILL SEEK HIM IN REPENTANCE BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

THREE SUPERIOR ASPECTS OF THE GOSPEL OF GOD

II. (:6-11) GOSPEL EFFICACY – COMMAND TO SEEK (VIA REPENTANCE)

How can anyone be saved? The Wisdom and Power and Sovereignty of God

The Gospel of God is Superior in terms of its Power to Save

A. (:6-7) God’s Pardon Must Be Sought by Repentance and Faith

1. Requirements to Receiving God’s Gracious Invitation

- a. (:6) Respond While the Opportunity Remains – Seek and Call in Faith
“*Seek the LORD while He may be found;
Call upon Him while He is near.*”

We see here that God demands a **Seeker mentality**. Wait a minute, you must be saying. How many times have I heard you preach from this pulpit that

Rom. 3:10-12 “*There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.*” Quoting Psalm 14:2

Heb. 11:6 “*And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*”

In fact there are many Scripture passages that speak to both sides of this equation. What gives? Clearly, there are different types of seeking. There is that which comes from human effort, from the flesh which has no desire or power to cleave to God in genuine faith. Then there is that seeking which is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit drawing someone to God in repentance and genuine faith. That is why we can criticize the **methodology** of the church growth movement which seeks to minimize the role of doctrine and of the Word of God and appeal to man’s desire to be entertained. Their emphasis on man’s felt needs and their accommodation of the gospel message to try to make it more appealing to the world stems from their false presupposition that man can seek and find God if they are just attracted with alluring bait. Just present the human intellect with the right arguments and allow man’s reason to seek the truth. They are ignorant to the fact that all men are spiritually blind and dead and unable to respond to the gospel apart from the convicting and drawing ministry of the Holy Spirit. So they design their church approach accordingly to cater to what they imagine is this sincere, Seeker Mentality.

The **Seeker Mentality** which God demands here is Isaiah 55 is far different. There is no

minimizing of the reality of sin. There is no reduction of the attributes of God so that He is just a God of love. He is presented as the **Holy One of Israel**. It is clear that our sins have put us at enmity with a God whose standards we break all of the time in both thought and deed. We must come to the point where we are broken over our depravity and desperate for the salvation that only God can provide. The seeking and the calling here are those inspired by faith and those that are expressed in repentance from sin. This requires the work of God in the heart of man.

But the emphasis on this passage is not on **how** to seek after God or **how** to call upon Him in faith; rather it is on the **urgency** of responding to this free offer of salvation. *Today is the day of salvation*. There is a day and hour coming when there will be no more opportunity. There will be no second chance when Jesus returns to this earth – only judgment and condemnation. And in the life of each individual, who knows how God is working. Certainly every rejection of the gospel leads to a further hardening of the heart; at some point it is too late for you as an individual. Seek and call before it is too late. God will not always be findable; He will not always be accessible.

Oswalt: Isaiah tells his people that it is not information that they should seek from God, but his presence and his character, gifts that he longs to give to them. . . In Ezekiel the prophetic (and divine) disgust with those who were constantly seeking a word from the Lord but were never seeking the Lord himself is explicit (e.g., **20:1-4**).

Ps. 95:7-11 *“Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah”*
Translated “rebellion” – the place in the wilderness where the Jewish people of the Exodus complained against the lack of water and expressed their rebellious hearts and their lack of faith (**Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20:13** *“Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the Lord, and He proved Himself holy among them.”*)

- b. (:7a) Repent -- Turn Away From Wickedness
*“Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;”*

Motyer: **The whole chapter pivots on the call to repent.** On the one hand, repentance is the way to enter the great, free feast; on the other hand, the call to repent is a word of God bringing with it its own power of accomplishment. As the rain furnishes both seed and bread, so the word of God plants the seed of repentance in the heart and feeds the returning sinner with the blessed consequences repentance produces.

Repentance lies at the heart of the gospel message. It is at this point that we must stop and examine the type of **false gospel** that seems to be sweeping over Christendom in our day. It is a gospel which sees no need for genuine repentance from sin. It has watered down the biblical demand for repentance to mean just an intellectual change of mind about who God is – as opposed to a fundamental inner change of heart and mind that leads to a change in action as we re-orient ourselves to the rightful Lordship of our God. So there are many evangelists who will call for a decision to receive Jesus as if He represents a life insurance policy against eternal punishment in hell – but only as a Savior who can be tacked on to your existing lifestyle as an appendage with no real conversion and life change. So we invent terms like carnal Christians to describe that vast multitude who have professed at some point in time some decision for Christ but have no fruit to demonstrate any life change. So we invent artificial distinctions like a post-

conversion decision to commit ourselves at some point to the Lordship of Christ and take that step to elevate ourselves from just being a child of God with eternal benefits to now being a true disciple of Jesus Christ. That was never the gospel message that Jesus preached.

Helpful books:

Walter Chantry – *Today's Gospel – Authentic or Synthetic?* Published back in 1970

By elevating unity over truth, we have lowered the content of the gospel message to the lowest common denominator so that we can get more groups and missionary societies to work together. But the result has been a gospel that dethrones the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a gospel message without any emphasis on:

- The character of God – especially His holiness
- The law of God – what truly constitutes sin and how does the Holy Spirit convict men of sin – it is not enough to try to convince men that they are not perfect – they need to see themselves at the core of their being as sinful
- The necessity of repentance and what that involves
“Today men are properly told to confess their sins and to ask forgiveness. But evangelists and pastors are forgetting to tell sinners to repent. Consequently this misinformed age imagines that it can continue in its old ways of life while adding Jesus as a personal Hell insurance for the world to come.”
- The true understanding of assurance of salvation deriving from the work of the Holy Spirit – not just promising them assurance based on some decision they have just made that may not have involved the new birth experience from a sovereign God

John MacArthur – *The Gospel According to Jesus* – What does Jesus mean when He says “Follow Me?” published in 1988 He traces through the various gospel incidents that demonstrate the approach which Jesus took in calling sinners to Himself – that approach differs drastically from much of what is called evangelism today

“The gospel Jesus proclaimed was a call to discipleship, a call to follow Him in submissive obedience, not just a plea to make a decision or pray a prayer. Jesus’ message liberated people from the bondage of their sin while it confronted and condemned hypocrisy. It was an offer of eternal life and forgiveness for repentant sinners, but at the same time it was a rebuke to outwardly religious people whose lives were devoid of true righteousness. It put sinners on notices that they must turn from sin and embrace God’s righteousness. It was in every sense good news, yet it was anything but easy-believism.

Our Lord’s words about eternal life were invariably accompanied by warnings to those who might be tempted to take salvation lightly. He taught that the cost of following Him is high, that the way is narrow and few find it. He said may who call Him Lord will be forbidden from entering the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matthew 7:13-23).”

Acts 17:30 “*God now commands all men everywhere to repent*”

Faith and Repentance are always two sides of the same coin – where you find one, you find the other

- c. (:7b) Trust -- Turn to the Lord
“*And let him return to the LORD,*”

Look at the example of how the **Prodigal Son** returned to his loving father – he forsook his life of following the lusts of his flesh and returned to his father

This returning involves an embracing by faith and dependence that is much more than mere intellectual assent of who God is

2. (:7c) Response on the Part of the Lord

a. Mercy and Compassion

“And He will have compassion on him;”

God’s salvation is rooted in His mercy and compassion towards us; Look at how Jesus went around on earth demonstrating His heart of mercy and compassion

The verse does not say that God “*might*” have compassion – that would not be good news. We are commanded to repent and believe; God promises to have compassion and forgive

b. Pardon and Forgiveness

“And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”

What a gospel!

- Is there anyone who has sinned beyond the ability of God to pardon?
- Will we ever find God’s forgiveness to be inadequate to deal with the depths of our sin?

Remember the story of the cleansed lepers that Jesus healed – only 1 came back to fall at His feet and offer up thanksgiving

We who have been forgiven much need to forgive others as well – What should be the limits of that forgiveness that we offer?? Abundant

B. (:8-9) God’s Plans are Inscrutable and Majestic – He Alone Has the Solution We Need

1. (:8) Different Than Man’s Eternal vs. Finite

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways, declares the LORD.”

Mark 10:23-27 apart from God salvation would be impossible

Oswalt: (Re second section, vv. 6-13) It may seem that God should be unable to offer restoration to wicked people and that it would be futile to seek the Lord as the prophet is urging, but he says we should do it anyway (vv. 6-7) because:

- (1) our understanding is not the measure of what God can do (vv. 8-9);
- (2) God’s word is absolutely dependable [and efficacious] (vv. 10-11); and
- (3) God promises wonderful results (vv. 12-13).

Oswalt: what is wrong with human ways and thought and requires one to turn away from them is that they are not God’s thoughts and ways. This same point is made in Prov. 16:1-3 (cf. also Prov. 3:5-6; 21:2). Our ways and thoughts have been perverted by original sin, and it is only as we turn from them to God and his mercy that we can ever have peace with him and live lives that will be truly productive.

2. (:9) Superior to Man’s Infinite and Majestic vs. Finite and Creature-like

*“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”*

Beall: God's salvation is beyond human comprehension and accomplishment

Young: the ways and thoughts of God are incomprehensible to man. Even though God reveal them to man, he cannot fully understand them

Parunak: The idea that a holy God could forgive his rebellious people is remarkable. The fundamental ethical problem in the Bible is how a sinful people can live in fellowship with a holy God. That is why the confession of Exod 34:6 is so important, and why it is quoted so often throughout the OT. Zion has invited the people to come and drink freely, though they cannot merit the refreshment that they crave. Isaiah has invited them to seek the Lord, even though they are wicked and unrighteous. A thoughtful reader will ask, "How can this be? How can the truth of my wickedness and God's mercy meet together? How can God's righteousness and my peace kiss each other? (Ps 85:10)?"

People do not behave this way. They do not give away food and drink for nothing. If they are wronged, they demand retribution.

Jim Bomkamp: God's people, the Israelites, were slow to learn and understand the ways of the Lord, as really most of us human beings are in this life. The glorious and grandiose plans that the Lord had for Israel, especially as she sat as a miniscule remnant captive and humbled in Babylon, must have been hard to imagine or comprehend. Only the eye of faith could see that what God had promised that He was able and could be trusted to fulfill. The people could only through faith trust in a God who is able to do abundantly beyond what they were able to ask or think, in restoring them as a nation and honoring and exalting them over all the nations for all of eternity.

C. (:10-11) God's Purposes are Achieved by the Productivity of God's Word

1. (:10) God's Word Comes From Heaven to Bring Blessing to the Earth

a. Comes From Heaven

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,"

b. To Bring Blessing to the Earth

*"And do not return there without watering the earth,
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower
and bread to the eater;"*

Piper: The Word of God is a Seed of Life:

1. it waters the earth,
2. it makes it bring forth,
3. it makes it sprout,
4. it gives seed to the sower, and
5. it gives bread to the eater.

Motyer: There is a gift which comes from heaven; it is absolutely given (it does *not return*), effectively brings life (*making it bud and flourish*) and provides totally for human need (*seed and bread*). The parallel between the life agency of rain and the effective word is exact. Each has a heavenly origin and power of effectiveness and neither fails.

2. (:11) God's Word Accomplishes God's Purposes

a. God Sends it Forth

"So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;"

b. God Prospers its Mission

*"It shall not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."*

Piper: The Word of God is Sovereign and Triumphant.

What an **incentive to evangelism!** There are many who have criticized the doctrines of grace (election, effectual calling, limited atonement, etc.) as somehow decreasing the motivation to evangelize – God is going to save whoever He will, so why do I need to make such an effort?? But actually the opposite is true. Since God has pledged to bless His word with power and effectiveness, we who have been called as the agents to dispense that word throughout the world must be about the work of the Great Commission.

III. (:12-13) GOSPEL CELEBRATION – PARADISE REGAINED - OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE

What will be the outcome of God's saving work? -- Majesty of God

Our God Saves and Our God Reigns Forever!

The Gospel of God is Superior in terms of its Outcome

Celebration by both parties – the saved celebrate in their experience of joy and peace and the Savior celebrates as His saving work becomes and eternal monument to His legacy of grace and power and majesty

A. (:12a) Imagery of Victory Parade – Joy and Peace

*"For you will go out with joy,
And be led forth with peace;"*

B. (:12b-13a) Illustrations of Joy and Restoration

1. (:12b) Illustration of Joy

*"The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you,
And all the trees of the field will clap their hands."*

2. (:13a) Illustration of Restoration

*"Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up;
And instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up;"*

The Fall brought God's curse upon all Nature so that man's work was frustrated by the inhibiting forces acting against fertility and productivity

Rom. 8:22 reverse of the curse *“For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.”* Full redemption of all creation

C. (:13b) Immutable Memorial

*“And it will be a memorial to the LORD,
For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off.”*

Importance of a legacy – here we have the eternal legacy of the Lord

Just like the rainbow was a significant sign which the Lord gave to the world that He would never again judge the world with a universal flood; now all of restored creation stands as an everlasting sign to **God's graciousness; His wisdom and power and sovereignty, and His majesty**

Constable: The transformation of the world following the lifting of the curse will be observable. While this description is obviously figurative—hills do not shout for joy, and trees do not clap their hands literally—it represents a real change in nature, not just the joy that will pervade all creation. This is a description of millennial conditions on the earth after Jesus Christ returns to the earth to rule and reign (cf. 35:1-2; 41:18-19; 44:3). If it were not so, there would be no everlasting sign. As the Passover was a sign to the Israelites of God's first redemption of them from Egyptian bondage, the transformed earth and people will be a sign to all God's people of His second redemption of them from Satan's bondage.

Beall: God's salvation results in everlasting joy (55:11-12). Vv 11-12 conclude this section by explaining that the redemption accomplished by the Lord would result in the people's going forth in joy and peace. Emphasis in v. 11a is on the words *“joy”* and *“peace,”* not on the going forth. The picture is that of the redeemed marching from captivity to Zion. As **Young** states, the verb *“go out”* may have its roots in the exodus from Egypt, and *“if there is any reflection upon an exodus from Babylon, such a departure is only one example of the deliverance intended”* (p. 385). In fact, because of the rest of vv. 12-13, it seems best to see the time frame as the Millennium, where there will be true peace (54:10; Isa 9:6-7). The mountains and trees are depicted poetically as rejoicing along with the people: all of nature rejoices in their salvation (see Rom 8:22: *“The whole creation groans and travails in pain”*). Instead of thorn and brier (from the curse of Gen 3:18, though different terms are used here), will grow the cyprus and the myrtle. During the Millennium, the land will indeed become quite fertile, as other verses in Isaiah have stated as well (35:1-2; 41:18-19). These natural phenomena will be for an everlasting sign that will not be destroyed. **They will show the greatness of the Lord, the superiority of His ways, and the wonder of His redemption.**

Parunak: At this point Isaiah's voice returns, marked by the third person reference to the Lord. This shows that this final clause is not a part of 12-13a, but a separate paragraph, and in fact it gives the significance of God's work of forgiveness. Vv. 8-13a tell us *that* God's thoughts are different from ours, but *why* should they be different? The answer lies in God's overall purpose to exalt himself.

and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.--
This final clause is critical. Why does God think thoughts of good toward his people? It is not first of all for their sake, but for his own, to make himself a reputation before the watching

universe. This is the same motive we saw at the end of the first invitation, in v. 5. God promises to make many nations subject to the covenant witness-leader-teacher, not for their sake, or even for his, but “*for the sake of the Lord thy God.*” **Forgiveness is God’s great self-glorification** before the universe, manifesting at once his authority as the law-giver, his power as judge, and his mercy and grace as the one who provides a way of forgiveness.

Motyer: The transformed people in a transformed world will be an everlasting sign, will “signify” who and what the Lord is. When people respond to the Lord’s word calling them to seek, forsake and return (6-7), the effective power of that word (10-11) brings them into an experience of the love, forgiveness (7) and peace (12) of God and lifts them into membership of a new world of eternal duration. This is what the Servant accomplished.

Young: Human kings and conquerors erect memorials to testify of their mighty deeds. The King of Kings also has a memorial, the redemption of the creation. The inscriptions of human kings are often destroyed, or their letters become blurred . . . No later king, however, will ever undo the deeds of Israel’s King, nor will any later conqueror ever erase His words. He has redeemed His people, brought them out of the servitude and bondage of sin unto Himself, established them in the heavenly life, and brought about a new heaven and a new earth. His sign will never be cut off.

CONCLUSION:

Rev. 22:1-5, 17

This tone of celebration should prepare us to properly celebrate the Lord’s Table together this morning.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of witnessing/missionary lessons can you draw out from studying this passage in concert with John 4?
- 2) Why do we think that we should be able to figure out and understand all of God’s ways when He clearly teaches that His thoughts and ways are inscrutable and infinitely above man’s thoughts and ways? What type of frustration could we avoid by embracing God’s uniqueness?
- 3) How are we encouraged to evangelize in the light of the efficacy of the gospel?
- 4) Are we celebrating right now the victory the gospel has achieved in defeating Satan and sin and death in our lives?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak:

Witness ðǎ .--The word “witness” was prominent in our discussion of the contest between the Lord and the idols in ch. 40-48. The false gods are commanded to bring forth their witnesses (charts):

43:9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their **witnesses**, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is* truth.

44:9 They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own **witnesses**; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.

Then Israel is introduced as the Lord’s witness, in her capacity as the Servant of the Lord:

43:10 Ye *are* my **witnesses**, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

43:12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when *there was* no strange *god* among you: therefore ye *are* my **witnesses**, saith the LORD, that I *am* God.

44:8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it*? Ye *are* even my **witnesses**. Is there a God beside me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*. . .

The contest between the Lord and the gods of the nations that we saw in ch. 40-48 naturally takes place in this heavenly council. It is there that the angelic host are summoned, even those who oppose the Lord (like Satan in Job), and there that he calls them to defend their claims to deity. The primary role of the servant of the Lord (“my servant Job”) is to bear witness against them. Israel failed, instead worshiping them, but the Messiah will be that faithful witness in the heavenly court, overturning the claims of the rebellious angels, and setting free the nations who have been under their dominion.

Piper: the Great Invitation in this chapter is the invitation to trust in the promise that God is planning for you to be happy forever. He is planning for you to live in peace forever. He is planning that mountains and hills and trees increase your joy. And he has written his seal across these promises by saying that they are his name; your joy is God's fame. Your happiness is God's reputation. Your peace is God's memorial. And this is an everlasting sign of his love that shall not be cut off.

Motyer: Chapter is well-constructed unity:

A1 The first picture: individual renewal, needs met (1)

B1 Hearing the word of the Lord (2-3b)

C1 The certainty of the promises (3c-5)

D The content of the word: a call to repent (6-7)

C2 The seriousness of the call (8-9)

B2 The efficaciousness of the word of the Lord (10-11)

A2 The second picture: world renewal, the curse lifted (12-13)

David Thompson: Quoting **John Calvin** who believed **verses 1-5** were aimed at Gentiles who never had a relationship with God and **verses 6-13** were aimed at Israel who needed to return to God

(*Isaiah*, Vol. 8, p. 165). However, I think we may also apply it to any believer who has drifted far away from God into sinful things. There are many reasons I believe this, but one of the most important theologically to point out is that both the O.T. and the N.T. point out that no unbeliever seeks God; God seeks the unbeliever (Psalm 14:2; 53:2; Romans 3:11). We make the assumption, then, that the second invitation is given to believers who have wandered away in sin and need to “return” (**verse 7**) to the Lord. The pronoun “him” in **verse 7**, “let him return to the LORD,” replaces the noun “man” who is described as wicked and unrighteous. So the wicked and unrighteous man is one who was once in a good relationship with God and needs to return to Him, whether Jew or Gentile.

TEXT: Isaiah 56:1-8

TITLE: *OUTSIDERS CAN BECOME INSIDERS*

BIG IDEA:

BLESSING PROMISED TO ALL WHO COMMIT TO GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS – EVEN GENTILES AND EUNUCHS

INTRODUCTION:

How big is God’s heart for sinners? We learned in Chap. 55 that the gospel of God is a “*Whosoever*” gospel. While some people might try to twist the doctrine of God’s Election to make it seem like He is small-hearted and restrictive in confirming His covenant to the small nation of Israel; in actuality God wants to embrace all who will make a commitment to His righteousness.

That message of **inclusiveness** should strike a chord with Gentiles like ourselves who have come to the party as outsiders. You all know what it means to be an outsider. You have that feeling of awkwardness and loneliness as you observe the love and fellowship of a group that has bonded together over common interests. You stand on the outside, lacking that position of privilege and status and wonder what it would be like to be included as an insider. In business, I understand what it means to be an outsider – go try to do business on the Eastern Shore when you don’t have roots there; or go down south into VA and try to fit into the good old boy network when it is obvious you are a Northerner.

Message of Paul to the **Ephesians: 2:11-22**

The ultimate passage about how Outsiders can become Insiders

Constable: Chapter 56 contains **moral exhortations** in view of God's salvation. . . Since His salvation was about to appear, in return from captivity and in the atoning work of the Servant, His people should practice justice and righteousness (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Titus 3:8). They had a responsibility beyond just believing His promises (chs. 54—55). Notice that practicing justice and righteousness does not accomplish salvation. They should be its consequence; they cannot be its cause (cf. Rom. 12:1-2).

Oswalt: The righteousness that chs. 1-39 called for, but that the people could not produce, can be produced by means of the righteousness of God that chs. 40-55 revealed (cf. 53:1).

BLESSING PROMISED TO ALL WHO COMMIT TO GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS – EVEN GENTILES AND EUNUCHS

I. (:1-2) BLESSING PROMISED TO ALL WHO COMMIT TO GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. (:1) Ethical Requirements Emphasized

“Thus says the LORD,”

Chiastic structure

1. Conditions for Blessing

*“Preserve justice,
and do righteousness,”*

Parunak: What is the relation between “judgment” and “justice”?

The two nouns first occur together in God’s statement about Abraham:

Gen 18:19 *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

They form a basic claim to godly conduct that is frequent throughout the OT (see notes).

- The first word, “judgment”, is a name for law, and emphasizes what is according to **God’s legislation**.
- The second word, “justice”, is literally “righteousness,” and indicates what is according to **God’s character**.

Perhaps the best translation of the two is the AV’s in Ezek 18 and 33 (repeatedly), “*lawful and right.*” Here, “*Obey the law, and do what is right.*” The association of the two recognizes that simply doing what the law says is not enough. It is possible to be obedient outwardly and yet harbor inward rebellion against the Lord. Our Lord frequently emphasized this principle in his dealings with the Pharisees.

* * * * *

What is involved in *Guarding justice and doing righteousness*?

Isaiah had already addressed this at the beginning of his book:

1:16-17; 21-23; 10:1-2

2. Promise of Blessing

*“For My salvation is about to come
And My righteousness to be revealed.”*

Beall: The general exhortation to live righteously in light of the Lord's salvation (56:1-2). The Lord begins in **v. 1** by exhorting unnamed people to “*keep justice and righteousness*” because God's salvation is “*near to come*” (compare the “near” of 55:6—God's salvation was near at this time, but He might not always be so near), and His righteousness would soon be revealed (compare Rom 1:18; as **Young** states, “when the salvation of God comes, His righteousness is also revealed” [3:389]).

v. 2 continues by pronouncing a blessing on the one who does what God says, and specifically who does not defile the Sabbath or do evil. Keeping the Sabbath would, of course, be a sign in those days of putting oneself under God's covenant with Israel (see Exod 31:12-17).

B. (:2) Ethical Requirements Repeated

1. Promise of Blessing

*“How blessed is the man who does this,
And the son of man who takes hold of it;”*

Parallels to Psalm 1 throughout

2. Conditions of Blessing

*“Who keeps from profaning the sabbath,
keeps his hand from doing any evil.”*

Don't want to get off track by diving deep into the controversial topic of **whether Sabbath observance is still binding on Christians today** – that would require a whole series of messages on its own; here Sabbath keeping in the Jewish context of those under the Mosaic law is used as a part for the whole to speak of obedience to God's commands overall

Yet I understand the importance of which side you come down on in this controversy

Matt. 5:17-19

I will just cite some **overall conclusions from Dr. John MacArthur** without trying to confirm them or make the argument here

Remember our focus in this passage – *Outsider can Become Insiders*

Constable: Ethical conduct will result in divine blessing. Profaning the Sabbath and doing evil are the opposite of preserving justice and doing righteousness. They represent specific acts of obedience (observing the Sabbath) and an attitude toward life (doing good). By refraining from work on the Sabbath, the Israelites expressed trust that God would provide for their needs as He promised. Next to circumcision, keeping the Sabbath was the central sign of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Exod. 31:13-17; Ezek. 20:12-17). God's standard is perfection: His people were to keep their hands from doing "any evil" (cf. Matt. 5:48).

Parunak: What he asks here is not simply keeping the Sabbath, but keeping the Sabbath while avoiding any evil. This pairing is an example of the relation between judgment and justice in v. 1. The first is a ritual, outward, conformity to the law, while the second is a deeper conformity to the law of God.

David Thompson: Three times in this chapter the Sabbath day is mentioned (56:2, 4, 6). The Sabbath day was a sign between God and Israel (Exodus 31:12-17). It was never a sign between God and Gentiles. The thing that characterized the Sabbath in the O.T. is that it was a day of complete rest from any physical activity, especially an agricultural or business pursuit (Exodus 20:8-11; 31:12-17; 35:3; Leviticus 25:4; Numbers 15:32-36; Nehemiah 10:31).

According to Paul, the New Testament believer is complete in Jesus Christ and the law was nailed to the cross and the Sabbath is no more (Colossians 2:10-16). In fact, Paul warned believers not to ever be enslaved to the law day observances (Galatians 4:9-10). In this Church Age, we worship God on Sunday, the first day of the week. We are not obligated in any way to keep the Sabbath because Christ nailed it to the cross.

However, after this Church Age is over, God's program will once again swing back to Israel; and in the Tribulation and also in the Millennium, there will be a reinstatement of the Sabbath Day

II. (:3-8) TRADITIONAL OUTSIDERS (GENTILES AND EUNUCHS) INCLUDED IN THIS PROMISE OF BLESSING

A. (:3) Traditional Outsiders Must Not View Themselves as Excluded

1. (:3a) Example of the Gentiles

*“Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,
‘The LORD will surely separate me from His people.’”*

Parunak: The “*son of the stranger*” could become an Israelite by receiving circumcision. Why then does Isaiah treat the admission of this category of person, like that of the eunuch, as something new?

Note the parallel between Exod 12:43 and 12:48.

Exo 12:43 There shall no **stranger** eat thereof :

Exo 12:48 no **uncircumcised person** shall eat thereof.

The parallel shows that the “*son of a stranger*” is simply an “uncircumcised person.” By receiving circumcision, a foreigner ceases to be the “son of a stranger.” But in this case, Isaiah is proposing something very radical: there will be a day when the Lord will receive the “son of the stranger” *without* the need for circumcision, in his condition as a foreigner. . .

Isaiah brings together the requirement for circumcision and the exclusion of the eunuch. Ethnic continuity is at the heart of Israel’s identity in the OT. They are carrying the promised seed of Abraham that will one day yield the Messiah. Circumcision reminds them of their role in passing on and extending the nation. Only those who are able to procreate, and who are marked in a way that reminds them of their procreative responsibility, can fully participate in the community. In our passage, the Lord reveals that the day will come when this physical, ethnic character of the people of God will come to an end. No longer will the eunuch and the uncircumcised be excluded from the house of the Lord.

* * * * *

Jerry Scott – Illustration

Almost every one of us has the unpleasant experience of being an "outsider" at some point in our life. Ever been ‘shut out?’

Discrimination, that is, choosing to accept or reject people based on color, sex, or religion is a "skill" which we learn fairly early in life.

Little boys form their clubs and put the sign over the door of the clubhouse, "no girls allowed!" As early as first or second grade, kids have already decided who is cool and who isn't, who is an insider and who is an outsider.

The little kid who was born with bigger ears than other people, who has clothes that are last year's style, is marked an outsider and shunned fiercely!

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2. (:3b) Example of the Eunuch

“Neither let the eunuch say, ‘Behold, I am a dry tree.’”

Could be a Eunuch:

- in a physical sense
- or in a functional sense

Beall: In vv. 3-8, two specific groups are encouraged by the Lord: proselytes (Gentiles who worshipped the Lord) and eunuchs (who were excluded by the Law from entering into the assembly [Deut 23:1]).

Constable: God's exclusion of foreigners and eunuchs from Israel's public worship (**Deut. 23:1-8**) was not because these types of people were intrinsically evil and therefore unacceptable to Him. God excluded foreigners because He wanted to teach His people that opposition to His will and His people has abiding consequences. He excluded eunuchs because He wanted His people to learn that the destruction of sexual organs that He created has consequences. These consequences affected their worship of the Holy One of Israel, as well as their public life and their private life. Ruth and the Ethiopian eunuch are the proof that God accepts people on the basis of their faith in Him—in spite of their ancestry or personal history. Non-Israelites and disabled Israelites could enjoy the blessings of God's salvation (personal salvation and millennial blessings) along with normal believing Israelites. This passage helps us understand the qualifications for elders and deacons in the New Testament. While the office may be closed to a particular individual because of acts he committed previously that have continuing consequences, he is fully acceptable to God and capable of serving Him in equally significant ministries.

B. (:4-7) Traditional Outsiders Not Viewed as Excluded by the Lord

1. (:4-5) Example of the Eunuch

“For thus says the LORD,”

Constable: The prophet prefaced his shocking explanation of the spiritual acceptability of ritually unacceptable people with, *“For thus says Yahweh.”* This was not just his opinion but divine revelation.

a. Conditions for Blessing

*“To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths,
And choose what pleases Me,
And hold fast My covenant,”*

b. Promise of Blessing

*“to them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial,
And a name better than that of sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.”*

Beall: *an everlasting name that would not be cut off* (pun intended?)

Constable: This promise can be very comforting to childless couples. If they follow God faithfully, He will bless them more greatly than He would bless them if they only had physical children.

Oswalt: The barren woman will have more children than the fertile woman (Isa. 5:1), and the nameless eunuch will have a name forever. Instead of being limited to what little posterity children could give him, the eunuch who trusts God will live forever in God's house (Ps. 23:6).

2. (:6-7) Example of the Gentiles

a. (:6) Conditions for Blessing

1) Allegiance

“Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,”

2) Worship

“To minister to Him,”

3) Devotion

“and to love the name of the LORD,”

4) Service

“To be His servants,”

5) Obedience

“everyone who keeps from profaning the sabbath,”

6) Loyalty

“And holds fast My covenant;”

Grogan: The six marks of the foreigner (v. 6) provide a beautiful description of true godliness, with love as its great dynamic, the very antithesis of Pharisaic legalism.

Parunak:

- *“join themselves to the Lord,”* choosing to associate with him rather than with the world
- *“serve him,”* seeking to accomplish his purposes rather than our own
- *“love the name of the Lord,”* seeking to see him honored

b. (:7) Promise of Blessing

*“Even those I will bring to My holy mountain,
And make them joyful in My house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar;
For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”*

Oswalt: All of Israel’s separation from the world was in order to keep Israel from being absorbed into the world and thus losing the ability to call the world out of itself into the blessings of God. But should Israel ever come to believe that its separation was so that Israel could keep here God and his blessings to herself, then all was lost. It is precisely this attitude that infuriated Jesus (Matt. 21:13) and that Isaiah is countering in this segment and in this division.

C. (:8) Summary: Promise of Extension of Salvation Blessing to Outsiders

*“The Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares,
‘Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.’”*

Look at story of Jesus – go out into the highway and byways and compel them to come in
Parable of the Great Supper – Luke 14:15-24

Beall: v. 8 concludes by saying that the Lord who gathers the dispersed of Israel will also gather others to them, namely the Gentiles. Jesus' words in **John 10:16** are similar: *“Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”* The gospel of salvation to the Gentiles is not just a NT concept;

it is rooted in the prophecies of the OT as well (compare **49:6**: the Servant's task to be “*a light to the Gentiles that you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth*”).

Constable: With an unusually strong declaration (cf. 1:24), sovereign Yahweh affirmed that He would gather many other Gentiles to Himself along with the Israelites (cf. 19:25; 49:6-7; 51:5; 55:5; John 10:16). He would not save only Israelites, but Gentiles as well. The new revelation, or mystery, concerning the relationship of Jews and Gentiles in the church (Eph. 2—3), was not that God would save Gentiles as well as Jews. It was that in the church He would deal with Jews and Gentiles on the same basis. Jews would have no advantage over Gentiles as they did previously. Now both types of people could come into relationship with God directly through faith in Christ. Formerly Gentiles came into relationship with God indirectly—through Israel—through faith in Yahweh. The Lord was not referring to the Babylonian exile or to geographical dispersal, but to those scattered from Himself.

CONCLUSION:

So the encouraging truth for anybody who sees themselves as a poor, helpless sinner in need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ is that *Outsiders can become Insiders*.

But the opposite is true as well: *Insiders can become Outsiders*:

There are many who view themselves as Insiders who will tragically find when Jesus returns in all His righteousness, that they are truly Outsiders.

Look at what Jesus had to say at the end of His Sermon on the Mount to the ultimate group of self proclaimed Insiders – the self righteous Pharisees and religious leaders of his day “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. [Sound familiar: ‘Preserve justice and do righteousness’] Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” Matt. 7:21-23*

Acts 10:34, 43 Peter preaching to the household of Cornelius: “*God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him . . . through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.*”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are there any types of people that we treat as outsiders as if they have no shot at the salvation offered by the Lord?
- 2) Which of the 6 conditions set forth to ensure blessing for the Gentiles convict us of our need for further spiritual growth and maturity?
- 3) What would be a parallel today to the OT requirement of keeping the Sabbath as a demonstration of fidelity to one’s relationship to the Lord?
- 4) How consistent and fervent are we in actively choosing what pleases the Lord?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: God's salvation is available to all people who seek to serve Him (56:1-8). That the blessings of redemption in the Millennium will not be limited exclusively to Israelites is made clear in the amazingly clear prophecy of Isa 56:1-8. This prophecy is a natural conclusion to the open-ended prophecy of chapter 55, which included Gentiles as well as Jews; but here the question as to whether Gentiles can be included in salvation is specifically addressed.

David Thompson:

WHEN JESUS CHRIST RETURNS TO REIGN, THOSE WHO HAVE PURPOSED TO GOVERN THEIR LIVES IN RIGHTEOUS WAYS WILL BE BLESSED AND THOSE WHO HAVE NOT WILL BE CURSED.

DESCRIPTION #1 – The description of those who will be blessed when Christ returns. **56:1-8**

Blessed Action #1 - The blessed man is one who will preserve justice . **56:1a**

Blessed Action #2 - The blessed man is one who will do righteousness . **56:1b**

Blessed Action #3 - The blessed man is one who does not profane the Sabbath . **56:2a**

Blessed Action #4 - The blessed man is one who does not do any evil . **56:2b**

Blessed Action #5 - The blessed man is one of any ethnic background. **56:3-5**

Blessed Action #6 - The blessed man will have access to acceptable worship . **56:6-8**

DESCRIPTION #2 – The description of those who will be cursed when Christ returns. **56:9-11**

(Cursed Picture #1) - The religious leaders were blind . **56:10a**

(Cursed Picture #2) - All of the leaders knew nothing . **56:10b**

(Cursed Picture #3) - All of the religious leaders were like mute dogs. **56:10c**

(Cursed Picture #4) - All of the religious leaders were lazy dreamers . **56:10d**

(Cursed Picture #5) - All of the religious leaders were greedy . **56:11a**

(Cursed Picture #6) - They were religious leaders with no knowledge . **56:11b**

(Cursed Picture #7) - They were religious shepherds who have all turned to their own way. **56:11c**

(Cursed Picture #8) - They were religious leaders who are all after unjust gain. **56:11d**

(Cursed Picture #9) - They were religious leaders who love to get drunk . **56:12a**

(Cursed Picture #10) - They were religious leaders who live like there is no tomorrow . **56:12b**

John MacArthur:

Are the Sabbath laws binding on Christians today?

We believe the Old Testament regulations governing Sabbath observances are ceremonial, not moral, aspects of the law. As such, they are no longer in force, but have passed away along with the sacrificial system, the Levitical priesthood, and all other aspects of Moses' law that prefigured Christ. Here are the reasons we hold this view.

1. In [Colossians 2:16-17](#), Paul explicitly refers to the Sabbath as a shadow of Christ, which is no longer binding since the substance (Christ) has come. It is quite clear in those verses that the weekly Sabbath is in view. The phrase "a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day" refers to the annual, monthly, and weekly holy days of the Jewish calendar (cf. [1 Chronicles 23:31](#); [2 Chronicles 2:4](#); [31:3](#); [Ezekiel 45:17](#); [Hosea 2:11](#)). If Paul were referring to special ceremonial dates of rest in that passage, why would he have used the word "Sabbath?" He had already mentioned the ceremonial dates when he spoke of festivals and new moons.
2. The Sabbath was the sign to Israel of the Mosaic Covenant ([Exodus 31:16-17](#); [Ezekiel 20:12](#); [Nehemiah 9:14](#)). Since we are now under the New Covenant (Hebrews 8), we are no longer required to observe the sign of the Mosaic Covenant.
3. The New Testament never commands Christians to observe the Sabbath.
4. In our only glimpse of an early church worship service in the New Testament, the church met on the first day of the week ([Acts 20:7](#)).
5. Nowhere in the Old Testament are the Gentile nations commanded to observe the Sabbath or condemned for failing to do so. That is certainly strange if Sabbath observance were meant to be an eternal moral principle.
6. There is no evidence in the Bible of anyone keeping the Sabbath before the time of Moses, nor are there any commands in the Bible to keep the Sabbath before the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai.
7. When the Apostles met at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), they did not impose Sabbath keeping on the Gentile believers.
8. The apostle Paul warned the Gentiles about many different sins in his epistles, but breaking the Sabbath was never one of them.
9. In [Galatians 4:10-11](#), Paul rebukes the Galatians for thinking God expected them to observe special days (including the Sabbath).
10. In [Romans 14:5](#), Paul forbids those who observe the Sabbath (these were no doubt Jewish believers) to condemn those who do not (Gentile believers).

11. The early church fathers, from Ignatius to Augustine, taught that the Old Testament Sabbath had been abolished and that the first day of the week (Sunday) was the day when Christians should meet for worship (contrary to the claim of many seventh-day sabbatarians who claim that Sunday worship was not instituted until the fourth century).
12. Sunday has not replaced Saturday as the Sabbath. Rather the Lord's Day is a time when believers gather to commemorate His resurrection, which occurred on the first day of the week. Every day to the believer is one of Sabbath rest, since we have ceased from our spiritual labor and are resting in the salvation of the Lord ([Hebrews 4:9-11](#)).

So while we still follow the pattern of designating one day of the week a day for the Lord's people to gather in worship, we do not refer to this as "the Sabbath."

John Calvin took a similar position. He wrote,

There were three reasons for giving this [fourth] commandment: First, with the seventh day of rest the Lord wished to give to the people of Israel an image of spiritual rest, whereby believers must cease from their own works in order to let the Lord work in them. Secondly, he wished that there be an established day in which believers might assemble in order to hear his Law and worship him. Thirdly, he willed that one day of rest be granted to servants and to those who live under the power of others so that they might have a relaxation from their labor. The latter, however, is rather an inferred than a principal reason.

As to the first reason, there is no doubt that it ceased in Christ; because he is the truth by the presence of which all images vanish. He is the reality at whose advent all shadows are abandoned. Hence St. Paul ([Col. 2:17](#)) that the sabbath has been a shadow of a reality yet to be. And he declares elsewhere its truth when in the letter to the Romans, ch. 6:8, he teaches us that we are buried with Christ in order that by his death we may die to the corruption of our flesh. And this is not done in one day, but during all the course of our life, until altogether dead in our own selves, we may be filled with the life of God. Hence, superstitious observance of days must remain far from Christians.

The two last reasons, however, must not be numbered among the shadows of old. Rather, they are equally valid for all ages. Hence, though the sabbath is abrogated, it so happens among us that we still convene on certain days in order to hear the word of God, to break the [mystic] bread of the Supper, and to offer public prayers; and, moreover, in order that some relaxation from their toil be given to servants and workingmen. As our human weakness does not allow such assemblies to meet every day, the day observed by the Jews has been taken away (as a good device for eliminating superstition) and another day has been destined to this use. This was necessary for securing and maintaining order and peace in the Church.

As the truth therefore was given to the Jews under a figure, so to us on the contrary truth is shown without shadows in order, first of all, that we meditate all our life on a perpetual sabbath from our works so that the Lord may operate in us by his spirit; secondly, in order that we observe the legitimate order of the Church for listening to the word of God, for administering the sacraments, and for public prayers; thirdly, in order that we do not oppress inhumanly with work those who are subject to us. [From *Instruction in Faith*, Calvin's own 1537 digest of the *Institutes*, sec. 8, "The Law of the Lord"].

Seventh Day Adventist Position on the Sabbath - A Safeguard of Our Relationship With God

The Sabbath encompasses our entire relationship with God. It is an indication of God's action on our behalf in the past, present, and future. The Sabbath protects man's friendship with God and provides the time essential for the development of that relationship. The Sabbath clarifies the relationship between God and the human family, for it points to God as Creator at a time when human beings would like to usurp God's position in the universe.

In this age of materialism, the Sabbath points men and women to the spiritual and to the personal. The consequences for forgetting the Sabbath day to keep it holy are serious. It will lead to the distortion and eventual destruction of a person's relationship with God.

When the Sabbath is kept, it is a witness to the rest that comes from trusting God alone as our sustainer, as the basis of our salvation, and as the ground of our hope in the future. As such, the Sabbath is a delight because we have entered God's rest and have accepted the invitation to fellowship with Him.

When God asks us to remember the Sabbath day He does so because He wants us to remember Him.

Principles and Theology of Sabbath Observance

1) *Nature and Purpose of the Sabbath*. The origin of the Sabbath lies in Creation when God rested from His work on the seventh day (Gen 1-3). The Sabbath has significance as a perpetual sign of the everlasting covenant between God and His people in order that they might know who it is that created them (Ex 31-17)

and sanctifies them ([Ex 31:13](#); [Ezek 20:12](#)), and that they might recognize Him as the Lord their God ([Ezek 20:20](#)).

2) *Uniqueness of the Sabbath.* The Sabbath is a special occasion for worshiping God as Creator and Redeemer and as the Lord of Life with whom the human family will be reunited at the second advent. The Sabbath commandment forms the center of the moral law as the seal of God's authority. Since it is a symbol of God's love relationship with His earthly children, human beings are obliged to respect this gift in the sense that they will do everything in their power to promote and engage in activities that will help establish and enhance a lasting relationship with God. Thus His people will engage only in those activities that are directed toward God and their fellowmen and not in those that lean toward self-gratification or self-interest.

3) *Universality of the Sabbath.* The universality of the Sabbath is rooted in Creation. Thus its privileges and obligations are binding in all nations, sectors, or classes. (See [Ex 20:11](#); [23:12](#); Dent 5:13; [Isa 56:1-8](#).) Sabbath observance pertains to all members of the household including children and extends even "to the stranger that is within thy gates" ([Ex 20:10](#)).

4) *Time Frame of the Sabbath.* Biblical Data: The Sabbath starts at the end of the sixth day of the week and lasts one day, from evening to evening (Gen 1; [Mark 1:32](#)). This time coincides with the time of sunset. Wherever a clear delineation of the time of sunset is difficult to ascertain, the Sabbath keeper will begin the Sabbath at the end of the day as marked by the diminishing light.

5) *Principles Guiding Sabbath Observance.* Although the Bible does not deal directly with many of the specific questions we may have regarding Sabbath observance in our day, it does provide us with general principles that are applicable today. (See [Ex 16:29](#); [20:8-11](#); [34:21](#); [Isa 58:13](#); [Neh 13:15-22](#).)

"The law forbids secular labor on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease; no labor for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day; but as God ceased His labor of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds."--The Desire of Ages, p 207

This concept, however, is not supportive of total inactivity. Both the Old and New Testaments invite us to care for the needs and alleviate the sufferings of others, for the Sabbath is a good day for all, particularly the lowly and the oppressed ([Ex 23:12](#); [Matt 12:10-13](#); [Mark 2:27](#); [Luke 13:11-17](#); [John 9:1-21](#)).

Yet even good works on the Sabbath must not obscure the chief Biblical characteristic of Sabbath observance, namely, rest ([Gen 2:1-3](#)). This includes both physical ([Ex 23:12](#)) and spiritual rest in God ([Matt 11:28](#)). The latter leads the Sabbath observer to seek the presence of, and communion with God in worship ([Isa 48:13](#)), both in quiet meditation ([Matt 12:1-8](#)) and in public worship ([Jer 23:32](#), [2 Kings 4:23](#), [11:4-12](#); [1 Chron 23:30](#) ff; [Isa 56:1-8](#)). Its object is to recognize God as Creator and Redeemer ([Gen 2:1-3](#); Dent 5:12-15), and it is to be shared by the individual family and the larger community ([Isa 56:1-8](#)).

6) *Sabbath and the Authority of God's Word.* Ellen White points out that the Sabbath commandment is unique, for it contains the seal of God's law. It alone "brings to view both the name and title of the Lawgiver. It

declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the Decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given."--The Great Controversy, p 452.

The Sabbath as a sign of the Creator points to His ownership and authority. Meaningful Sabbath observance, therefore, indicates the acceptance of God as Creator and Owner and acknowledges His authority over all creation, including oneself. Sabbath observance is based on the authority of God's Word. There is no other logical reason for it.

Human beings have the freedom to enter into a relationship with the Creator of the universe as with a personal friend.

Sabbath keepers may have to face resistance at times because of their commitment to God to keep the Sabbath holy. To those who do not recognize God as their Creator, it seems arbitrary or inexplicable for someone to cease from all work on the Sabbath day for merely religious reasons. Meaningful Sabbath observance testifies to the fact that we have chosen to obey God's commandment. We thus recognize that our life is now lived in obedience to God's Word. The Sabbath will be a special test in the end time. The believer will have to make a choice either to give allegiance to God's Word or to human authority ([Rev 14:7, 12](#)).

<https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/documents/article/go/0/sabbath-observance/>

TEXT: Isaiah 56:9-12

TITLE: CONDEMNATION OF SELF SERVING LEADERSHIP

BIG IDEA:

GOD INVITES UNSUSPECTING DISASTER UPON THE SELF SERVING LEADERS WHO SHOULD BE PROTECTING AND FEEDING HIS VULNERABLE FLOCK

INTRODUCTION:

In the first half of Chap. 56 we saw God's message of encouragement to those who were traditionally viewed as Outsiders – to the Gentiles and to the eunuchs. The Lord is gracious to gather them into the family of the redeemed. He makes it possible for the Outsiders to become Insiders – full members of the family of faith. But now the passage takes an abrupt change in direction and brings a word of condemnation against those who would have considered themselves the supreme Insiders – the civil rulers and religious rulers of the nation of Israel.

They had been charged with the important responsibility of protecting and feeding the flock of God which is always vulnerable to attack. But God indicts them here for totally failing to fulfill their charge. Instead of being a model for servant leadership, they have served themselves; instead of protecting the flock they have only been concerned for protecting and advancing their own power and prestige and possessions. They have abused their position of authority and failed to sound the alarm about coming dangers. They have demonstrated a complete lack of understanding and discernment.

We have examples all around us today of those who have turned the ministry into an opportunity for building their own kingdom of prosperity and indulgence. Just follow the money; investigate the lifestyles of some of the prominent televangelists and preachers of the popular prosperity gospel. It is sickening to see how far removed their ministry model is from the example demonstrated for us in the ministry of Jesus and His apostles.

Probably the easiest and most visible target to highlight is **Joel Osteen:**

<http://www.celebritynetworth.com/richest-celebrities/joel-osteen-net-worth/>

Joel Osteen is an American preacher, televangelist and author who has a net worth of **\$40 million** dollars. Joel Osteen is the pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas. He took over his father's role as a pastor and televangelist in 1999, despite having very little formal religious training. Since then, the Lakewood Church broadcast has grown exponentially and can be seen in 100 different countries.

Joel wrote a positive-thinking book in 2004, which helped him promote his "live at your full potential" message on the road to sold-out sports arenas.

- his inaugural book "**Your Best Life Now**"
- second book titled "**Become A Better You**"

Joel Osteen, whose book sales and related stuff generates a reported **\$55 million per year**, claims an individual should not feel guilt for possessing lots of material wealth. Instead, one needs to thank and praise God for the acquired wealth.

How many sheep have been deceived into a sense of false security by his adulterated message?

Opening and closing sections linked by the invitation “Come” and the contrast between a feast of food and a feast of wine. The heart of the paragraph in verses 10-11 will detail their failures.

GOD INVITES UNSUSPECTING DISASTER UPON THE SELF SERVING LEADERS WHO SHOULD BE PROTECTING AND FEEDING HIS VULNERABLE FLOCK

I. (:9) DIVINE INVITATION TO DEVOUR GOD’S PEOPLE – God Sees the Vulnerability of the Flock

*“All you beasts of the field,
All you beasts in the forest,
Come to eat.”*

What happens when God removes protective hedge around his vineyard? **Isaiah 5**

Jer. 12:7-9

Ezek. 34:5, 8, 17-22

Parunak: A flock is constantly at risk because of wild animals who would prey on the sheep. David described the risk to Saul, from his experience as a shepherd:

1Sa 17:34 *And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock [cf. Is. 5:5]*

The wild beasts who devour are pagan armies. God defended his flock from the beasts of Assyria under Hezekiah, but the time will come when, because of their sin, he will abandon them to the beasts of Babylon.

Our Lord warned the disciples,

Mat 7:15 *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening **wolves**.*

Mat 10:16 *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of **wolves**:*

Paul tells the elders of the church at Ephesus,

Act 20:28-30 *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall **grievous wolves** enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*

Borgman: Vs. 9 -- Hostility between man and beast since the Fall; look at symbolism in Daniel and Revelation; the one named the Beast in eschatological times; Simple invitation – Come and eat; frightening thing is that man is the meal; Fine dining – not the emphatic stem for devour; part of the covenant curse for infidelity; **Lev. 26:21; Deut. 28:25; 32:23**; cf. wicked **Jezebel** (subtle but devastating wickedness) – the dogs will lick up her blood – king says, “*She is a cursed woman*”; 2 Kings – wild beasts went and devoured them; youth mocking Elijah for his baldness;

Young: There is also the possibility of making the last designation an object of the infinitive to

devour, so that the verse would read: *All ye beasts of the field, come to devour all the beasts in the forest.* On this construction the beasts of the field are the enemies, and the beasts of the forest Israel. [Parunak takes this view] Why, however, should Israel be so designated?

[maybe beasts of the forest would normally be the ones feasting on the beasts of the field so that this is an unnatural reversal??]

II. (:10-11) DIVINE INDICTMENT OF LEADERSHIP FAILURE

6 Areas of Failure:

These would be true in political arena as well – but I will be concentrating our application on spiritual leadership within the church

Really 2 main figures: watchmen/watch dogs and shepherds

Motyer: The titles *watchmen* (10a) and *shepherds* (11c) contrast two aspects of the true leader – to guard from external danger and to care for internal need.

But 6 areas of failure highlighted

A. Failure to Exercise Discernment – Blind Watchmen

*“His watchmen are blind,
All of them know nothing.”*

What should be the function of watchmen?

Oswalt: They do not understand the critical nature of their task, they do not know the desperate nature of the times, they do not know the nature of their people, they do not know their own failings. As a result, in a changed figure, they are like watchdogs (cf. Job 30:1) that cannot bark, utterly useless for the task they have been given.

Borgman: What could provoke God to call the beasts of the field to come and make a meal of His people? Diagnosis of the watchmen; what were they called to do? Stood on hill or city wall as a defense mechanism; **Is. 52:7-8**; morphed into more of a prophetic role to look for God’s work and proclaim it to the people; taking on a ministerial function; **Ezek. 3:17** – communicate God’s warnings; **Ezek. 33:1ff**; role of the preacher – called to warn and exhort and rebuke of dangers both from within and without; **Acts 20:27** “*free from the blood of all men*”; “*Be on guard*”; the problem is the watchmen are blind; of no use; an oxymoron; not lacking real sight but had no discernment; couldn’t see danger because they couldn’t see truth; second diagnosis: they know nothing; need knowledge of the Word of God, of truth;

Positive Example / Standard:

Matt. 16:3 “*Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?*”

2 Tim. 2:15 “*a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth*”

Jesus came as the *Logos* – bringing God’s message down from heaven; revealing who God is as

well as the message of God; knowing all things regarding the future and regarding the heart of man

B. Failure to Sound Warning – Mute Dogs

*“All of them are dumb dogs
unable to bark,”*

Let's not be critical or judge others

Let's be loving; don't say anything harsh or unpleasant

What does the Bible say about watchmen who don't sound the cry of warning?

Scooter might not have been a very intimidating watchdog, but at least he would bark

Borgman: mute dogs; unable to bark; supposed to lift up his voice and cry out; dumb as in mute; dog appears 32 times in OT and viewed as contemptible; a scavenger; dishonorable persons or evil doers; Ps. 22 – *“dogs have surrounded me”*; called Gentiles dogs; negative imagery continues in NT – applied to the false circumcision – you are not the dogs, they are the dogs; nasty way to refer to someone;

Positive Example / Standard:

No false message of peace and prosperity proclaimed by Christ or the apostles; their messages were full of warning and rebuke

Plenty of bark in the warnings and rebukes issued by Jesus – just look at **Matt. 23**

Acts 20:27 Paul didn't shrink back from warning them and proclaiming the whole counsel of God

C. Failure to Stand Guard in State of Alertness – Lazy Dreamers

*“Dreamers lying down,
who love to slumber;”*

Not exactly the ideal guard: blind, mute, asleep

No work ethic; looking for a life of ease and comfort

Look at what Jesus had to say about the urgency of staying alert, keeping watch, being on guard, not falling asleep

Borgman: Lazy and greedy; not dreamers but sleepers; slumber is epitome of laziness – Prov. 6 and 24;

Positive Example / Standard:

Matt. 25:1-13 Parable of the Ten Virgins – *“be on the alert”* for the return of Christ

Matt. 26:41 – *Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation*

Ps. 121: 3-4 *“He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”*

2 Cor. 6:4-10 ministry was not a life of slothfulness or ease for the Apostle Paul

D. Failure to Practice Contentment – Greedy Dogs

“And the dogs are greedy,

they are not satisfied.”

Love for money is the root of all kinds of evil

Oswalt: These people have wide-open throats that cannot be filled, no matter how much they swallow . . . Having forsaken the real meaning of their lives for gratification of desire, they find no satisfaction there either.

Borgman: strong appetites and they don't know satisfaction; “*whose god is their belly*”; they are opposite of what they are supposed to be; possess all the disqualifying characteristics;

MacArthur: Someone needs to say this plainly: The faith healers and health-and-wealth preachers who dominate religious television are shameless frauds. Their message is not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is nothing spiritual or miraculous about their on-stage chicanery. It is all a devious ruse designed to take advantage of desperate people. They are not Godly ministers but greedy impostors who corrupt the Word of God for money's sake. They are not real pastors who shepherd the flock of God but hirelings whose only design is to fleece the sheep. Their love of money is glaringly obvious in what they say as well as how they live. They claim to possess great spiritual power, but in reality they are rank materialists and enemies of everything holy.

online article at <http://www.gty.org/Blog/B091207>

Positive Example / Standard:

Luke 4 – Temptation account of Jesus – “*Man shall not live on bread alone*”

Matt. 6:33 “*Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*” – no anxiety about material provisions

Phil. 4:1-13

1 Tim. 6:9-11

2 Tim. 2:3-4

2 Pet. 2:3

E. Failure to Shepherd Wisely – Foolish Shepherds

“And they are shepherds who have no understanding;”

Look at Jeremiah's indictment of foolish shepherds

Borgman: Imagery of Shepherds; same group; no discernment; no knowledge; role is to both guard and feed the sheep; Jer. 3:15; Word of God is rod and staff that protects the flock and the pasture that feeds the flock;

Positive Example / Standard:

Psalm 23

John 10:11-18

F. Failure to Unselfishly Serve God with Integrity – Selfish Extortioners

*They have all turned to their own way,
Each one to his unjust gain, to the last one.”*

Unwilling to place their dependence upon God and to do things His way
Not standing up for the rights of widows and orphans, but exploiting others to feather their own nest unjustly

What an indictment of the nation Israel – corrupt leadership all the way around

Borgman: Jer. 10: 21 “the shepherds have become stupid”; “they have turned to their own way” – Is. 53:6; sinful rebellion; self-willed; should be submitted to the Chief Shepherd; they pursue unjust gain; easy life, easy money; turning the ministry into opportunity for their own gain;

Young: when greedy gain fills the hearts of ministers, disaster is sure to follow; their usefulness in God's service is at an end

Parunak: Note a symmetry in the description of the dogs and the shepherds. Each has two main failings. The first failing is in their lack of attentiveness to the dangers confronting the flock. The second is in their selfish focus on their own appetites.

Is. 28:7-8

Is. 29:9-11

Positive Example / Standard: Examine motivation for ministry

1 Tim. 3:3 Elder must be free from the “*love of money*”

1 Pet. 5:2 “*not for sordid gain*”

2 Cor. 4:2 “*but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*” – transparency and accountability in ministry

III. (:12) DELUDED INTOXICATION OF UNDISCERNING LEADERS – The Leaders Pursue Their Hedonistic Lusters in a False Sense of Security

*“Come,’ they say, ‘let us get wine, and let us drink heavily of strong drink;
And tomorrow will be like today, only more so.”*

Inebriated optimism and careless self indulgence in the lusts of the flesh

Constable: Rather than caring for the sheep unselfishly, these shepherds went off and got drunk—repeatedly. They indulged themselves at the expense of their charges, and in the process, became enslaved and incapable of fulfilling their responsibilities.

Don't imagine the future will look like the present

Borgman: they abuse alcohol; **Is. 28:7** “*reel with strong drink*”; they are presumptuous and complacent; **James 4:13-16**; arrogant practical atheism; anticipating enjoying same debauchery tomorrow, only intensified; **Jer. 12:10** – they end up ruining the flock of God; **Jer. 23: 1**; **Ezek. 34** – prophecy against the shepherds of my people – call them into account; hold them responsible; confront and denounce self serving leaders; Elmer Gantry more reality than spooof today in the evangelical camp; Look at present day scandals: Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggert

Parunak: Both Israel's watchdogs and her shepherds were self-serving. We have already read our Lord's condemnation of self-serving shepherds, and the NT continues this theme in warning against those who would serve for pay.

Act 20:33-35 *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have shewed you all things, how that **so labouring** ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

1Pe 5:1-3 *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; **not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind**; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

Motyer: To incompetence (10), self-concern (11ab) and selfish preoccupation (11cef), the rulers added complacency about tomorrow.

Cf. James 4:13-16

Wikipedia article: In 2007, [Senator Chuck Grassley \(R-IA\)](#) opened a probe into the finances of six televangelists who preach a "[prosperity gospel](#)"- The probe investigated reports of lavish lifestyles by televangelists including: fleets of [Rolls Royces](#), palatial mansions, private jets, and other expensive items purportedly paid for by television viewers who donate due to the ministries' encouragement of offerings. The six that were investigated are:

On 6 January 2011 Senator Grassley released his review of the six ministries response to his inquiry. He called for a further congressional review of tax-exemption laws for religious group

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Televangelism>

CONCLUSION:

Servant leadership is what the Great Shepherd wants for all of His under shepherds;

That is why the **model of plurality of elder church govt** is so important with its checks and balances and with its resistance to the elevation of one man to some type of superior role – like that of Diotrephes who loves to be first; who loves all of the perks; who is the ultimate in self serving leadership

We don't emphasize these distinctives of Solid Rock Community Church without sound justification; the Bible makes a big deal out of these issues and we are right to make a big deal of them as well; these are not personal soap box issues; these are the very battleground issues where Satan seeks to undermine the advancement of the kingdom of God in this present dispensation of the Church Age

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In the political realm today, where do we see examples of corruption and self serving leaders who are amassing a fortune for themselves rather than serving to protect and defend?
- 2) In the evangelical church today, where do we see such examples?
- 3) What safeguards do we have in our church to protect the integrity of ministry?
- 4) How can we be more faithful as watchmen and shepherds of God's flock?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: In vv. 9-12, the Gentile nations (depicted as beasts of the field) are exhorted to come to devour slumbering Israel. Israel's watchmen (their leaders, certainly including the prophets and probably the kings as well) are described in v. 10 as blind and ignorant, dumb dogs unable to bark. Instead of guarding the flock, they are asleep (compare Acts 20:28-29). In v. 11, the "dog" figure is again used, but in a slightly different fashion. Not only are the leaders not watchdogs, they are greedy, having an insatiable appetite to devour the flock rather than care for it (see Ezek 34:1-10). They are supposed to be shepherding the flock, but instead they act like greedy dogs, with no understanding, each one going his own way for his own gain.

David Thompson:

WHEN JESUS CHRIST RETURNS TO REIGN, THOSE WHO HAVE PURPOSED TO GOVERN THEIR LIVES IN RIGHTEOUS WAYS WILL BE BLESSED AND THOSE WHO HAVE NOT WILL BE CURSED.

DESCRIPTION #2 – The description of those who will be cursed when Christ returns. **56:9-11**

(Cursed Picture #1) - The religious leaders were blind . **56:10a**

(Cursed Picture #2) - All of the leaders knew nothing . **56:10b**

(Cursed Picture #3) - All of the religious leaders were like mute dogs. **56:10c**

(Cursed Picture #4) - All of the religious leaders were lazy dreamers . **56:10d**

(Cursed Picture #5) - All of the religious leaders were greedy . **56:11a**

(Cursed Picture #6) - They were religious leaders with no knowledge . **56:11b**

(Cursed Picture #7) - They were religious shepherds who have all turned to their own way.

56:11c

(Cursed Picture #8) - They were religious leaders who are all after unjust gain. **56:11d**

(Cursed Picture #9) - They were religious leaders who love to get drunk . **56:12a**

(Cursed Picture #10) - They were religious leaders who live like there is no tomorrow . **56:12b**

Motyer: The critique of leadership offered here is wholly one of character not of policy. The opinion that from the point of view of the public it matters only what the government's policy is, but the private lives of leaders is their own affair, finds no support. The juxtaposition of 56:9-12 with 57:1-21 insists that private wrong and public right do not co-exist.

Brian Borgman: Blind Watchmen and Ignorant Shepherds

In contrast with eunuchs who dedicate themselves to genuine worship; Those who should be the closest end up being judged and condemned. **In Praise of Folly** by Erasmus – goes after the politicians and philosophers and clergy with heavy satire; attacks a carnal, self-serving, self-seeking clergy; true in our day as well;

Even the best of men are men at best; nobody is immune to the temptations of ministry; we are all depraved

- we need response of humility; guard our hearts
- we need response of prayer for our leaders

Phil Pockras: Sleeping Dogs and Abusive Shepherds

Exposing false leaders for what they are; supposed to be trustworthy and leaders among the people of God; illustration from Rom. 11 of grafting process; here we are looking at the ones broken off; God invites predators to come into his flock of sheep; Disciplining the true Israel of God and exposing and judging the hypocritical leaders; useless watchdogs and abusers of the flock; civil and religious leaders; the magistrates and the ministry; devoured by the Babylonians and by the Romans in AD 70; going along with the culture of the day instead of warning against idolatry and the filth of the age;

They are diligent and wide awake in protecting their own selfish interests; they are greedy; constantly wanting more and more; they never have enough; greedy of their own position of leaders of the people of God; hated any threat to their money, their place and their power; taking care of #1; concerned for their popularity and their power; you can make a lot of money if you have no scruples;

TEXT: Isaiah 57:1-21

TITLE: THERE IS NO PEACE FOR THE WICKED

BIG IDEA:

**MAN-MADE RELIGION CAN NEVER PRODUCE PEACE –
PEACE ONLY COMES FROM THE SOVEREIGN GRACE OF A HOLY GOD**

INTRODUCTION:

Everybody has an **innate longing for Peace**. The troubled and anxious and fearful long to have their agitated heart calmed; The sick and the dying long to enter into an eternal state of peace. Even those that are the most motivated to stir up war and strife envision at the end a peace of their own making which they will then be able to enjoy. Remember those caricatures of the dumb blonds of beauty pageants who respond to the question about their one desire for this world with the empty wish of “World Peace.” Or the bumper stickers that loudly proclaim the same wishful thinking as if just desiring this end will bring it about. But **where does peace come from?** Religion represents man’s attempts to obtain peace. “*Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?*” (Matt. 19:16) – that was the question of the rich man who came to Jesus with an emptiness in his soul despite all of his material possessions. All pagan idolatry and adulterous alliances are directed towards achieving this elusive goal.

**MAN-MADE RELIGION CAN NEVER PRODUCE PEACE –
PEACE ONLY COMES FROM THE SOVEREIGN GRACE OF A HOLY GOD**

I. (:1-2) PEACE IS NOT PERCEIVABLE BY THE WICKED -- CONSOLATION FOR THE DEPARTED RIGHTEOUS

A. Death of the Righteous Means Nothing to a Corrupt Culture

*“The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart;
And devout men are taken away, while no one understands.”*

Don’t forget the context of corrupt leadership from the previous chapter
Any society should be concerned to see that the righteous flourish and increase in number;
Irony here is that nobody notices

Proverbs speaks about the corresponding cycles:

Prov. 11:10 “*When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, And when the wicked perish, there is joyful shouting.*”

Cf.: Ps. 12:1; Prov. 28:12, 28; 29:2; Micah 7:2 - **Borgman**

Motyer: The alternation between singular and plural is designed to express both the general truth of the safety and peace of the righteous and to apply it to each individual.

Don’t expect to have any type of significant impact on a corrupt culture; you will not be missed or lamented

Illustration: Memorial service for Mr. Nick

Being “*taken away*” could refer to persecution and more of a violent death; What was the impact on society when Jesus was put to death?

Beall: The righteous die, unnoticed, in an evil world (57:1-2). In 57:1-2, the plight of the righteous in a world dominated by wicked leaders is indicated. The righteous man dies, but no one notices, no one recognizes that the righteous one is actually better off, because only at his death can he find peace and rest. . . The implication is that the earth is so wicked that it is actually a blessing to die!

Constable: As the leadership of the nation grew worse, the number of righteous people shrank, without people perceiving what was happening. God allowed this disappearance of the devout to spare them the judgment He would bring on the evil nation and its ungodly rulers. Few people in the nation, however, understood this reason for the depletion of the righteous. . . God will do this when He removes the church from the earth before He brings the Tribulation on it. He did it in the past when he removed Lot before He destroyed Sodom.

Parunak: The suffering of the righteous is a major theological dilemma, one that motivates large portions of Scripture. But the corrupt flock is so blind that they don’t give it a moment’s attention.

[Possible intimations of the Rapture of the church here]

B. Death of the Righteous Means Deliverance from a Corrupt Culture

*“For the righteous man is taken away from evil,
He enters into peace;
They rest in their beds,
Each one who walked in his upright way.”*

Oswalt: two alternatives for understanding the place of *evil* in the object clause . . . One possibility is “as a result of.” On this reading the sense would be that because of the evil in a society of corrupt leadership, the righteous are being persecuted to death. The other possibility would be “from the presence of.” Here the sense would be that the righteous are being taken out of the society by God because of the increasing evil in the society and the evil end to which it is rushing. The typical usage of this compound preposition seems to favor the latter interpretation (cf. 20:6; 30:11; Gen. 7:7; Hos. 11:2).

Sometimes we look at the death of our beloved only from the standpoint of our loss; but we fail to also consider the blessing to the one who has departed and been delivered from more suffering and abuse and hardship

Other times people make vacuous statements in generality about the destiny of the departed as if everyone goes to a better place and is better off; Not so – There is no peace for the wicked; this is a very targeted and narrow blessing

Motyer: How blessed are the Lord’s people in death! Their death is purposeful and leads to entry into peace and the experience of rest.

Oswalt: The leaders go on their own ways using their positions to secure for themselves increasing comfort and pleasure with decreasing satisfaction, while all around them the flock is being devoured, and one by one the righteous disappear, not to be replaced.

Calvin makes reference to the death of Luther before his time:

Who was snatched from the world a short time before that terrible calamity befell Germany, which he had foretold many years before, when he exclaimed loudly against that contempt of the Gospel and that wickedness and licentiousness which everywhere prevailed. Frequently had he entreated the Lord to call him out of this life before he beheld that dreadful punishment, the anticipation of which filled him with trembling and horror. And he obtained it from the Lord. Soon after his death, lo, a sudden and unforeseen war sprang up, by which Germany was terribly afflicted, when nothing was farther from her thoughts than the dread of such a calamity.

II. (:3-13) PEACE IS PURSUED IN FUTILE WAYS BY THE WICKED -- CONDEMNATION FOR PAGAN IDOLATRY AND ADULTEROUS ALLIANCES (MAN-MADE RELIGION)

A. (:3) Summons to the Trial

*“But come here, you sons of a sorceress,
Offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute.”*

Sorceress (Deut. 18:10-12; Is. 2:6) and *prostitute (Is. 1:21)* represent the female partner in the relationship – addresses both of these motifs in section on condemnation

Adulterer represents the male partner

Motyer: Sorceress is one who had opened herself to the “control” of a spirit or supernatural entity. . . Adultery . . . expresses the principle (unfaithfulness to the covenant); prostitution the practice (devotion to lovers other than the Lord). The adulterer gives his love elsewhere; the prostitute takes other lovers."

Remember, we are not talking about foreign pagans here like the Canaanites or Ammonites or Moabites or other “ites;” we are talking about the home grown pagans within the nation of Israel; descendants of Abraham and Sarah – that’s whose bloodline they proudly boast in

Pretty strong language of contempt and indictment – biblical way to say “son of a bitch” – Can you imagine today referring to the most respected political and religious leaders of our day (much less the hoi polloi) in such degrading terms? We need to hear how shocking this sounds. This section is going to have some of the most lurid and sexually explicit material in the scriptures – definitely R rated

How could these people imagine that they had any type of secure or favored standing before a holy God? Such a trial is not going to turn out in their favor.

Oswalt: Throughout the Bible idolatry and adultery are linked, because both focus on the priority of the individual’s needs, the attempt to gain power, and the devaluation of submission and trust.

B. (:4) Summary Charge of Rebellion

1. The Offended Sovereign

“Against whom do you jest?”

Against whom do you open wide your mouth and stick out your tongue?"

Parunak: *Against whom do ye sport yourselves?*--The uniform usage of this construction in earlier passages is positive, referring to delighting oneself in the Lord or in his blessings

Psa 37:4 *Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

Psa 37:11 *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

So we should not understand the question as suggesting a negative answer. We might better translate, "*In whom is your delight?*"

The Lord Jesus taught,

Mat 6:21 *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

The true sign of our relation to God is not how we behave, or what we believe, but what brings us pleasure. The true believer will delight in the Lord, in his Word, and in time with his people. If we find these things a burden and unpleasant duty, that's a danger sign that they are not our true treasure, and some idol has crept in. . . gestures of pride and mockery

People lose sight of the fact that the sins they commit are an offense against the person of God; they are making fun of God; they are sticking their tongue out at God; they are shaking their fist or rebellion against God

Would you let your children stick their tongue out at you and show such disdain and disrespect? Absolutely no fear of God here – that is the type of corrupt culture in which we live today

Eccles 5:2 – warns us to be cautious and use few words in the presence of the Holy One

Young: Enlarging the mouth and prolonging the tongue were signs of derision (cf. Ps. 22:8; 35:21; Lam. 2:16).

2. The Rebellious Offenders

*"Are you not children of rebellion,
Offspring of deceit,"*

This is just piling on by the indignant prophet; but here the emphasis is more on their own depraved character as matching that of the depravity of their parents

- Characterized by *rebellion*

- Characterized by *deceit*

C. (5-10) Specific Offenses of Pagan Idolatry and Adulterous Alliances

[list is not necessarily all mutually exclusive; some overlap]

1. (:5a) Cults of Life -- Sexually Perverse Fertility Worship – Location = the high places
"Who inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every luxuriant tree,"

Constable: Vs. 5 -- They were rebellious and deceitful in that they practiced fertility worship and child sacrifice. They believed connection with nature, rather than a spiritual relationship with the Creator, would yield fertility. They also believed that sacrificing the next generation would guarantee the preservation of the present generation. Of course, the opposite is true. God's people burned with lust as they carried out these pagan rites in the places thought to be most conducive to their success. "Oaks" (terebinths, Heb. *'elim*) may refer to large trees, not a particular variety of tree. These trees were the places and objects of idol worship. How different a relationship with Yahweh based on trust would have been.

2. (:5b) Cults of Death -- Morally Perverse Child Sacrifice – Location = the ravines
“*Who slaughter the children in the ravines, under the clefts of the crags?*”

For example, in **2 Kings 21:6** where Manasseh offered up his son and dealt in soothsaying, mediums, and wizards

Chuck Smith: It seems unthinkable to us in this age in which we live that parents would take their little babies and throw them into the fire, which was a part of the worship of Baal and of Molech. If you go over to Jerusalem to the Museum of Natural History, in one area they have a case filled with little idols that have been uncovered in the land. I saw one of the idols of Baal, a little iron figure with arms out and hands in an upturned position like this. And in their worship of this idol, they would heat it until it would turn a glowing red-hot color from the heat, and then they would place their live babies in these little outstretched arms. And they would be consumed in the fire as they worship the god. These are the things that God is speaking out against. Practices that His people followed as they thought so little of life that they were willing to sacrifice their own babies unto their gods.

Cf. atrocity of abortion – How many are sacrificed every year to the idol of independence and selfish living?

Motyer: There may be a deliberate contrast here between cults of life (fertility) and cults of death (human sacrifice) as summarizing the total range of hateful affronts to the Lord.

3. (:6) Futile Exercise of Idolatry – Location: the rocky creek beds of the ravines
“*Among the smooth stones of the ravine is your portion, they are your lot;
Even to them you have poured out a libation, You have made a grain offering.
Shall I relent concerning these things?*”

Constable: Vs. 6 -- Having chosen to worship in the wadis, the apostate Israelites would have to be content to have the rocks of the wadis as their gods (cf. Rom. 1:20-25). A wadi (Heb. *nahal*) is a streambed that is dry most of the year but in the rainy season becomes a rushing torrent. As mountaintops became places of worship because they were close to heaven and the gods, so wadis in valleys became places of worship because they were close to Sheol and the dead. The unfaithful in Israel even made drink and grain offerings to these rocks. This was not the kind of behavior that would cause God to change His mind about bringing judgment on His people.

Parunak: The “*smooth things*” may be stones (as our version has it) that served as idols. Then the Lord is saying, “*You have chosen them as your gods. Enjoy them.*”

But a stronger interpretation is possible, perhaps in the form of a pun. The root translated “smooth” is used in Ugaritic, a West Semitic language dating to the time of Moses, to describe dead people, and graves were often dug in the walls of the wadis (**2 Kings 23:6**). One function of those who deal in black arts is to call up the dead, as Saul asked the witch of Endor to do for him with respect to Samuel (**1 Sam 28:8**). In violation of **Deut 18:10-11**, they have engaged in these forbidden practices. Now God says: “*You want to consult the dead? You may go join them.*”

Parunak: The verb . . . here has the meaning “calm myself, retract punishment.” God is making a pun with the word “enflaming yourselves” in v. 5, which sounds similar in Hebrew “*Should I soothe my wrath while you are enflaming yourselves in lust?*” The question is rhetorical. It would be completely irrational for them to expect God to stand by while they rebel against him.

4. (:7) Nature Worship – Location: the high mountains

*“Upon a high and lofty mountain you have made your bed.
You also went up there to offer sacrifice.”*

Parunak: The OT frequently mentions the “high places” of idolatrous worship. However, up until the time of Solomon, the term does not have a negative association. Even Samuel offered at a high place (1 Sam 9:12-14, 19, 25), and the Tabernacle was at a high place during the reign of David (1 Kings 3:4). The term takes on a negative association only after Solomon set up an idolatrous high place **1 Kings 11:1-8**. His motive was to please his foreign wives, whom he took as diplomatic gestures, to build relations with the nations round about. He turned his trust from the Lord to the pagan nations around him. . .

5. (:8) Sexual Perversion of every kind – Location: the bedroom

*“And behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your sign;
Indeed, far removed from Me, you have uncovered yourself;
And have gone up and made your bed wide.
And you have made an agreement for yourself with them,
You have loved their bed,
You have looked on their manhood.”*

Oswalt: The reference to *door* and *doorposts* is reminiscent of the commands in Deut. 6:9 and 11:20 about placing a portion of the Law on the doorposts of the house.

“*sign*” -- some type of memorial or phallic symbol??

Casual sex = “*wide bed*” vs. marriage bed which has been ordained by God to be very narrow – the one flesh relationship of one man and one woman for life

You cannot hide your disgraceful actions from God

“*manhood*” – “hand” – it does seem likely that the suggestion first put forward by J. C. Doderlein that hand is a euphemism for “penis” is correct.

6. (:9) Unfaithful Political Alliances – Location: foreign nations

*“And you have journeyed to the king with oil
and increased your perfumes;*

*You have sent your envoys a great distance,
and made them go down to Sheol.*

Constable: Vs. 9 -- Some Israelites had also traveled far from home to worship other gods. This may be a reference to making political alliances with other nations and then worshipping their gods with them (cf. Ezek. 23). The king in view may be the most prominent foreign ruler at the time Isaiah wrote this prophecy. These political trips involved great distances. The negotiators would take the oils and perfumes used in the worship of foreign gods with them. Over time these instances of idolatry had increased. But instead of going to foreign nations, Isaiah said these envoys were really going to Sheol because God would slay His people for their unfaithfulness to Him.

Oswalt: Now the prophet adds foreign gods to the idol collection. The people have gone to the trees, the wadis, and the mountains looking for lovers with which to prostitute themselves, but that was not enough. They must seek out lovers from far away.

7. (:10) Perseverance in Pagan Idolatry and Adulterous Alliances

*“You were tired out by the length of your road,
yet you did not say, ‘It is hopeless.’
You found renewed strength,
therefore you did not faint.”*

Parunak: It’s amazing how persistently people will seek help from powerless worldly resources, while giving up on God if he does not immediately do what they please. . . All the emphasis is on their self-sufficiency.

Young: refers to all the efforts that Israel was making to accomplish its ends. It is the nation’s full and complete devotion to idolatry. Whatever Israel could do in the service of the false gods and idols it was ready to do. Apparently no task or service was too great. Nothing seemed to weary Israel in its desire for idolatry.

D. (:11) Sarcastic Indictment of Their Failure to Fear God

1. Failure to Remember God

*“Of whom were you worried and fearful,
When you lied, and did not remember Me, nor give Me a thought?”*

2. Failure to Respond to God’s Forbearance

*“Was I not silent even for a long time
So you do not fear Me?”*

E. (:12-13a) Sentence of Condemnation is Inescapable

1. (:12) No Deliverance Via Imagined Good Works

*“I will declare your righteousness and your deeds,
But they will not profit you.”*

Massive understatement – not only not profit but they will condemn you

2. (:13a) No Deliverance Via Vacuous Devoted Idols

*“When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you.
But the wind will carry all of them up, and a breath will take them away.”*

REMINDER: (:13b) Consolation to the Righteous

*“But he who takes refuge in Me
shall inherit the land, and shall possess My holy mountain.”*

Circling back to the theme from the beginning of the chapter

Constable: In that day of judgment, the idols that the Israelites had trusted in, even in captivity, would be of no help. They would be as useless and lightweight as what the winds blow away. In contrast, those who made Yahweh their refuge from the storms of life would inherit the land and possess the Zion of the future Millennium (cf. 11:9; 24:23; 25:6-8; 65:25; 66:20; Matt. 5:5).

Martin: “inherit the land” – Ps. 25:12-13; 37:9, 11, 22, 29; 69:35-36

III. (:14-21) PEACE IS ONLY PROVIDED BY THE SOVEREIGN GRACE OF A HOLY GOD -- CONVERSION FOR THE CONTRITE WHO FORSAKE THEIR WICKED WAYS

Delitzsch [quoted by **Young**] aptly observes that the previous verses constituting the first section of the prophecy are filled with threatening and conclude with a brief statement of promise. This [vs. 14] and the following verses constitute the opposite, being filled with blessing and promise and closing with a brief statement of threatening.

A. (:14-19) Conversion for the Contrite – Time of Restoration has come

1. (:14) Preparation for Conversion

*“And it shall be said,
‘Build up, build up,
Prepare the way,
Remove every obstacle out of the way of My people.”*

Sounds like a mission for John the Baptist – “*Prepare the way of the Lord*” – except here the preparation is not for the Lord to come to His people but for God’s people to return to the Lord

Parunak: This is the start of a new section, rather than the end of v. 13. That in turn means that the waw should be understood as the ordinary waw, not waw relative, and the verb translated as past rather than as future (continuing the imperfects of 13b). There are three reasons for this:

The first reason is technical. The two verbs in the previous verse are both imperfects, and there is no reason for the writer to switch to sequential forms here.

Second, the antecedent of the pronoun in “*my people*” in Isaiah is most commonly the Lord, not the righteous. Even the exceptions are Isaiah delivering the word of the Lord. The title is never placed on the lips of a third party. Thus we should understand that the speaker changes.

Third, each of the three sections of ch. 40-66 contains such a command to prepare the way:

Isa 40:3 *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

Isa 62:10 *Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.*

In both other places, it is paragraph initial. So it probably is here.

Oswalt: making it possible for the people to return to God. Whatever prevents them from coming to him and taking refuge in him is to be taken out of the way. The language is that of highway building, which appears throughout the book. The roadbed is to be raised up above the surrounding countryside so that it can have an adequate foundation under it. All the bumps and potholes are to be removed from it so that nothing can stand in the people's way.

Young: Must not be limited to a reference to a return from Babylon . . . In the great eschatological return, when God will gather together all His people that are dispersed (because of their sin), there will be no obstacles to the fulfillment of His purposes.

2. (:15-16) Commitment to Conversion

a. (:15a) Commitment to Conversion Cannot Compromise God's Exalted Holiness

How can God accomplish this dramatic regathering and revival described in vs. 14??

Oswalt: Vs. 15 -- one of the finest one-sentence summations of biblical theology in the Bible.

1) Exalted / Preeminent / Majestic *"For thus says the high and exalted One"*

Is. 6:1 – same exact phrase

Ezekiel 28 – Condemnation of King of Tyre – *"Because your heart is lifted up and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods'"*

Message of Colossians – Christ has the preeminence – **3:1** *"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."*

James 4 *"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit therefore to God."*

2) Eternal *"Who lives forever,"* [inhabits eternity]

Source of all life

Jesus defines Himself as *"The Way, the Truth, and the Life"*

Understand the limitations of our finiteness; distinction between the Creator and His creatures;

What a privilege it is to be granted eternal life – **John 17:3** “*This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*”

A. W. Tozer – **The Eternity of God** – cf. **Ps. 90:1-2**; “*O Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*”

“*everlasting*” – some people think it means only lasting to the **end of the age** as when the bible speaks of everlasting mountains; want to escape doctrine of everlasting hell; but when applied to the person of God always means endlessness;

3) Holy

“*whose name is Holy,*”

Phil Johnson: Vs. 15 Holiness is at the heart of all true worship; the sum of all of God’s perfections; not just the performance of religious activities; Holy is one of the names that God goes by; **Ps. 111:9** “*Holy and awesome is His name*”; the essence of who God is; vision of Is. 6; **Rev. 4:8** --that threefold expression “*Holy, Holy, Holy*” is unique to this aspect of God – not found with any of the other characteristics of God; the moral excellence of God; distinct, separate, different – refers to God’s **otherness** from all of His creation and His **separation** from all evil; pure light in whom there is no darkness at all; Hab. 1:3; Lev. 10:3; Ex. 15:11 glorious in holiness; **1 Sam. 2:2** “*There is no one holy like the Lord, indeed, there is no one besides You.*” if people could begin to grasp that it would put an end to most of man’s sinful problems

Our response: we are called to be holy just as God is holy - **1 Pet. 1:15**

b. (:15b) Commitment to Conversion Requires Contrition

*“I dwell on a high and holy place,
and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit
In order to revive the spirit of the lowly
and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*

Chiastic structure here: contrite / lowly / lowly / contrite

Piper: God will heal them by humbling them. He will cure the patient by crushing his pride. If only the crushed and humble enjoy God's fellowship (v. 15), and if Israel's sickness is a proud and willful rebellion (v. 17), and if God promises to heal them (v. 18), then his healing must be humbling and his cure must be a crushed spirit.

1. It is *surprising* that the lofty One whose name is Holy dwells with crushed and humble saints.
2. It is *not compromising* when the lofty One whose name is Holy dwells with crushed and humble saints.
3. It is *healing* when the lofty One whose name is Holy dwells with crushed and humble saints.

Motyer: When, therefore, the poem goes on to speak of others being taken as the family of God to share his dwelling, it is clear that this is not done by any reduction of the standards or the dignity of God, nor through any adjustment or compromise of his nature.

Sovereignty of God to work in the heart of sinful man to convert it and regenerate it and give to him a new heart of flesh instead of stone

Man cannot schedule divine revival – it makes me cringe when I see the revival meetings scheduled for such and such a date as if we could dictate to God His timetable for revival; the work of reviving is solely the gracious work of God

- c. (:16) Commitment to Conversion is the Background for God’s Discipline
*“For I will not contend forever,
neither will I always be angry;
For the spirit would grow faint before Me,
and the breath of those whom I have made.”*

Young: Inasmuch as God is the Creator of human souls, He will have mercy upon them.

God is not out to obliterate mankind and stamp them out forever; His purposes are rooted in His mercy and His plan of redemption

3. (:17) Obstacles to Conversion = Iniquity and Rebellion
*“Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain
I was angry and struck him;
I hid My face and was angry,
And he went on turning away, in the way of his heart.”*

“unjust gain” -- Speaks to the “unscrupulous pursuit of self-interest” **Motyer** – described in chap. 56

2 Responses from God:

- Anger leading to strong discipline – “*struck him*”
- Anger leading to withdrawal of fellowship and favor – “*hid my face*”

Stubborn Response on the part of sinful man:

- no change of heart but continued rebellion

4. (:18-19) Results of Conversion = Healing and Peace
a. (:18-19a) Healing and Comfort Leading to Praise
*“I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;
I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners,
Creating the praise of the lips.”*

Divine initiative in the healing process; not due to man reforming his ways

Sovereign grace at work behind the scenes here = only way for sinful man to obtain peace with God

Is. 12:1-2 reversal from God’s anger to gracious salvation

- b. (:19b) Peace and Healing for Both Gentile and Jew
*“Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near,
Says the LORD, ‘and I will heal him.’”*

Ephes. 2:17

B. (:20-21) No Consolation for the Wicked

1. (:20) Tumultuous Upheaval – No Quiet

*“But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet,
And its waters toss up refuse and mud.”*

Young: from the heart of the ungodly proceed thoughts, words, and works, unclean and ungodly, the mire and mud of a restless conscience.

2. (:21) Perpetual Agitation – No Peace

“There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.”

Constable: The wicked contrast with the humble who take advantage of God's provision of grace. Far from being at peace, their existence is as tumultuous as the tossing sea, which is incapable of being at rest. Their constant agitation creates many other problems, like the raging sea casts up debris and mud. No *shalom* is the portion of the wicked (cf. **48:22**).

Beall: The same tragic words were uttered in **48:22**, the end of the first section of the second half of the book. Now, we come to the end of the second nine-chapter section, and the same conclusion is reached.

CONCLUSION:

Reflect on the words of the famous hymn

*Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of unholy alliances do idolaters make today – demonstrating their true loyalties?
- 2) What tends to disrupt peace in your life?
- 3) What will be some of the obstacles that God will have to remove in the end times as He prepares to save the nation of Israel?
- 4) Are you demonstrating a humble and contrite heart right now in your relationship to God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Thompson: WHEN GOD’S OWN PEOPLE REJECT GOD’S WORD AND GOD’S LEADERS, GOD WILL REMOVE HIS LEADERS AND HIS PEOPLE WILL GET WHAT THEY DESERVE.

There are **three prophetic results** of what will happen after God's righteous people are removed:

PROPHETIC RESULT #1 – What most people will do. **57:3-10**

Action #1 - People will become demonic . **57:3a**

Action #2 - People will become immoral . **57:3b**

Action #3 - People will become arrogantly verbal . **57:4**

Action #4 - People will invent their own worship . **57:5-8**

Action #5 - People will be very zealous . **57:9-10**

PROPHETIC RESULT #2 – What most people won't do. **57:11-13**

Reality #1 - Most will not worry about God or fear God. **57:11a**

Reality #2 - Most will not remember God or even think about God. **57:11b**

Reality #3 - Most don't realize that their works mean nothing. **57:12**

Reality #4 - Most don't realize their idols are nothing and can do nothing. **57:13a**

Reality #5 - Most don't realize that one who turns to the Lord will inherit everything. **57:13**

PROPHETIC RESULT #3 – What God will eventually do for some people. **57:14-21**

Action #1 - God will eventually remove every obstacle so My people can have a great life. **57:14**

Action #2 - God will eventually revive a relationship with His humble and contrite people. **57:15**

Action #3 - God will eventually remove His anger from His people. **57:16-17**

(Reason #1) - God was angry because of unjust gain . **57:17a**

(Reason #2) - God was angry because of ungodly direction . **57:17b**

Action #4 - God will heal and comfort the one who turns to Him. **57:18-19**

Action #5 - God will condemn the wicked. **57:20-21**

Parunak: This section is an instance of the covenant lawsuit form which we considered earlier in ch. 1.21.

This form has a standard format, much as a letter does with its outside and inside address, salutation, body, and signature. These include

- a summons to the trial (v. 3),
- an interrogative accusation (vv. 4-5),
- a detailed account of the defendant's rebellion against the sovereign (vv. 6-11),
- and the threat of judgment (vv. 12-13a).

This form is common in the prophets, and also known from secular literature (the Mari archives, dating to 1800 BC; the epic of Tukulti-Ninurta from about 1200, and several Hittite examples from the midsecond millennium). So by the time of Isaiah, it was an established, if somewhat archaic, formula of judicial accusation. Recognizing this form allows us to have a better feel for the overtones that the Lord's language would bring to his hearers.

Phil Johnson: Humbled by God's Holiness -- Is. 57:15

Context: pronouncing prophecy of doom against Israel for sins of covetousness and idolatry –

especially harsh against the rulers of Israel; mocked God while following false gods of their own making; these are very religious people; these are not out and out pagans; most gave lip service to Jehovah as their God but their hearts were not in it; had exchanged true holiness for mere religious ceremonialism and rituals; Is. 29:13; the sum of all God's attributes is holiness; tons of people today think that religious activity is the same as holiness; empty pretense; Condemning religion and calling for holiness by reminding people that God is a holy God

The people didn't realize how far they were from God and how much they had alienated him; similar to Roman Catholicism today and much of modern evangelicalism = reinventing Christianity to suit their tastes; propositional truth is out of fashion; they act as if the Word of God does not really matter; self-centered brand of faith instead of exalting our holy God; Vs. 13 – let's see how much power there is in your man-made religion when you come to a real crisis; passage takes a turn and God speaks words of grace; God affirms His sovereignty over the human heart;

3 Ways we ought to immediately respond to God's Holiness:

1) Provoke us to fear God – vs. 11; rather than be intimidated by anyone else; Rev. 15:4; Luke 12:4-5; not a euphemism for formal reverence but a holy terror and dread so we quake with fright given our own unholiness in God's presence; Judges 13:16ff reaction of Samson's father to angel of the Lord = preincarnate appearance of Christ; *"We shall surely die because we have seen God"*; Mark 4:39-41 *"they feared exceedingly"* after the storm was calmed when they realized they were in the presence of infinite holiness; Luke 5:8 Peter -- *"depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord"*; John -- *"I fell at his feet as if dead"*; Ex. 33:19; the beginning of wisdom;

2) Motivate us to worship God –

3) Induce us to imitate God

Brian Borgman: Where Have All the Righteous Gone?

The disappearance of a righteous remnant has negative implications for society;

Devout man = covenantally faithful men; picture of the removal of the godly from society; like removing the salt from the earth; that preservative that maintains the social and moral structures of any generation

Connection between diminishing of the righteous and increase in moral corruption in society

Charles Bridges: the rise of the wicked to power is God's judgment

People should be deeply concerned but the irony is that nobody even notices or understands; nobody understands what God is doing

Involved in Sorcery, witchcraft -- They are doomed without new parents and a new nature; look at prevalence of horoscopes today; epitome of spiritual defection from God; almost every major newspaper has a horoscope page; God of heaven and earth is in charge of your future; denunciation of God's sovereign care of you as his people

"you have made your bed wide" – graphic image so that you can include as many people as possible in your bed; Ezek. 16 and 23 only passage to exceed this imagery as gross and disgusting; Israel has lost all restraint; the righteous have disappeared; Israel is out on every high place pursuing idolatry; they are doing whatever they please

Borgman: The High and Exalted One Revives the Lowly

When God removes the righteous; disaster follows as wickedness increases; this is a wickedness

of false religion; human beings are incurably religious; when there is a void of truth religious sentiments don't go away; they are just redirected in wicked ways

There is still a refuge for those who will seek God – even in the midst of the blackest darkness and filthiest cesspool; God still extends His hand of mercy; God's grace shines forth from the depths of ruin and misery; Desperation prompts seeking of God's grace and mercy; originally this passage would have given hope to the exiles; but it goes beyond that to a greater redemption and a greater return; what God does for sinners in Jesus Christ

Vs. 14 – need a causeway built up for God's people to return; devastation has occurred; Is. 40:3 – fulfilled in ministry of John the Baptist; in this passage the Lord Himself is coming; in our passage the Lord's people need a pathway so we can go to God in repentance; all the things that would impede you on your way back to God; get rid of the idolatry and pagan worship; application is much broader; Heb. 12:1-2; weights vs sins – things that are not necessarily sin; like the robes for runners of Greek races;

Vs. 15 – Transcendence of God – He is other than us; Is. 40; Is. 55; Is. 6:1 “*high and exalted*” – same exact phrase; God is not a part of this creation; the one who lives forever; the eternal one; the names of God convey who God is; not enough to grant God preeminence as if His is the highest in ascending order;

Contrite: 2 aspects: brokenness over sin; crushed (same word that dust comes from) – you cannot be any lower than that; run over by a steamroller; they see who they are and see who God is; possess true humility; dwells with those who are down and out; they have been humbled; bowed down under a load

TEXT: Isaiah 58:1-14

TITLE: RITUAL VS RIGHTEOUSNESS

BIG IDEA:
ONLY GENUINE WORSHIP BRINGS BLESSING

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter examines our **motivation** for all of our religious activity. Certainly there should be the expectation that **blessing** will be associated with obedient worship. But religious people down thru the ages have perverted God's instructions regarding how to approach Him in genuine worship. They have put the emphasis on the externals instead of on internal righteousness. They have engaged in the external rites to try to demonstrate their spirituality to themselves and to others; or have engaged in the external rites to try to manipulate God to produce selfish results.

But God sees our motivation for all of our religious activity. Only Genuine Worship that seeks God with a contrite heart is pleasing to Him. He condemns all those who draw near with the lips but whose heart is far from Him. The Pharisees are the clearest illustration of Jew who could be so dedicated to external requirements and yet so far from any fellowship with a holy God. At the same time they made a show of bringing tithes and offerings, they had no regard for the practical needs of widows in their midst or even their own parents. They were immersed in ritual but devoid of righteousness. Jesus used the Sermon on the Mount to condemn their practices and expose their hypocrisy.

Oswalt: With heavy irony similar to that employed in **1:10-15**, the prophet declares that although the people think their behavior should win them special favor with God, its real purpose is to gain ground in the dog-eat-dog struggle for power, position, and possessions. Why did God institute the forms of religion? As ends in themselves? No, but as symbols of an attitude of submission, surrender, and trust that will manifest itself in changed behavior. Without that attitude as evidenced by the behavior, the forms are sources not for divine pleasure but of divine disgust. . . what pleases God is the true combination of both external and internal religion, when his nature has become so much a part of a person's being that worship expresses a love for God which is so deep that it must overflow in our treatment of others, especially those weaker than we.

Illustration: Christmas catalog – can only pick 1 present; with God we get the full catalog of blessings

ONLY GENUINE WORSHIP BRINGS BLESSING

PROLOGUE (:1) REMIND ISRAEL OF HER SINFUL HYPOCRISY

A. Public Reminder

*"Cry loudly, do not hold back;
Raise your voice like a trumpet,"*

Young: to *cry with the throat* means to cry at the top of one's voice; *trumpet* is emphatic

The prophetic voice; not called to deliver popular messages

Oswalt: The soper, a musical instrument made from a ram's horn, was the primary device used to gain communitywide attention in ancient Israel, whether for alarm (18:3) or for communal activity (27:3). Its piercing blast was a sign to stop all other activity and pay attention.

[like our Emergency Broadcast System]

We need a reminder of our sins; we forget that one of the characteristics of a genuine believer is that we continue to confess our sinfulness – in fact as we mature, we see more clearly the depths of our depravity

B. Painful Reminder

*“And declare to My people their transgression,
And to the house of Jacob their sins.”*

Get a grip on reality

The rejection by God of His sinful people should be no surprise to them

Many preachers today think it is harsh and not helping people to call attention to their sins

David Thompson: Loudly announce to My people that you transgressed and sinned against God. Unless you are willing to admit this reality, you will go nowhere in your relationship with God. As **John Calvin** said, when you are dealing with religious hypocrisy, what you need are “thunderbolts” of heavenly words (*Isaiah*, pp. 223-224).

I. (:2-12) BLESSINGS ASSOCIATED ONLY WITH GENUINE FASTING

A. (:2-3a) Counterfeit Religious Activity Creates Confusion

1. (:2a) Outwardly Looking Loyal to God

*“Yet they seek Me day by day,
and delight to know My ways,
As a nation that has done righteousness,
And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God.”*

- *Day by day* implies consistent religious practices; they are applying themselves to religious externals
- *Know My ways* -- Studying and learning God's Word
- *Done righteousness* -- Involved with acts of outward piety and charity
- *Not forsaken the ordinance* – Participation in sacrifices and feasts and festivals

2. (:2b) Outwardly Seeking God's Counsel

“They ask Me for just decisions,”

3. (:2b) Outwardly Drawing Near to God

“They delight in the nearness of God.”

Young: the people are simply hypocritical in their approach to God. They act like a nation that actually has done righteousness and has not forsaken the judgment of its God, whereas as a matter of fact they themselves have not done righteousness and have forsaken His judgments.

4. (:3a) Confused Over God’s Rejection

“Why have we fasted and Thou dost not see?

Why have we humbled ourselves and Thou dost not notice?”

Similar to book of **Malachi**

Beall: same type of question is asked in **Mal 3:14** (*“You have said, ‘It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, And that we have walked as mourners Before the LORD of hosts?’”). In a sense, the very fact that such a question is asked betrays the true heart of the Israelites: they are only fasting to be noticed, similar to the Pharisees in Jesus' day (**Matt 6:16-18** [*Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 “so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*]; **Luke 18:12**).*

Motyer: The only fast commanded by law was the Day of Atonement (Lv. 23:26-32), which was “a holy convocation”, a time of self-abasement, free of work, a “Sabbath of solemn rest.”

Parunak: But there were other occasional fasts before then, occasioned by times of national disaster:

Defeat of Israel by Benjamin: Jdg 20:26 *Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.*

Threat from the Philistines: 1Sa 7:6 *And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD.*

After the death of Saul and his sons: 1Sa 31:13 *And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.*

David, seeking the healing of his son: 2Sa 12:22 *And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*

Ahab, when Elijah told him of coming judgment: 1Ki 21:27 *And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.*

There is a difference between these fasts and that of the Day of Atonement. The latter was intended to show the people’s awareness of their sin and their rejection of it. These other fasts

are all done in order to get something from God, to solicit some protection or favor. Many times he graciously granted what they asked. But **they came to see the fast as a magic wand to get God to act.** These words reflect their frustration when they wave their wand and he doesn't act.

David Thompson: God does not accept any form of worship that is out to please us. God is looking for worship that pleases Him.

B. (:3b-7) Contrast Between Rejected and Approved Fasting

1. (:3b-5) Rejected Fasting Exposed

a. Ungodly Motivations for Fasting

1) Selfishness – Pursuing Personal Pleasure

“Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire,”

2) Exploitation – Pursuing Profitable Work

“And drive hard all your workers.”

same word used of the Egyptian taskmasters in Exodus

3) Oppression – Striking Others Instead of Serving Others

*“Behold, you fast for contention and strife
and to strike with a wicked fist.”*

Parunak: They fast in order to get God to support their desire in ungodly competition with others. Two NT parallels illustrate this ungodly approach to God.

James describes the futility of selfish prayer:

Jam 4:1-3 *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

When Paul was arrested, a group of Pharisees undertook a fast as part of their plan to assassinate him, perhaps to seek God's support:

Act 23:12 *And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.*

b. Godly Motivations for Fasting

1) Seeking God

*“You do not fast like you do today
to make your voice heard on high.”*

2) Humbling Yourself

*“Is it a fast like this which I choose,
a day for a man to humble himself?”*

c. Hypocritical Practices

1) False Humility – trying to look humble before others
*“Is it for bowing one’s head like a reed,
And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed?”*

2) External Show – trying to dictate to God what external practices constitute genuine worship
“Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD?”

David Thompson: Every year this country calls for a national day of prayer. Some of the leaders who propagate this concept are not at all interested in dealing with their own sin. I am not sure that a national day of prayer means much of anything to God. I don’t think it is even acceptable to God.

2. (:6-7) Approved Fasting Explained

“Is this not the fast which I choose,”

God must have the final say on what constitutes appropriate worship

a. Addressing Social Injustice – Surprising emphasis

*“To loosen the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the bands of the yoke,
And to let the oppressed go free,
And break every yoke?”*

Young: could refer to the release of unjustly held slaves. According to the law, slaves of Israelitish descent were to be emancipated every three years. Jeremiah 34:8-22 presents an instance of a gross violation of this principle.

b. Addressing Practical Needs of Others

*“Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry,
And bring the homeless poor into the house;
When you see the naked, to cover him;
And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”*

Emphasis on how you minister to others rather than on how spiritual you look to others
Food, shelter and clothing are essentials of life

Parunak: These obligations are particularly strong toward those to whom we have a familial bond. Israel’s first responsibility was toward other Israelites, the orphan and widow, though they also had a duty to the stranger who dwelt among them.

Young: Love toward all men is a hallmark of those who belong to the Lord, and this love will manifest itself in a true concern for their welfare.

Oswalt: *your own flesh* – All humans are off the same stuff; why should I conceal myself from one whose condition is different from mine, but whose essence is the same?

C. (:8-12) Catalog of Blessings for Genuine Obedience (With 2 Conditions inserted)

1. (:8) Blessing #1 -- Renewing

*“Then your light will break out like the dawn, -- Renewal of Life
And your recovery will speedily spring forth; -- Renewal of Health
And your righteousness will go before you; -- Renewal of Security:
The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.” -- Righteousness / Glory*

Emphasis on speed

Oswalt: As the vanguard and the rearguard offer protection (like the pillar of the fire and cloud, Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19-20), so the *righteousness* and the *glory* that the Lord gives to his people will be proof against anything the world can hurl at them.

2. (:9a) Blessing #2 -- Relating

*“Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
You will cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’”*

(:9b-10a) Heart of the Matter -- Two Conditions

a. Condition #1 – Addressing Social Injustice

*“If you remove the yoke from your midst,
The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,”*

Parunak: So here, the prophet does not condemn simple pointing, but use of gestures to qualify words. Our word should be clear, simple, and straightforward, without any qualifying gestures, crossed fingers, or winks. Anything else is an attempt to oppress our fellows.

b. Condition #2 – Addressing Practical Needs of Others

*“And if you give yourself to the hungry,
And satisfy the desire of the afflicted,”*

3. (:10b) Blessing #3 -- Reinvigorating

*“Then your light will rise in darkness,
And your gloom will become like midday.”*

Constable: Making self the focus of life, in contrast, results in darkness (cf. 5:20; 8:20; 47:5; 60:2), disease (cf. 1:5), defeat (cf. 1:7), and separation (cf. 1:4).

4. (:11a) Blessing #4 -- Rejoicing

*“And the LORD will continually guide you,
And satisfy your desire in scorched places,
And give strength to your bones;”*

Parunak: As often in this book, Isaiah draws on the imagery of the Exodus. “*Guide*” is a common verb for God’s leadership of the people through the wilderness, where he fed them and gave them drink in a desert land.

It also recalls Psa 23, where (as here) it is combined with physical provision. Isaiah echoes each of the four clauses of Ps 23:2-3:

Psa 23:2-3 *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

Oswalt: The idea of making the bones strong is in contrast to all those references where terror makes the bones tremble and shake (Job 4:14; Ps. 6:2; Jer. 23:9; Hab. 3:16), or sorrow or guilt makes them waste away (Ps. 31:10; 32:3; 38:3; 102:5). In contrast, see Isa. 66:14; Job 21:24; Prov. 15:30; 16:24. This is the truth that all physicians know: when the spirit is at peace the chances for the body to be well are vastly increased.

5. (:11b) Blessing #5 -- Refreshing

*“And you will be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.”*

Beall: The contrast between the garden of the opening chapter of Isaiah and the one described here is striking: in 1:29, the people chose the gardens to practice idolatry, and therefore God had to cause them to become like “a garden that has no water” (1:30); now, if the people obey, they will be “like a watered garden” (58:11).

6. (:12) Blessing #6 -- Rebuilding

*“And those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins;
You will raise up the age-old foundations;
And you will be called the repairer of the breach,
The restorer of the streets in which to dwell.”*

II. (:13-14a) BLESSINGS ASSOCIATED ONLY WITH GENUINE SABBATH KEEPING

A. (:13) Commitment to Genuine Sabbath Keeping

1. Forsake Personal Pleasure

*“If because of the sabbath,
you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day,”*

2. Honor the Sabbath in Word and Deed

*“And call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable,
And shall honor it,”*

3. Forsake Personal Pleasure

*“desisting from your own ways,
From seeking your own pleasure,
And speaking your own word”*

B. (:14) Consummation of Enjoying God’s Blessings

1. Supreme Delight – You will delight in the Lord

“Then you will take delight in the LORD,”

Like Piper's URL – www.desiringgod.org -- God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him

2. Supreme Exaltation – You will be lifted up
“And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;”

God is the one who both casts one down and lifts one up
Ps. 3:3 “My Glory and the One who lifts my head”

3. Supreme Nourishment – You will be fed
“And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father;”

Beall: Most seem to spiritualize these promises to the blessings enjoyed by the church; but why then is there such an emphasis on Jacob, their father? It seems best to take the reference to Israel enjoying the blessings of their land in the Millennium.

Constable: If they would give themselves to God and others rather than pursuing selfish goals, they would experience personal and national fulfillment and receive His rewards. This was a promise from the mouth of Yahweh.

Oswalt: Here is the golden key of all biblical revelation: those who give themselves away find themselves; those who relinquish the throne receive the crown.

EPILOGUE (:14b) THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD
“For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

CONCLUSION:

How Genuine is our worship this morning?
Does our professed love for God manifest itself in genuine regard for the practical needs of the weak among us – like the orphans and widows?
Are we just trying to look spiritual to ourselves and others?
Are we trying to manipulate God like a rabbit's foot for our own personal pleasures?
Or are we truly approaching God with a humble and contrite heart to offer up worship that is pleasing in His sight?
To God be the Glory!

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What connection do we see between internal and external religion in our lives?
- 2) Are we continuing to confess our sins and be honest before God?
- 3) Are our religious activities self-centered around our own objectives?
- 4) Are we experiencing God's blessing in terms of Delight, Exaltation and Nourishment?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: In every sense the Sabbath brings us to the heart of the matter. It is a real test of heart-religion to give a whole day to God and to do it with delight. The Sabbath is, first, a call to consecrate life's timetable to God, to adopt a style for six days which allow the seventh day to be a day apart (Ex. 16:22-30; Nu. 15:32-36). But verses 13-14 go beyond getting the timetable right; they are dominated by the word delight. The heart is so captivated by God that the day set apart is a joy.

Constable: God intended the system of worship He prescribed to illustrate the importance of a heart relationship with Himself that should affect interpersonal relationships. This pericope exposes the superficial attitude of many of God's people with strong irony.

Parunak: The subject of this chapter is false vs. true worship. The first part of the chapter focused on false vs. true fasting. The second focuses on false vs. true sabbath keeping. The choice of these two reflects the ten commandments.

- The sabbath is the subject of the fourth commandment, the final commandment of the four that concern our relation to the Lord.
- Fasting is depriving ourselves so as to please the Lord. It demonstrates our adherence to the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." In addition, this chapter teaches that the right way to deprive ourselves is to care for the poor and not oppress them. True fasting addresses the six commandments that concern our relation to our fellow humans.

David Thompson:

ISRAEL NEEDS TO BE LOUDLY TOLD THAT SHE HAS SINNED AGAINST GOD; AND NO MATTER HOW RELIGIOUS SHE THINKS SHE IS, OR HOW MUCH RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY SHE HAS, SHE DOES NOT HAVE A REAL RIGHTEOUSNESS .

* * * * *

Van Parunak: **The Sabbath and the Believer** www.cyber-chapel.org

The Sabbath is a continuing source of confusion to believers. On one hand, it is enshrined in the ten commandments, and Isaiah repeatedly invokes it as characteristic of the day of the Lord.

We read about its importance in ch. 56,

Isa 56:2, 6-7 *Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. ... 6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of 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 mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.*

At the end of the book, we read,

Isa 66:23 *And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath*

to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

Yet Paul instructs the Colossians,⁵

Col 2:16-17 *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

To sort this out, we should observe three things.

The Sabbath is Israel's Sign

God often marks his covenants with distinctive signs or seals:⁶

Noah: Gen 9:12-13 *And God said, This is the **token àâú** of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: 13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a **token àâú** of a covenant between me and the earth.*

Abraham: Gen 17:11 *ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a **token àâú** of the covenant betwixt me and you.*

New Covenant: Eph 1:13 *in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise...*

First, the Sabbath is distinctly Israelite. God describes it as a sign of his covenant with Israel:

Exo 31:12-17 *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my **sabbaths** ye shall keep: for **it is a sign àâú** between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. 14 Ye shall keep the **sabbath** therefore; for it is holy unto you: ... 17 **It is a sign** between me and the children of Israel for ever: ...*

So the Sabbath is distinctively Israelite.

The Sabbath is a Civil Ordinance

Second, Israel's purview extends over civil as well as spiritual life, and the Sabbath is part of that civil structure. It regulates the social calendar, and presumes that the whole society observes it. We can see the relation between the civil government and the calendar in the names of months in the OT. Before the Babylonian exile, the Hebrews designate the months by numbers ("first month, second month," etc., e.g., Lev 23:5, 24), or occasionally by specific names (e.g., Abib, Zib, Ethanim, Bul, e.g., Exod 13:4). After the exile, and to this day, they use the Babylonian names for months. As a people without a government, they adopted the calendar of the land where they lived.

Our Lord taught us that during this present evil age, his people do not form a civil society:

Joh 18:36 *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

Instead, we are to live as strangers and pilgrims, submitting ourselves to whatever government is in effect where we live (Rom 13). But when the Lord returns, he will rule with a rod of iron (Rev 19:15), from Zion (Isa 2, 4). At that time, it is entirely reasonable to expect that the pattern of

civil rule will be the one that God gave Israel, and not only the Sabbath, but other elements of the Israelite calendar, will be reinstated.

Zechariah, for example, anticipates the international celebration of the feast of tabernacles (Zech 14:16). Recall from the promises in v. 14 that the Lord has this period in view in our passage in Isaiah.

The Sabbath holds lessons for us today

Third, like all of Scripture, the Sabbath law is “*profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness*” (2 Tim 3:16), even today. God did not design his creatures to work non-stop. In his perfect social structure, he ordained one day in seven for rest.

Our Savior captured this intent when he told the Pharisees,

Mar 2:27 *And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: We should respect that pattern, in our own lives and in what we ask of one another. And ultimately, Heb 4 teaches us that our Savior’s rest from his work gives us the Sabbath-hope of one day entering into the rest that he now enjoys:*

Heb 4:9-11 *There remaineth therefore a [sabbath-]rest to the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into his rest [our Lord], he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. 11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest [that our Savior now enjoys], lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*

5 Paul does not rule out observance of special days, but makes it a matter of individual conscience, Rom 14:5-6
6 Rom 4:11 shows the interchangeability of the terms, using “sign” and “seal” in parallel to describe circumcision: “And he received the **sign** of circumcision, a **seal** of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised”

TEXT: Isaiah 59:1-15a

TITLE: A DEVASTATING PICTURE OF A DEPRAVED SOCIETY

BIG IDEA:

THE PERVASIVE, CORRUPTING IMPACT OF SIN LEAVES SOCIETY DEVOID OF TRUTH, JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

INTRODUCTION:

What does society look like when it is devoid of truth? When instead of justice and righteousness, one finds only the pervasive, corrupting influence of sin and wickedness? The prophet Isaiah gives us a picture of just such a society which would be judged by the upcoming Babylonian Captivity. God's Holy City Jerusalem is pictured as so depraved and corrupt that any man who takes a stand against wickedness puts himself at grave risk. The sad thing for us today is how relevant we find such a passage in the 21st century here in our own country.

This passage begins by addressing the blame shifting that sinners love to engage in – The problem can't be with us; it must be with God. Fortunately the passage concludes with genuine confession of sin and the embracing of the guilt and consequences of such wickedness. That will lay the foundation for the coming of the Redeemer to Zion in the second half of chapter 59. But before we can appreciate deliverance we must first come to grips with the depths of our depravity.

THE PERVASIVE, CORRUPTING IMPACT OF SIN LEAVES SOCIETY DEVOID OF TRUTH, JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

This passage presents a well-developed **theology of sin**. We will examine the effects of sin on both individuals and on society:

- I. in terms of **SIN'S CULPABILITY AND CONDEMNATION**
- II. in terms of **SIN'S CONSEQUENCES AND CONFESSION**

I. (:1-8) SIN'S CULPABILITY AND CONDEMNATION

A. (:1-3) Culpability for Sin Lies With Us . . . Not With God

1. (:1) Don't Blame God

- a. **Inability** Not the Reason – No Lack of Power

“Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short that it cannot save;”

Is. 50:2 – symbol of God's sovereign power that cannot be stopped by anyone; references to the outstretched hand of God

- b. **Insensitivity** Not the Reason – No Lack of Perception and Compassion

“Neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear.”

Is. 58:9 Lord hearing and answering the cries of His people in mercy and compassion; more than just physically hearing the sound waves

Prov. 15:29 *“The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.”*

If the Lord had promised such a glorious future for the nation of Israel, why does it seem like the Lord has turned his back to them?

Blame shifting is popular with sinners; don't want to own the guilt and corresponding condemnation

Parunak: the hand is the organ of action; the ear is the organ of perceiving speech

Constable: The people were complaining that God was not answering their prayers (cf. **58:1-3**). Isaiah assured them that His silence was not due to His inability to help them (a shortened hand) or to His disinterest in them (an insensitive ear).

2. (:2) Blame Your Own Sins

*“But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,
And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.”*

By way of **emphasis**, at the beginning of each of these 2 lines, “*your iniquities*” / “*your sins*”

There must be accepting of the blame for sin and guilt

Oswalt: The phrase “*separation between*” used in v. 2 elsewhere occurs only in **Gen 1:6**: just as the firmament separated the waters above from the waters below, preventing any commingling, so iniquity and sins prevent any intercourse between God and His people.

Motyer: Sin first opens a gulf (*separated*) and then creates a divine alienation (*hidden his face*)

Great verse for gospel tracts – explaining concept of **Alienation**; why is **Reconciliation** necessary?

(cf. Gen. 3:6, 16; Jer. 5:2-6; Hab.1:13; 1 John 1:6).

3. (:3) Blame the Pervasiveness of Your Depravity

a. Wicked Deeds – Violence and Malice

*“For your **hands** are defiled with blood,
And your **fingers** with iniquity;”*

In **vs. 3-7** note the various parts of the body indicted for their participation in sin; **Rom. 6-8** – don't allow the members of your body to continue to practice sin

Blood = damage done to others

b. Wicked Words – Lies and Deception

*“Your **lips** have spoken falsehood,
Your **tongue** mutters wickedness.”*

Pro 6:16-19 “*These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”*

Look at the **Pervasiveness of sin** highlighted here:

- One rotten apple spoils the barrel
- A little leaven leavens the whole lump
- Sin is like a cancer that spreads through the body on its mission of death

B. (:4-8) Condemnation for Sin Derives From a Description of Sin's Pervasive, Corrupting Impact

1. (:4) 2 Metaphors – Perversion of Positive Venues

a. Metaphor from **Courts**

*“No one sues righteously and no one pleads honestly.”
They trust in confusion, and speak lies;”*

Where should we expect to see truth upheld ?? Certainly in our **court system**

But Isaiah finds nothing but corruption in that hallowed venue. There is no pursuit of the truth but only a contest between adversaries who will use any means possible to win a judgment that will benefit themselves.

[**Illustration:** My brother-in-law couldn't stomach practicing law]

This is not **Perry Mason**, where the innocent prevail and the guilty are discovered and held accountable.

You can more easily understand what Isaiah is saying when you have a neighbor who serves you with legal papers and is willing to lie and fabricate arguments to gain some meaningless small strip of property.

They trust in desolation; *tohu*; nothingness

Oswalt: Justice does not exist to hold all persons up to the same fair standard. Rather, the legal system exists so that the strong and the clever can twist it to their own purposes. The result is exactly as the prophet says: chaos and emptiness.

Constable: Justice was not coming out of the courts, but legal maneuvering and loopholes had taken the place of straightforward decisions. The people were using and abusing the legal system for their own ends rather than allowing it to sit in judgment on their actions. They were trying to confuse the issues and lie their way out of their responsibilities. Instead of conceiving the truth that would issue in righteousness, they were conceiving mischief that would bear iniquity (cf. Job 15:35; James 1:15). [Also Ps. 7:14]

Look at how easily people lie today; prevalent in business as well as in the legal system
Business loves to post their core values of integrity and honesty on their corporate walls; but expediency usually rules when it comes to making a profit. It is the rare salesman who does not resort to lies to look good in front of their customers.

Jer. 9:3-9 *“They bend their tongue like their bow; Lies and not truth prevail in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know Me”*

b. Metaphor from **Conception** [should be another positive venue]

*“They conceive mischief,
and bring forth iniquity.”*

What consumes their thinking and their planning?

The psalmist says that the wicked lie awake at night to concoct more devious schemes and to plan ways to pursue sin.

Beall: Though the normal result of conception is life, here “conception” leads to evil and death—everything is turned upside down!

2. (:5-6a) 2 Illustrations – Poisonous Creatures Linked to Death and Destruction

a. (:5) **Serpent Eggs**

*“They hatch adders' eggs . . .
He who eats of their eggs dies,
And from that which is crushed a snake breaks forth.”*

b. (:6a) **Spider Webs**

*“and weave the spider's web . . .
Their webs will not become clothing,
Nor will they cover themselves with their works;”*

Constable: Instead of receiving nourishment from the eggs, the eggs either poison or, if hatched, fatally attack the eater. Instead of receiving warmth from the beautifully woven web, the web fails to clothe and instead entangles its wearer. This was because the work the people expended to secure food and clothing was self-centered. People even resorted to physical violence to get what they wanted for themselves. Such a society promises much but delivers little, and what it does deliver turns around and kills it.

Beall: Thus, what may at first appear as good sources of the basic necessities of life, food and clothing, to those who are unsuspecting, will ultimately end in destruction and uselessness; and even those who hatch the plans do not seem to be able to control the outcome or escape from the ultimate destruction unleashed by their evil plans.

3. (:6b-8) 2 Body Parts – Instruments of Unrighteousness, Violence and Destruction

a. Hands

*“Their works are works of iniquity,
And an act of violence is in their **hands**.”*

Oswalt: The whole person of the body politic is implicated in the crimes that are taking place.

b. Feet

*“Their **feet** run to evil,
And they hasten to shed innocent blood;”*

c. Thoughts [not technically a body part]

*“Their **thoughts** are thoughts of iniquity;
Devastation and destruction are in their highways.”*

Young: Their thoughts (i.e. the intentions, plans, devices) are born in iniquity, lead to iniquity, and are themselves of iniquitous nature. Were one to walk upon their paths he would find only wasting and ruin.

Mark 7:20-23

Transitions nicely to the next point where the emphasis is on *highways, tracks, paths*

4. (:8) 2 Summary Judgments

a. No Pursuit of Peace or Justice

*“They do not know the way of peace,
And there is no justice in their tracks;”*

b. Dedicated to Perversion Rather Than Peace

*“They have made their paths crooked;
Whoever treads on them does not know peace.”*

Motyer: Refusing God’s “rule of law”, they have made a tangled mess of their lives and the responsibility is wholly theirs. . . the future holds no prospect of peace (peace with God, harmonious society, personal fulfillment) because the road cannot lead there.

II. (:9-15a) SIN’S CONSEQUENCES AND CONFESSION

A. (:9-11) Consequences of Sinful Behavior – Lamentation Over Sin’s Consequences

1. (:9) No Justice or Light

a. (:9a) No Justice

*“Therefore, justice is far from us,
And righteousness does not overtake us;”*

Parunak: The shift in pronouns in v. 9 marks an interesting turn. Up to this point, the prophet has been speaking for God, first calling the people’s attention to their sin (“you”), then describing their behavior (“they”). Now he turns around, takes his place with the wicked, and leads them in a prayer of confession.

Motyer: The first person plural indicates that there are those who have come to repentance. The secret work of divine enabling (57:19a) and the effect of the preaching of God’s law (58:1-14) has brought them to the place where they are prepared to confess the darkness (9), helplessness (10), bitterness (11ab), hopelessness (11cd) and personal guiltiness (12-13) of sin.

b. (:9b) No Light

*“We hope for light, but behold, darkness;
For brightness, but we walk in gloom.”*

2. (:10) No Hope

a. (:10a) No Vision or Escape

*“We grope along the wall like blind men,
We grope like those who have no eyes;”*

Deut. 28:27-29 describes the consequences of disobedience

“The Lord will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The Lord will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart; and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you.”

b. (:10b) No Stability or Vitality

*“We stumble at midday as in the twilight,
Among those who are vigorous we are like dead men.”*

Constable: All the parallel descriptions in this verse stress the hopelessness and vulnerability of the Israelites due to their natural blindness to God's ways (cf. 6:10; 8:16-17; **42:7**; Deut. 28:29).

Young: Isaiah depicts the plight of the sinners, ever seeking an escape from their condition and only falling deeper therein (cf. Rom. 7:14)

3. (:11) No Joy or Justice

a. (:11a) No Joy

*“All of us growl like bears,
And moan sadly like doves;”*

Frustrated, angry bears

Sad, mournful doves

b. (:11b) No Justice or Salvation

*“We hope for justice, but there is none,
For salvation, but it is far from us.”*

Constable: They could not even articulate their grief but simply growled and moaned like angry bears and pitiful doves (cf. Mark 7:34; John 11:38; Rom. 8:22-23). This lament closes as it began, with an admission that justice and salvation were far from God's people.

Review: movement from **Culpability** to **Condemnation** to **Consequences** and now finishing with **Confession**

B. (:12-15a) Confession of Sinful Behavior and Corresponding Depravity of Society

1. (:12) The Testimony of Our Transgressions and Sins

*“For our transgressions are multiplied before Thee,
And our sins testify against us;
For our transgressions are with us,
And we know our iniquities:”*

Started off with blame shifting as if the problem could be blamed on God; but here the prophet identifies with the sins of the nation and offers up genuine confession of sin

Young: This personification of the sins presents them as accusers against those who have brought them into being.

You can't run away and hide from your sin; you can't escape the testimony they will offer up on judgment day; the tape doesn't lie – just rewind and play the tape

2. (:13) The Traitorous Nature of Our Transgressions and Sins

*“Transgressing and denying the LORD,
And turning away from our God,
Speaking oppression and revolt,
Conceiving in and uttering from the heart lying words.”*

3. (:14-15) The Travesty Caused By Our Transgressions and Sins

a. (:14) Society Devoid of Justice, Righteousness, Truth and Honesty
*“And justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away;
For truth has stumbled in the street, and uprightness cannot enter.”*

“travesty” = perversion, corruption, distortion; everything is reversed and upside down
Things are not as they should be in society

4 Foundational Virtues of any Society:

Borgman: Deut. 16:19-20 *Justice* is important to God; **24:17** – these 3 categories of people generally despised and poor and helpless; **27:19; Ps. 37:28** *“For the Lord loves justice”*
Mic. 6:8 What does God require: *“to do justice”*

Righteousness = to be in conformity to what God says is good and right; God is righteous (cf. the Psalms); God loves righteousness

Personification of each of these virtues – *truth stumbles*; foundational to justice and righteousness; truth doesn't matter anymore

Uprightness -- Honesty, equity in your dealings with others – willing to swear to his own heart; if you are looking out for self you will not value this virtue

b. (:15) Snare Awaits Any Who Would Stand Against Evil
*“Yes, truth is lacking;
And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey.”*

According to a 2002 study conducted by the University of Massachusetts, 60% of adults can't have a ten minute conversation without lying at least once. [all kinds of shocking statistics]

We live in a society that almost rejects the validity of propositional truth; 64% of people say no such thing as absolute truth

The **postmodern aversion to truth** is well expressed by **Allan Bloom** in *The Closing of the American Mind*:

The danger...is not error but intolerance. Relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to [teaching]. Openness - and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of

various claims to truth and the various ways of life and kinds of human beings - is the great insight of our times. The true believer is the real danger. The study of history and of culture teaches that all the world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think that you are right at all.

Someone has said that we have now moved from the conviction that everyone has a right to his own opinions, to the notion that every opinion is equally right! – because there is no such thing as absolute truth / In the postmodern worldview, people become their own authority and accept only what they personally experience.

Constable: Where truth is lacking, as it was in Isaiah's society, the person who turns aside from evil to do good makes himself a prey to others who take advantage of him. This is the final irony of many ironies in this pericope. It corresponds to the earlier expressions of bad conditions resulting from iniquity (cf. vv. 4, 7-8). Isaiah was not advocating this type of behavior. He was saying that unless God intervenes for His people, this type of behavior is all that they can expect.

CONCLUSION:

So if someone ever tries to persuade you that your sin is just something personal that won't harm someone else, remember this portrait of a depraved society from the book of Isaiah. Truth had better matter – because truth is foundational to the key virtues of any society – Justice, Righteousness and Integrity.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do we tend to shift blame for our sins rather than owning our sins?
- 2) How does one sin lead to another – in effect opening the floodgates for further sinning?
- 3) What have been some of the consequences of sin in our own life?
- 4) How do you see truth and justice and righteousness lacking in our society?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Here the people confess their sin, and we read of their judgment.

The section is structured by shifts in pronouns (chart). All could credibly be spoken by Isaiah.

- First, he speaks to the people (“you”), describing how their sin is responsible for the alienation they feel from God. We might call this section **Accusation**.
- Next, he speaks about their sin, using vivid imagery. This section is a **Description** of

their sin.

- Finally, he takes his place with the people in **Confession**.

Motyer:

- Verses 1-4b are couched in second person plurals, leveling direct accusations
- Verses 5-7 are a third person plural description
- Verses 9-12 are a first person plural confession

Verses 4cd, 8, 13 are summary statements concluding their respective sections. The whole is written in paired lines, well reflected in the NIV.

Borgman: Not the Way It's Supposed to Be

Answer to those who would blame God for their sins and the consequences; a **theology of sin** within the scope of national confession; sense of corporate nature of sin – how it affects society; a description of the sin that had permeated the people of God; alienation, corruption, social venom and futility and sin as consumer

I. Sin as Alienation (:1-2)

Describes sin in terms of what it does to our relationship with God

Where is God? Not as strong or as loving as we thought He was?

These are the 2 issues that pop up regarding “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

Hand is symbol for power; stretch out His hand against Egypt to deliver His people = demonstration of God's power; He creates with an outstretched hand; raw, unrivaled, sovereign power; **Is. 50:2**; the power of God is without limit

“*Ear*” symbolizes compassion towards His people; His channel for His people to pray to Him and cry out to Him; “incline your ear to my cries” in the psalms; much more than just listen; have compassion on me; **Is. 58:9**; proneness on our part to blame God when things don't go right;

Man designed for communion and fellowship with God; to walk with God; to worship God; sin drives a wedge to separate us from God; God hiding His favorable presence from us; “*may He cause His face to shine upon you*” = the smile of God; posture of blessing; God withdrawing His presence in such a way that He does not respond to His people; God's presence has an ethical reality to it – He cannot abide with sin; **Hab. 1:13**; God is light and in Him is no darkness at all; sin creates barrier – it separates and alienates; **Prov. 15:29**; God is far from the proud and the wicked; doctrine of reconciliation tell how that breach is fixed

John Frame: “His presence is proportional to our ethical kinship to Him”

Look at alienation that took place back in the Garden at Fall of Man; Adam hides himself because an alienation had taken place; a death had occurred
“My God, My God, Why have you **Abandoned Me**?”

God has the complaint; He reconciles Himself to us – creating an unbreakable bond with His people; but our sins can create a barrier in the enjoyment of that relationship

II. Sin as Corruption (:3-4)

Describing sin in terms of what it is = corrupt deeds and speech

Your *hands* are defiled with blood; your hands are the problem; when you pray you lift up your hands to God; violence, treachery, cruelty = damage done to others especially for your own gain; clean hands are prerequisite to entering into God's presence; Ps. 15;

Fingers = even more intricate involvement with sin

How easy do we lie; do our children lie? God is truth; when we lie we are defying God

Violation of 9th commandment

Matt. 12:24 – do you want to know what your heart looks like? Take a look at what comes out of your mouth

Vs 4 -- The abuse of the legal system for one's own gain; making your case before the judge with lies and misrepresentations; no intent on telling the truth so that you can win; the very institution that is designed to uphold truth and justice is itself undermined by the corruption of lies; then it only exists to serve those who are strong enough and clever enough to use it for their own gain; think of slick lawyers and their schemes that circumvent justice; looking for loopholes; undermining social order; corruption by its very nature spreads; opens up the floodgates to more sin

III. Sin as Social Venom and Futility (:5-6)

Whether you eat the eggs or break them, you are killed;

Cf. impressive webs built by spiders; quite the workmanship – symmetrical and beautiful and intricate; but try to sit on it and see what happens; can't sustain any weight

Utter futility of sin; not going to work

Society rooted in iniquity promises much but delivers futility

The foundations of society have been destroyed – sounds like our own day

IV. Sin as Ravenous Consumer (:7-8)

The mad rush of self interest – running to shed blood; they are going to hurt others for personal gain

The wicked lies on his bed coming up with more wicked schemes and plans

Man is the ultimate consumer of sin – just can't get enough

Sin is the ultimate consumer = that which consumes and destroys man and society

Not just a pathway that people walk down but a highway of destruction; the bottom will drop out

No off ramp on this highway of destruction so just stay off it

Borgman: The Confession of the Remnant

:9-11 Lamentation of the Remnant – justice is far from us; looking for the justice of God in their salvation; concept of justice and righteousness come together and speak of God's saving power

Absolute moral and spiritual confusion as they stumble along in darkness; hoping to find a door or window somewhere and it escapes them

Growling of bear = frustration; hope deferred makes the heart sick; expecting God to act and He doesn't act; deeply grieved and sad

Remnant feels despair; no light or hope

:12-13 Confession of transgressions and iniquities; nothing hidden before the face of God; our own consciences testify against us; we know our sins; we don't need to be convinced of them; transgressions described in vs. 13; every sin is an act of apostasy – of turning away from God and denying Him;

:14-15a the bitter fruit of their sin; sin is always a grassroots movement; starts from the ground up and spreads its corrupting impact; individual corruption ends up destroying the foundations of society; social virtues listed here: justice, righteousness, truth, honesty; what happens when a people become inundated with their own iniquities?

TEXT: Isaiah 59:15b-21

TITLE: *HERE COMES THE REDEEMER-WARRIOR*

BIG IDEA:

THE REDEEMER-WARRIOR COMES TO EXECUTE SALVATION AND VENGEANCE

INTRODUCTION:

This is a great Christmas season text – **A Redeemer will come to Zion!** The Redeemer is coming – that was the message of the OT and that is the message of the NT as well. The first time to bring Salvation ... but the second time both to bring **Salvation** to the nation of Israel but **Vengeance** to God's enemies.

Last week in the first half of Chapter 59 we a **Devastating Picture of a Depraved Society**. How sad to see the depths to which the Holy City of God had descended – No Justice; No Light; No Hope; No way of Escape; No Joy; No Justice. The Culpability did not lie with God – there was no lack of power or compassion on His part. The problem was due to the pervasive corrupting impact of their own sin which testified against them. What a dark picture. Where truth is lacking, the foundations of society have been completely undermined.

It's going to take a very special person to make a difference and turn around such a desperate situation. No mere human can solve this sin problem. The **Divine Warrior** Himself will need to graciously put on the armor of battle and gain the victory that is needed. But He will do this in His sovereignty and in His power not ultimately to provide for the needs of His people but ultimately to glorify Himself.

THE REDEEMER-WARRIOR COMES TO EXECUTE SALVATION AND VENGEANCE

I. (:15b-20) THE PROVISION OF REDEMPTION = THE REDEEMER-WARRIOR WILL COME TO ZION

A. (:15b-16a) Divine Vision Sees the Fundamental Problem = Depravity With No Deliverer

“Now the LORD saw,”

There is never any deficiency in the Divine Vision. The certainty that the Lord accurately sees to the heart of every situation – not just observing external circumstances but also the heart motivation behind all of our thoughts and deeds – should be a comfort to the righteous and a fearsome thing to God's enemies.

Doesn't need to have His vision corrected; no need for contact lenses or laser surgery. Fortunately for us the Lord's pure vision is coupled with His mercy and compassion towards the Elect – otherwise there would be no hope for us because of the depths of our own depravity.

Have to deal with 2 issues:

- Deliverance of God's people

- Vengeance against God's enemies

The Divine Vision in this instance focuses on two key areas:

1. No Justice

“And it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice.”

The Lord created this world perfect; He knows how things should look when justice and righteousness prevail; He is displeased when He sees a perverse society where no justice exists. We should have a hatred of evil as well. We should have a longing for the Messiah to return and establish His kingdom in justice and righteousness here on this earth.

Rev. 22:20 *“Come, Lord Jesus”*

2. No Man / No Intercessor

*“And He saw that there was no man,
And was astonished that there was no one to intercede;”*

Parunak: Of several Hebrew words for man (including אדם and אנוש), this one (איש) is often used to indicate virility and strength:

1Ki 2:2 [David to Solomon] *I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;*

Jer 5:1 *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.*

Motyer: to stand between people and the consequences of their moral collapse

Constable: Though Israel was blind (v. 10), the Lord saw. He saw the true state of His people, as He sees everything. He saw that there was no justice in Israel or for Israel (vv. 9-15a). . . God also saw that there was no human being who could mediate between Himself and His people, who could appeal effectively to Him for them (cf. **1 Tim. 2:5** *“one mediator”*; **Heb. 7:25** *“He always lives to make intercession for them”*; **1 John 2:1** *“we have an Advocate”*). Aaron and Phinehas had done this for Israel in the past (**Num. 25:7**). So God Himself acted in power to deliver them, in faithfulness to His promises.

Oswalt: God's desolation (*he was appalled*) over this fact is surely not a response of surprise, as though some human could have filled this gap but did not. Rather, it is an expression of his perpetual horror of sin and his perpetual compassion for his people.

Borgman: The most shocking part is not the depravity but that there was no one to do anything about it; **Ezek 22:30** *“I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.”*

Num. 14:19 – God ready to destroy the nation after evil report of the 10 spies; Moses stood in the gap; intercedes for the people; there were others who stood in the gap as well; Phineas kills consorting couple right in front of the tabernacle – in the midst of debauchery and rampant immorality

Because there was no one, God Himself would bring salvation; to save His own people by His own power for His own sake

B. (:16b-17) Divine Warrior Dresses for Battle to Accomplish the Victory Himself

What passage do you think of when you read these verses? The Apostle Paul did not come up with his imagery of the armor of God in a vacuum. He was an expert in the writings of Isaiah.

1. Salvation and Righteousness – Rescuing His People

*“Then His own arm brought **salvation** to Him;
And His **righteousness** upheld Him.
And He put on **righteousness** like a breastplate,
And a helmet of **salvation** on His head;”*

Beall: It is quite possible that “arm” and “righteousness” in this verse may refer to the Messiah (see Isa 40:10; 53:1). In any event, at the very least they refer to God's power and righteousness: God Himself would have to intercede for the people and provide salvation. . . note the **chiastic arrangement** in vv. 16-17 of salvation-righteousness, righteousness-salvation

2. Vengeance and Zeal – Judging His Enemies

*“And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing,
And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.”*

Constable: As a warrior preparing for battle, the Lord made ready to defend His people (cf. Eph. 6:13-17).

Parunak: Paul has clearly started with Isaiah’s imagery and elaborated it. But think about the implications of what he has done. Isaiah is describing the armor that God dons to come to earth and solve the problem. This is first of all the armor of the messianic Redeemer. It is a fruitful exercise to meditate on how our Lord demonstrated the use of each piece of this armor. Paul now says that we are to wear it.

The relation between the passages is very much the same kind as that in the various Servant passages that Paul appropriates to himself as an apostle (chart). The church is the body of Christ. Our mission is a continuation of his mission. We are the Servant, completing the work of the perfect Servant, and the armor we need in our work is the same that he bore.

C. (:18-20) Divine Visitation – In Vengeance and Redemption

Be Ready – The Redeemer-Warrior is coming! Great Christmas season text

1. (:18-19) Vengeance Repays Enemies to Establish Divine Glory

a. (:18) Repaying According to Works – Settling All Accounts

*“According to their deeds, so He will repay,
Wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies;
To the coastlands He will make recompense.”*

Parunak: The fundamental idea is bringing something to its appropriate completion, and the nouns used here always appear in contexts of reward or punishment. God’s judgment is never undeserved.

Oswalt: *repay* is from the verb *salam* (the same root as *salom*, “*peace*”) with the sense of pacifying a debt. It is hard to escape the sense that the choice of the word is ironic. God will

give *shalom*, “*peace*,” to those who love him (cf. 57:19), but he will “*pacify*” all accounts with his enemies, whether they be near at hand or at the ends of the earth (*the coastlands*).

Motyer: *Wrath* is the burning hostility of the divine nature to sin; *retribution*, the exactness with which wrath is applied

Borgman: Divine recompense = wrath to His enemies – coast lands = uttermost parts of the earth; universal judgment; no remote island untouched; **1 Pet. 1:17** “*impartially judges men according to their deeds*”; Rev. used of Christ who will repay His enemies according to their deeds; **Rom. 2:5**; God will repay men according to their deeds; sounds like salvation by works; damnation by works; how can Paul say such a thing when he believes in justification by faith alone; not hypothetical here; a person is saved by faith and faith alone but they will be judged by works and works alone because **works are the validating evidence of genuine faith**; we better repent of our evil deeds and follow Jesus with the obedience of faith; James – show me your faith without works – that faith can’t save; saying that you believe in Jesus is not all that matters; the obedience of faith – **real faith has in it obedience**

- b. (:19a) Establishing Worldwide Worship to the Glory of God
“*So they will fear the name of the LORD from the west
And His glory from the rising of the sun,*”

This *fear* could be either positive or negative – depending on which interpretation you choose for the second half of the verse below

- c. (:19b) Overwhelming in Sudden Wrath
“*For He will come like a rushing stream,
Which the wind of the LORD drives.*”

2 possibilities:

1) **Motyer:** When an adversary comes streaming in, the Spirit of the Lord lifts a banner against him (AV)

NIV “*When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will put him to flight*”

2) **Oswalt:** for he will come like a pent-up river, which the wind of the Lord drives before it . . . The wrath of God against sin will be like a stream thundering through a narrow canyon, pushed on by a roaring wind; and those who choose to ally themselves with sin, no matter where they are in the world, will have good cause to be terrified (cf. 2:19-22; Rev. 6:15-17).

2. (:20) Redemption Rescues People From Sin

“*And a Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, declares the LORD.*”

II. (:21) THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION = THE NEW COVENANT

A. Unilaterally Established by God with the Nation of Israel

“*And as for Me, this is My covenant with them, says the LORD:*”

“*them*” = “*those who turn from transgression in Jacob*”

Emphasis on what God will do Himself personally

Ezek 36:22ff
Jer. 31:27ff
Heb. 8:6ff
Rom. 11:25-27

B. New Focus on God's Spirit

"My Spirit which is upon you,"

James Harrison: Who is the "you" in this context? Masculine instead of feminine as in 60:1 so it is the Messiah rather than the nation of Israel here?? Or Israel as the servant nation??

Context seems to fit better with the nation than with the person of Messiah

C. Internalization of God's Word – for the purpose of obedience and testimony

"and My words which I have put in your mouth,"

S. Lewis Johnson: so the result is Israel finally becomes the true servant of Jehovah through the ideal Servant the Lord Jesus Christ

Parunak: The main difference is that in 54:13, the second person singular pronouns are feminine, designating mother Zion. In our passage they are masculine, representing the people of God as the continuation of the Servant. The promise is not looking back to the barren wife or the bereaved, widowed mother, but forward to "them that turn from transgression in Jacob" (vs. 20) who now carry on the work of the Servant.

D. Permanence of God's Promise

*"shall not depart from your mouth,
nor from the mouth of your offspring,
nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring,
says the LORD, 'from now and forever.'"*

Constable: There is debate about whether the Lord has already given His Spirit permanently to all His people, but there is no question that He has not yet made His people the witnesses that they should be. He has given the Spirit to Christians, but not to all Israelites (cf. Joel 2:29). Christians are relatively ineffective witnesses now, but Israel will be a faithful witness in the Millennium (Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:27b). Israel will witness to the greatness of Yahweh and will draw the nations to Him (cf. 2:2-3; 60:1-3). This is the purpose for which He will redeem them.

Beall: This covenant is probably to be identified with the New Covenant of Jer 31:31-34 and Ezek 36:26-27. It is interesting that in 42:6 and 49:8, the Servant is to be given as a covenant to the peoples. Thus, the entire Trinity is involved in this covenant with God's people. It is an everlasting covenant, one which is yet to be literally fulfilled in the Millennium. Chapter 60 provides in glorious detail the outworking of this covenant in the Millennial kingdom.

Parunak: As the Intercessor, he establishes a new relation between himself and his people, dealing with the internal problem of sin that alienates us from God. Historically, this began in the gospels and Acts, but the Jewish aspect will be completed as described in Rev 20.

Oswalt: Israel is called to be God's servant to the world, in order that all the world may be drawn to the mountain of the house of the Lord (2:2-3). In order for that purpose to be realized, Israel's sin must be forgiven, but it must also be defeated. Israel's character must be like God's in order that out of the clean mouth of her life the breath of God may pronounce the Word of God to the waiting world. When this takes place, the glory of the Lord will have risen in Israel and all the nations will come to the brightness of that rising (60:1-3).

CONCLUSION:

The world is a chaotic and dark place when we view it just through the natural lens of our own observation. But the certainty of God's promises for the future centered around the Second Coming of the Redeemer-Warrior should give us confidence in the glory of the age to come. Our cry echoes the closing words of the Book of Revelation in response to the testimony of our Lord that He is coming quickly: *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Does our picture of the person of God include the fierce imagery of the Divine Warrior who works vengeance or is it limited to the gentle Good Shepherd?
- 2) What is the relationship between the armor of God which Christians are exhorted to put on by the Apostle Paul in Ephes. 6 and the armor which the Redeemer-Warrior puts on here? Similarities? Differences?
- 3) How can judgment be according to works if we are saved by grace through faith?
- 4) How do some advocates for Infant Baptism use vs. 21 to support their position? Refutation of their arguments?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: The overall problem is one that the people themselves have acknowledged in the previous section: the lack of judgment (vv. 9, 11, 14), that is, conduct that is in keeping with God's word. Once the people lament this, the Lord steps in. Of course he has recognized the lack of judgment all along, but he lets them wallow in their self-righteousness until they see the hopelessness of their situation, and then he takes action.

The main structure of this system is an alternation between two problems that lead to the lack of judgment, and that the Redeemer solves: **the opposition of God's enemies, and the alienation of God's people from him.** The problem is introduced in 15b-16a (A-B), then the solution unfolds in three stages, marked by reversal of the two components (AB, BA, AB). We face an external adversary, Satan and those who serve him, who must be defeated. We also face an internal weakness, the sin of Adam that pervades every human, even God's people, and separates us from God.

Parunak: The Servant is the embodiment of God's promise. But what is the propositional content of that promise? This passage lays down the details. Note **the centrality of the Spirit and the Word of God**, both of which figure in other OT passages about the **New Covenant**. The Covenant has five features. No one passage has them all, but all enjoy the support of "two or three witnesses":

1. The designation of this promise as a covenant (Isa, Jer)
2. The gift of God's Spirit (Isa, Eze)
3. The centrality of God's word (all three, the only common element)
4. The eternal, unbreakable nature of the covenant (Isa, Jer)
5. Forgiveness of sin (Jer and Eze)

Motyer: Divine commitment to salvation and vengeance

Borgman: A Redeemer Will Come to Zion

Remnant aware of corruption; confession so that they are prepared for salvation; now they are eager for God to act; we don't necessarily live in the worst of moral times – cf. England back in 1700s; there were a few that the gospel could cure Britain's woes – Whitfields and Wesleys saved Great Britain – Great Awakening; sense that things are about as bad as they can get; in the midst of that context even God is surprised

Displeased and astonished – conditions were evil before the Lord; society was supposed to be rooted and grounded in His revelation and law; Evil = that which is contrary to creation purposes; not the way things should be; cf. theologians called openist – God is not aware of the future so He is taken by surprise; anthropomorphisms like hand of God; Does God have emotion? Yes but He is not subject to His emotions; such heights of depravity excite God's compassion and displeasure

Calvin: the language is meant to shame the people of God

Do my own failures at times astonish God?

God interacts with us in dynamic sense on our level

The arm is the symbol of strength; His own redeeming power; **Is. 33:2** "*be their arm every morning*"; **51:5** God's arms are used for both judgment and salvation; God's salvation for His people means judgment for their enemies; **Is. 51:9** allusion to Exodus that destroyed Egypt; **Is. 52:10** – connection between arm of Lord and salvation; when God bares His holy arm it is impressive; **Is. 53:1** "*to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*"

Is. 12:2 God Himself is His people's salvation in Isaiah; salvation becomes increasingly personified in the person of the Messiah; conclusion: Messiah is Yahweh Himself; Christ has become to us redemption ... the embodiment and incarnation of the salvation of God to us

"His righteousness upheld Him" – sustained Him; motivated Him – keeps Him moving towards this goal; accomplishing salvation for His own name sake and glory; these texts are quoted in NT;

Clothing is metaphorical for character and commitment and enduement for a task; as well as to put on display; God doesn't need to protect His cranium or His vitals; prepared for battle to win salvation for His people and to bring judgment;

Matthew Henry – He wears the armor first so it fits us

Rom. 3:24-26 – the righteousness of God is put on display

Ominous sight for God's enemies and awesome sight for His people

Now we get to **garments of vengeance** for clothing – for His enemies; **Is. 63:3** – strong language; sprinkled with the blood of His enemies; **Rev. 19:13** a robe dipped in blood – striking and fierce language and imagery; when God comes in judgment He means business; reckless abandon and zeal -- cf. movie Braveheart;

a mantle of zeal – no pacifist; not hanging back but on the front lines; **Ps. 69:9** “*zeal for Thine house has consumed me*”; cf. cleansing of the temple by Christ; zeal seen as a virtue – **Ps. 119:139** “*My zeal has consumed me because my adversaries have forgotten Your words*”; **Is. 9:6-7** “*the zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this*” = establishment of Davidic throne with Messiah sitting on it; **26:11** “*they see your zeal ... and they are put to shame*”; **Is. 37:32; 42:13** – “*go forth like a Warrior*”

Larry D. Pettegrew: TMSJ 10/2 (Fall 1999) 251-270 THE NEW COVENANT

Theologians of all kinds focus on Christ as the key to understanding the biblical covenants. Two significant characteristics of the New Covenant promised to Israel are its newness in replacing the Mosaic Covenant and its everlasting and irrevocable nature. For Israel the New Covenant promises her transformation through providing her a new heart, her final and permanent forgiveness, and the consummation of her relationship with the Lord. Through Israel God will also bless the Gentiles because of this covenant. As mediator of the New Covenant, the Messiah will be identified with Israel as God's Son, Servant, covenant, and Abraham's seed. Though the Messiah is not yet identified nationally with Israel, He is already identified with the church. Terminology and provisions spelled out in the NT indicate that Christ inaugurated the New Covenant at His first advent. Though the New Covenant will not be fulfilled with Israel until her future repentance, the church through Spirit baptism into Christ participates in that covenant. . .

The promises of the New Covenant direct themselves to Israel, and that leaves non-Israelites on the outside looking in. . . Some blessings relate to the Gentile nations, but even these are “spill-over” blessings from Israel. . .

the New Covenant, like the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants made with Israel, was declared everlasting and irrevocable, based on the promise of the sovereign, faithful God of the universe.¹¹ Thus the nation would possess the promises of the covenants forever. . .

The Lord promises to prosper Israel with an abundance of physical blessings, including the gathering of the people to the land (Jer 31:8-11, 15-17), productivity (Jer 31:12), expressions of joy (Jer 31:13-14), increase in herds and flocks (Jer 31:23-24), and rebuilding of cities (31:38-40). The spiritual provisions include a transformed heart of flesh, forgiveness of sins, and a consummated relationship with the Lord. Ezekiel adds that a permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit will accompany the law within the heart: “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezek 36:27). . .

Why is God so concerned about His relationship with Israel? What is special about this nation that leads God to make such wonderful promises to its people? The basic answer is that the Lord has identified Himself with the nation to the extent that His reputation and honor are at stake. . .

The New Testament (covenant!) documents thus should be looked at as instruction on how to

live out the New Covenant in the present age. Edward Malatesta, for example, presents a convincing case that John writes 1 John as a New Covenant document, explaining the existing provisions of the New Covenant. Malatesta writes, “The composition of Jer 31 (LXX 38), 31-34 highlights three elements of the New Covenant: an interiorization of the Law, knowledge of God, and forgiveness of sins. We shall see later that 1 Jn associates these same three elements in a Covenant context.”⁵⁹ Other NT books plainly unfold the teachings of the New Covenant. Thus, not only the terms for the New Covenant but also the provisions of the New Covenant are highly visible in the NT. NT Christians benefit in marvelous ways from this covenant that was promised to Israel.

So here is the tension. In the first part of the essay we emphasized that the New Covenant was promised to Israel. In the second part of the essay we emphasized that the New Covenant is operative and that members of the church are benefiting from it. How does the church get to benefit from the New Covenant that was made with Israel? For non-dispensationalists, this is not much of a problem. They have some tensions with the Old Testament teaching about the New Covenant being made with Israel.⁶⁰ But the church in the New Covenant is not a problem since in their system, the church essentially replaces Israel.⁶¹ Dispensationalists, who believe that God has separate programs for Israel and the church, have suggested various solutions to this problem. These include two new covenants (one for Israel and one for the church), or one covenant for Israel with application of the blessings to the church, or that the church has only new-covenant-like blessings.⁶² The best solution is that the church participates in the New Covenant, but the New Covenant will not be finally fulfilled until Israel comes into a right relationship with God at the end of the Tribulation. The church does not participate in the land blessings, and may not have full benefit of the spiritual blessings because the king is not yet here on earth ruling. But the church really does participate in the New Covenant provided by Jesus Christ.⁶³ Still, “participation,” though it explains the “what,” does not explain the “how.” How do church saints participate in the New Covenant?

In Christ. Though the Servant/Messiah was rejected by the covenant nation, and though the Old Testament promises will not be fulfilled until the eschaton, the Servant/Messiah has already begun to be the mediator of the New Covenant. Hope remains, therefore, for Gentiles outside of the covenants and promises and Jews related to a nation under the curse of the unpardonable sin to participate in the New Covenant. To do so, they would have to be able to establish an intimate relationship with this Servant/Messiah. Is this possible? . . .

Spirit Baptism. But how does one get into Christ? Clearly it is through the baptism of the Spirit at the time of conversion. Even more intimately, Paul explains that all who were baptized into Christ have “clothed” themselves “with Christ” (Gal 3:27). Dunn writes, “To be baptized into Christ is complementary to or equivalent to assuming the persona of Christ. In both cases [Spirit baptism and putting on Christ] some sort of identification or sense of bound-up-with-ness is implicit.”⁶⁷ Through such intimacy, church saints, whether Gentiles or Jews, inherit what Christ inherits and are sons of Abraham because Christ is (Gal 3:29).

Conclusion:

This essay has emphasized that the relationship of Christ to the New Covenant and the church to Christ does not in any way negate the future fulfillment of the New Covenant with Israel. The Lord made the New Covenant with Israel and presented it to Israel as a foundation of the messianic kingdom program. But the nation rejected the Messiah and His kingdom. Thus the New Covenant will not be fulfilled with Israel until the Day of the Lord events when the nation

in repentance accepts the One whom it previously considered to be “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isa 53:4; cf. Zech 12:10-14). Before that happens, Gentiles outside God’s covenant program and Jews under the shadow of a curse are blessed to be able to participate in the New Covenant. This they can do through Spirit baptism into Christ at the time of conversion. Though the Servant/Messiah came to His own people, “His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name . . .” (John 1:11-12).

<https://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj10q.pdf>

James Harrison: A Redeemer Will Come to Zion

The promise that God has made to His people that things will not always be as they are; this passage is full of future glory; universal joy in Christ; this world is ugly and disturbing; overturning of morality that calls good evil and evil good; then I look in my own heart and see darkness and depravity; easy to feel hopeless in regard to the world in which we live and the future we face; When we turn to Scriptures our perceptions are corrected; there’s something better to come; a new world; God has committed Himself to the future of this world; In Christ all the nations of the world will be blessed; light illuminates everything around it; Ps. 22:27; Is. 2:2-3; Dan. 7; Phil. 2 “*every knee will bow*”; Rev. 7 “*a great multitude standing before the throne*”

The final victory of Jesus Christ is the theme of the Bible; not some rabbit trail; why do we fear the future? Age to come is glorious; crime and terrorism eliminated; if you can see that future you can face anything that comes against you today; strengthen our confidence in the promise of God; we live in this world by faith; if we look only at what we can see we won’t want to go forward;

vv. 14-20 the before picture – this is how God finds us; truth is lacking; no justice; 4 realities that hold society together in vs. 14 – at the center of each phrase; these realities are now outside of our experience; left to ourselves we are a truth-resistant people;

God is not indifferent to wrong; He is determined to do something about it

We cannot rescue ourselves on our own

No one who could turn the tide and reverse the situation

God is a warrior and He has in His arsenal all He needs to triumph; He will settle every score with perfect justice; no hiding place – not even to the coastland; the apparent strength of evil is just that –apparent – just a colossal bluff; weak, getting old and passing away

vv. 19-20 – right now the progress of the gospel might seem slow and laborious; the present is not the measure of the future; opposition will be swept away; dissolving opposition into reverence buying family member out of slavery made you their redeemer

vs. 21 is hinge where we move from the past to the future – the New Covenant – what makes the difference? God’s Promise and Faithfulness to His Word; Isaiah shifts from poetry to prose here and makes it very clear – God pledging Himself to His people; His unfulfilling promise; His guarantee; we have made this world a mess; but God does not accept defeat; He guarantees our future; gives us His Spirit and His Word and will never take them away; never separate these two; we have been changed by the Spirit and the Word; day will come when the entire world will be changed; Christ has come to me through the Spirit and the Word and made me His;

“*them*” – from vs. 21 -- God’s covenant is with repentant people; the “*you*” is vs. 21 is masculine and in 60:1 is feminine (Zion); the Suffering Servant is likely answer; God has made a promise to His Son; world renewal is as certain as God’s faithfulness to Himself; 60:1 speaking of Zion,

the people of God

D. Scott Meadows: Our Divine Savior

Portrays God acting as if He were a man even though He is not; God is not unaware or uncaring about the human predicament of sin; His compassion is aroused; He will act to rectify the situation; no effective savior for the people who were suffering;

Emphatic by way of contrast – His arm brought salvation; God chose Himself to act; use His own power to rescue them and win the victory; God will restore the moral order; takes matters into His own hands; acts decisively;

vv. 17-18 – Yahweh acts to save His people; bullies and crooks seem to have the upper hand; the Lord is going to clean house; portrayed as Divine Warrior; very dramatic; gladiator imagery; figurative language; will display His saving power; will take revenge on those who have spurned His authority and violated His laws and harmed His people; this is not the typical image people have of God – more Ps. 23 the Lord as Shepherd or Father; but He is also terrible to sinners; King, Law-giver and Judge wrapped up in one; revenge is God’s entirely justified response to man’s sin; He has a right to pay back His enemies; a necessary response of His holy nature; capable of great fury; this type of punishment is necessary for restoration to paradise and law and order

vv. 19-20 Prophecy of future worldwide, Zion-centered blessedness – universal fear of the name of the Lord; God’s aggressive action powerfully brings about a new situation for His glory and for His people; coming situation is just as pervasive as the pervasive nature of sin; commencement of worldwide worship – as a direct result of God taking revenge on His enemies; “*fear the name of the Lord*” -- expression that signifies genuine worship of the Lord; is this something yet future?

ESV “*for the Lord will come like a rushing stream which the wind of the Lord drives*”

A decisive divine victory in realm of spiritual warfare and end of hostilities; God is destined to prevail over His enemies; the rebellion against King Jesus will be put down by the sovereignty of God to the praise of the Divine Warrior Himself

Quoted in **Rom. 11:26** – “*so all Israel will be saved*” – quotation from LXX;

- national Israel in end times

- all of God’s elect in Christ

This is a spiritual salvation from sin that comes through Jesus Christ our Lord

Vs. 21 – God speaking directly to Christ and His seed as triumphant over the devil; cf. Gen. 3;
The covenant announced
The covenant blessings set forth

TEXT: Isaiah 60:1-22

TITLE: THE MAGNETIC DRAW OF THE LIGHT OF THE LORD IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

BIG IDEA:

THE LIGHT OF THE LORD WILL BE REFLECTED IN TRANSFORMED ISRAEL, SERVED BY TRANSFORMED NATIONS IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

INTRODUCTION:

Our passage this morning is all about **Transformation** – the transformation of the nation of Israel that will happen in the last days and the transformation of the Gentile nations that will reverse their history of oppression and end up serving and enriching Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. Transformation is a big word for a big concept = “**a fundamental change in character or condition.**” God is in the business of Transformation. That is what He is doing in our lives as believers in Jesus Christ:

2 Cor. 3:18 *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”*

How is that work going in your life? Do you sense a growing maturity as the Lord changes you? Are you different today than you were 5 years ago? This work is totally accomplished by a sovereign God who works by grace through faith by the power of His Spirit.

The nation of Israel as we have studied these past couple of years certainly is in need of a major transformation. They are not functioning as God intended them to be a light to the Gentile nations. They have not been receptive to the Word of God or to the Messiah whom God has sent. And yet God has not rejected His chosen people. Certainly the world of nations in which we live today needs radical transformation. There is no love for the law of God or desire to worship Him in spirit and truth. Yet the picture we are going to find in Isaiah 60 is one of a transformed Israel and a transformed world of Gentile nations. What are we to make of this passage?

Today we are simply going to read the chapter as an overview – so that we can think about it this week and then come back and go through it again in more detail. But before reading the passage we are going to spend a large part of time in some foundational material.

4 Foundational Passages to understanding Isaiah 60:

1) Gen. 12:1-3 -- Abrahamic Covenant – understand how vs. 12 picks up on this theme

<http://www.gotquestions.org/Abrahamic-covenant.htm>

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. There are two basic types of covenants: conditional and unconditional. A conditional or bilateral covenant is an agreement that is binding on both parties for its fulfillment. Both parties agree to fulfill certain conditions. If either party fails to meet their responsibilities, the covenant is broken and neither party has to fulfill the expectations of the covenant. An unconditional or unilateral covenant is an agreement between two parties, but only one of the two parties has to do something. Nothing is required of the other party. The actual Abrahamic Covenant is found in Genesis 12:1–3. The ceremony recorded in Genesis 15 indicates the unconditional nature of the covenant.

There are three main features to the Abrahamic Covenant:

1. The promise of land ([Genesis 12:1](#)). God called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to a land that He would give him ([Genesis 12:1](#)). This promise is reiterated in [Genesis 13:14–18](#) where it is confirmed by a shoe covenant; its dimensions are given in [Genesis 15:18–21](#) (precluding any notion of this being fulfilled in heaven). The land aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant is expanded in [Deuteronomy 30:1–10](#), which is the [Palestinian Covenant](#).
2. The promise of descendants ([Genesis 12:2](#)). God promised Abraham that He would make a great nation out of him. Abraham, who was 75 years old and childless ([Genesis 12:4](#)), was promised many descendants. This promise is amplified in [Genesis 17:6](#) where God promised that nations and kings would descend from the aged patriarch. This promise (which is expanded in the [Davidic Covenant](#) of [2 Samuel 7:12–16](#)) would eventuate in the Davidic throne with Messiah's kingdom rule over the Hebrew people.
3. The promise of blessing and redemption ([Genesis 12:3](#)). God promised to bless Abraham and the families of the earth through him. This promise is amplified in the [New Covenant](#) ([Jeremiah 31:31–34](#); cf. [Hebrews 8:6–13](#)) and has to do with "Israel's spiritual blessing and redemption." [Jeremiah 31:34](#) anticipates the forgiveness of sin. The unconditional and eternal nature of the covenant is seen in that the covenant is reaffirmed to [Isaac](#) ([Genesis 21:12; 26:3–4](#)). The "I will" promises again suggest the unconditional aspect of the covenant. The covenant is later confirmed to [Jacob](#) ([Genesis 28:14–15](#)). It is noteworthy that God reaffirmed these promises amid the sins of the patriarchs, which fact further emphasizes the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant.

God's method of fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant is literal, inasmuch as God partially fulfilled the covenant in history: God blessed Abraham by giving him the land ([Genesis 13:14–17](#)), and, centuries later, the sons of Abraham took control of the land: "So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there" ([Joshua 21:43](#)). God blessed Abraham spiritually ([Genesis 13:8, 18; 14:22, 23; 21:22](#)); God gave him numerous descendants ([Genesis 22:17; 49:3–28](#)). An important element of the Abrahamic Covenant, however, demands a still-future fulfillment with [Messiah's kingdom rule](#):

- (1) Israel as a nation will possess the totality of the land in the future. Numerous Old Testament passages anticipate the future blessing of Israel and her possession of the land as promised to Abraham. Ezekiel envisions a future day when Israel is restored to the land ([Ezekiel 20:33–37, 40–42; 36:1–37:28](#)).
- (2) Israel as a nation will be converted, forgiven, and restored ([Romans 11:25–27](#)).
- (3) Israel will repent and receive the forgiveness of God in the future ([Zechariah 12:10–14](#)). The Abrahamic Covenant finds its ultimate fulfillment in connection with the return of Messiah to rescue and bless His people Israel. It is through the nation Israel that God promised in [Genesis 12:1–3](#) to bless the nations of the world. That ultimate blessing will issue in the forgiveness of sins and Messiah's glorious kingdom reign on earth.

2) John 1:4-9; John 8:12 Jesus as the Light of the world

<http://www.gotquestions.org/light-of-the-world.html>

([John 8:12](#)) is the second of seven "I AM" declarations of Jesus, recorded only in John's gospel, that point to His unique divine identity and purpose. In declaring Himself to be the Light of the world, Jesus was claiming that He is the exclusive source of spiritual light. No other source of spiritual truth is available to mankind.

There are two types of light in the world. We can perceive one, or both, or neither! When we are born into this world, we perceive physical light, and by it we learn of our Creator's handiwork in the things we see. However, although that light is good, there is another Light, a Light so important that the Son of God had to come in order to both declare and impart it to men. [John 8:12](#) records, "When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, 'I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but have the light of life.'" The allegory used by the Lord in this verse speaks of the light of His Truth, the light of His Word, the light of eternal Life. Those who perceive the true Light will never walk in spiritual darkness.

We take a candle into a room to dispel the darkness. Likewise, the Light of Jesus Christ has to be taken into the darkness of sin that engulfs the hearts and lives of those who are not following Him. That's the condition behind having this Light—that we follow Him. If we do not follow Him, we will not have this light, this truth, this eternal life. . .

Following Jesus is the condition of two promises in [John 8:12](#). First, His followers will *never* walk in darkness, which is a reference to the [assurance of salvation](#) we enjoy. As true followers of the Light, we will never follow the ways of sin, never live in a state of continually sinning ([1 John 1:5-7](#)). Rather, we repent of our sin in order to stay close to the Light of the world. The second promise is that we will reflect the Light of Life. Just as He came as the Light of the world, He commands us to be “lights,” too. In [Matthew 5:14-16](#) we see believers depicted as the light of the world. Just as the moon has no light of its own, reflecting the light of the sun, so are believers to reflect the Light of Christ so that all can see it in us. The Light is evident to others by the good deeds we do in faith and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

3) Romans 9-11 – the temporary and partial setting aside of the nation of Israel during this present church age with the anticipation that the end times will see a grafting back in of a saved ethnic nation of Israel when at a point in time God turns their hearts back to receive their Messiah

Clear explanation that God is not finished with dealing with Israel as an ethnic nation.

4) Rev. 20-21 – Millennial Kingdom and the New Jerusalem (new heavens and new earth)

* * * * *

3 very different Eschatological, Hermeneutical Grids:

1) **Postmill approach** – gospel is progressively spreading and conquering the world; then Jesus will return when His kingdom has been victorious (does not seem to mesh with worldwide events) The belief that the church is responsible for arranging the "golden age" of Christ's rule in people's hearts, resulting in godly overtones in politics, entertainment, family, and social life. Dominion Theology is one branch. Views the premill view as pessimistic.

2) **Amill, Covenant Theology approach** – The belief that the millennial kingdom is not literal, that it began at Christ's resurrection and is manifest either in the hearts of saints in heaven or saints on earth. Replacement theology -- the church has replaced Israel as the target for the fulfillment of OT promises related to the glorious future of God's people (result is you must gloss over the details of much of Isaiah's prophecy) Where do you see symbolic, figurative language and how do you interpret that language? Value is that it emphasizes the unity of God's people and the centrality of Christ's work of redemption; are not Jew and Gentile now without distinction in the church of Jesus Christ?

3) **Premill approach** – There remains a program for ethnic Israel where God will fulfill the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant in a 1000 year millennial kingdom where Jerusalem will be the focus of worldwide governance and worship (leads to some unexpected details – like the renewal of some form of sacrifices in a temple located in Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom); the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. Along with this perspective comes an understanding of the **telescoping nature** of OT prophecy in the light of progressive revelation – 2 events like the first and second coming of Jesus are not distinguished as distinct in the OT; same is true as to how the Millennial Kingdom and the eternal state are treated

What happens when you try to read **Isaiah 60** from each of these 3 very different perspectives? Try that on your own this week – take 3 different passes through the chapter and pretend that you

are a theologian from each of those 3 camps. How would you interpret each verse? What challenges would be presented; problem passages for your position?

THE LIGHT OF THE LORD WILL BE REFLECTED IN TRANSFORMED ISRAEL AS A MAGNET TO ATTRACT GENTILE NATIONS TO SERVE AND ENRICH ISRAEL AND WORSHIP THE HOLY GOD OF ISRAEL IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

Shorter version:

Parunak: Zion will shine with the light of the Lord when he restores her society and exalts her in the eyes of the nations

Largely following the **structural outline** of **Motyer** which sees the chapter revolving around the fulcrum point of vs. 12; 5 stanzas before vs. 12 and 5 stanzas after vs. 12 – total of 10 stanzas; I have grouped them in sets of 2 each

Oswalt: 8 key themes recur throughout chaps 60-62:

- 1) God will save his people [theme of the book]
- 2) he will give light to them [they will reflect His light]
- 3) he will share his glory with them [it's ultimately about the glory of God]
- 4) the nations will be drawn to what they see of God in Israel [Magnet imagery]
- 5) they will restore Zion's children to her [Regathering from all over the world]
- 6) they will bring their wealth to give to Israel's God [Enriching]
- 7) those who had oppressed Israel will be brought low and she will be exalted over them
- 8) she will both experience and exemplify the righteousness of God

As will be shown, all of these have threads that reach back through the entire book and come to their climax here.

Arab nations continually issue dire threats against the nation of Israel:

Iran's new president created a sense of outrage in the west yesterday by describing Israel as a "disgraceful blot" that should be "wiped off the face of the earth". Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who is more hardline than his predecessor, told students in Tehran that a new wave of Palestinian attacks would be enough to finish off Israel. Oct 2005

A branch of ISIS on Egypt's volatile Sinai Peninsula has reportedly threatened to attack Israel in a video released Wednesday. Nov 11, 2015

Israel's claim to land called Palestine – hotly disputed by Muslims

Does God keep His unconditional promises? Don't depend on obedience of His people

Remember the structure we talked about from Motyer's outline – 10 stanzas – 5 each revolving around vs 12 – working outward in concentric circles

At the heart you have the **Transformation of the Nations**

Outside of that you have the **Transformation of Israel**

The bookends at the beginning and the end speak of **the Light of the Lord**

We will read 2 stanzas at a time and make our comments on these 5 sections of Is. 60

I. (:1-5) THE LIGHT OF THE LORD BECOMES THE LIGHT OF ISRAEL – ATTRACTING THE NATIONS AND ENRICHING ISRAEL

A. (:1-3) Stanza 1 – Reflecting the Light of the Lord and Attracting the Nations

1. (:1-2) Reflecting the Light of the Lord -- Arise, Shine – Double Imperative

*“Arise, shine; for your light has come,
And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness will cover the earth,
And deep darkness the peoples;
But the LORD will rise upon you,
And His glory will appear upon you.”*

Song: “Rise and Shine and give God the Glory, children of the Lord”

Application for us every day as the sun comes up and a new day dawns – Arise, Shine

A command which we don’t have the capability naturally to obey

Borgman: The commands point out our own impotence – like the leper and blind man and lame man

Pelagius: if God gives command there must be inherent ability to obey the command

Augustine: Lord command what you will and then grant what you command – where does the power come from? How is the command fulfilled? By the accompanying power of God that comes with the command – “*for your light has come*”

Luke 1:78-79; Ephes 5:14 -- because NT makes reference to these OT prophecies as having connection to the First Coming of Christ – don’t make the mistake that there is no ultimate fulfillment yet future; remember in **Acts 2:14-21** how Peter referenced the prophecy of Joel about the outpouring of God’s Spirit – many details of that prophecy remain to be fulfilled in the end times – sun being turned into darkness and the moon into blood; the terrible Day of the Lord has not yet come – but we still make application to us today of the spiritual blessings associated with the first coming of Christ

Isaiah is talking about the Glory of Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom; don’t confuse with the eternal state of new heavens and new earth

Stedman: God’s glory had once dwelt in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-38), only to depart because of Israel’s sin (1 Sam. 4:21). God’s glory then came into the temple (1 Kings 8:11), but it departed when the nation turned to idols (Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:22-23). The glory came to Israel in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14), but the nation nailed that glory to a cross. Today, God’s glory dwells in His church (Eph. 2:20-22) and in His people individually (1 Cor. 6:19-20); but one day His glory will be revealed to the earth when He answers His people’s prayer: “*Thy kingdom come.*”

Look at the darkness of this wicked world – especially will be true in the Tribulation period – read the book of Revelation – extreme demonic activity – **Amos 5:18** “*Alas, you who are logging for the day of the Lord, for what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you? It will be darkness and not light*”

Oswalt: This is that deliverance into a life empowered by the Spirit of God (cf. **59:21**) in which

the light of God is reflected by the people of God. Like a city gleaming in the light of the newly risen sun, they shine with a beauty that is not their own. . . The only hope for Israel for the human race is in the “*coming*” of God. He has come and will come again, like the dawning of anew day, to bring the healing, peace, and righteousness that we cannot bring to ourselves (cf. Mal. 4:2). . . In the beginning, Israel sought to glorify itself by associating with the high and the mighty of the earth’s nations (**Isa. 2**). The result of that effort was the opposite of what was intended. They were abased and humiliated (chs. 2-3). Glory belongs to God alone. Nevertheless, God promised that he would somehow share his glory with them (**ch. 4**).

Beall: The only reason Zion is able to give light is that she has received the light of the Lord. Similarly, unless we have received the Lord's light, we are unable to help others see the light reflected in us. The Lord is Himself the light, as this verse and vv. 19-20 make plain. This truth is echoed in John 1:4-9 and John 8:12. . . The darkness/light imagery was used earlier by Isaiah in **Isa 8:22-9:2**, also in the context of the darkness of the world before the Redeemer vs. the light brought about by the Messiah, especially in His millennial reign (see Isa 9:6-7). The same imagery is used in **58:8, 10** as well. Though things may look gloomy because of sin and oppression, God will break through as the morning sun upon a dark world.

2. (:3) Attracting the Nations

*“And nations will come to your light,
kings to the brightness of your rising.”*

Oswalt: The brightness of the presence of God (cf. 4:5) in the person of the Savior will be irresistible. However far God’s people may fall short of all that God is, if they will only reflect the light of the incarnation in some part of its power, even kings will want to come to fall at his feet.

Constable: In the future manifestation of light, the Gentile nations and their leaders will look to Israel for light (righteousness and illumination). They will not seek Israel because she is light but because of the light that she will reflect and make manifest to the world. We can see a foreview of the revelation of God's light coming through the 144,000 Jewish missionaries who will preach the gospel during the Tribulation (cf. Rev. 7:1-8). This preaching will not fulfill this promise, however. The present preaching of the gospel by the church is only a foretaste of what is also to come through Israel.

B. (:4-5) Stanza 2 – Regathering and Rejoicing in Your Enrichment by the Nations

1. (:4) Regathering -- Lift Up / See – Double Imperative

*“Lift up your eyes round about, and see;
They all gather together, they come to you.
Your sons will come from afar,
And your daughters will be carried in the arms.”*

Regathering of Israel’s faithful remnant in preparation for entering the millennial kingdom

Parunak: Zechariah, who prophesied during the time of Zerubbabel, envisions a yet-future time of exile. His prophecy is universally mistranslated; the most natural rendering of the words is:

Zec 1:17 *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities from prosperity shall yet be scattered abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.*

Zechariah’s prophecy of subsequent scattering was fulfilled when the Romans destroyed

Jerusalem in AD 73 and 135. Thus the sixth century return is not the end of Zion's mourning, as Isa 60:20 promises. . .

The covenant position understands Isaiah's promise as referring to the salvation of the Gentiles. Young writes, "Here the prophet refers not to apostate Israelites, but to the heathen who have been converted and are coming from afar in all directions."³ Yet 49:22 clearly distinguishes Zion's children from the Gentiles who bring them back.

Understood in its most natural sense, this promise is not fully realized either in the returns of the sixth and fifth centuries BC, nor in the founding of the modern state of Israel, nor in the growth of the church over the ages. The natural understanding of this promise requires a restoration that has not yet happened.

2. (:5) Rejoicing in Your Enrichment

*"Then you will see and be radiant,
And your heart will thrill and rejoice;
Because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you,
The wealth of the nations will come to you."*

Constable: The nations and their leaders will bring the disbursed Israelites back to their land as well (cf. 11:12; 49:18). They will also bring their wealth and give it to the Israelites (cf. v. 11; 61:6; Hag. 2:7-8; Zech. 14:14). This will delight the Israelites, as well as surprise them, since throughout history the nations have taken from Israel. . . Israel will rejoice and be amazed because the nations will bring their wealth and give it to Israel. The nations will do this because Israel will be the Lord's vehicle for bringing the knowledge of God to them. The gifts are really in praise of the Lord, not to gain Israel's favor, or to repay her for her sufferings, or because she is a superior race.

The nation of Israel will surely enjoy a favored position as they are blessed by the wealth of all nations – can't say that we have seen that fulfillment yet in history

II. (:6-9) TRANSFORMATION OF ISRAEL – A MAGNET AND A MIRROR

A. (:6-7) Stanza 3 – Magnet for Enrichment and Worship

1. (:6) Extravagant Material Gifts – Focus on Praising the Lord

*"A multitude of camels will cover you,
The young camels of Midian and Ephah;
All those from Sheba will come;"
They will bring gold and frankincense,
And will bear good news of the praises of the LORD."*

Oswalt: From the riches of the northwest, the prophet's mind turns to the wealth of the southeast and the abundance of the Arabian caravans (cf. ch. 21).

Parunak: These promises of material tribute are a major issue in deciding between the interpretive alternatives that we are considering in this chapter. How are we to understand such promises? These prophecies are part of an important example of "**manifold fulfillment**": an initial prophecy is repeated down through history, sometimes in words and sometimes in events that foreshadow or partially realize the promise, until the time of the actual fulfillment. . . The

coming of the wise men is another link in this chain of manifold fulfillment. But it does not exhaust the promise, any more than did the **visit of the Queen of Sheba** . . .

One consequence of manifold fulfillment is that an earlier prophecy may telescope together events that later history shows to be separated in time. We saw this at the end of ch. 59 in the two aspects of the Redeemer's work, establishing the new covenant (which happened 2000 years ago) and defeating his enemies (which has not yet begun). It is likely that Isa 60 is a similar telescoping of the 1000 years of Rev 20:4 (when Gentiles will come from across the seas to rebuild Jerusalem and offer sacrifice at her temple) and the New Heavens and New Earth of Rev 21 (a new order, without temple, sea, or heavenly lights).

Oswalt: The value of gold is still recognized today, but in ancient times incense was almost equally valuable, both because of its widespread use in worship and for its aromatic powers in a world where the only thing to do with distasteful odors was to try to cover them. These items were still the symbols of the wealth of the East when the wise men brought their gifts to the infant Jesus many years later (Matt. 2:11).

2. (:7) Abundant Sacrificial Animals – Focus on Worshiping the Lord

*“All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you,
The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you;
will go up with acceptance on My altar,
And I shall glorify My glorious house.”*

Eze 40-48 – sacrifices will be offered in the millennial kingdom; fullest and most detailed picture of worship in the millennial kingdom – all of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant as well as the Davidic and New Covenants will reach their ultimate fulfillment

Constable: Isaiah's vision of the future Jerusalem included a temple and altar (cf. v. 13), but John's vision of the future Jerusalem excluded both (Rev. 21:22). The solution is probably that Isaiah described the millennial city, and John the eternal city.

Parunak: while the temple was standing, the Jewish [NT] believers did not hesitate to participate in the temple rituals, not as a remembrance of sin, but as a remembrance of the Savior of whom they were a type. They did not impose these practices on the Gentiles (Acts 15), and when the temple was destroyed, it became impossible to follow the law of sacrifice. However, when the temple is restored, in the coming time of Israel's exaltation, these sacrifices will be resumed as a further remembrance of the one who loved us and gave himself for us, and Jews and Gentiles will together bring their memorial sacrifices.

B. (:8-9) Stanza 4 – Mirror of God's Glory to the Nations

2. (:8) Eager Response by the Nations

*“Who are these who fly like a cloud,
And like the doves to their lattices?”*

Motyer: these Gentiles come with the speed of flying clouds and the naturalness of homing pigeons

Is this a reference to transportation by airplanes?? Or to the white sails of ships?? **Different modes of transportation** are in view in this section; land travel by camels; travel by sea and

now travel by air

Beall: In v. 8, the Lord asks a rhetorical question: who are they that are flying like doves to their roosts? The answer is that they are the coastlands who are waiting for the Lord. This response must be compared to 42:4, in which the Servant will not be discouraged until He has established justice in the earth (in the Millennium), “*and the coastlands shall wait for His law*”—here in 60:8, the coastlands simply wait for the Lawgiver Himself. The similar wording of these two passages indicates that the Servant of 42:4 is to be identified with the Lord. These coastlands will provide ships which will bring Israelites (Zion's sons) from far places, as well as silver and gold, all for the Lord's name and glory (a constant theme of this chapter). God has so beautified Zion, that the coastlands will desire to come to her (see also 55:5).

6. (:9) Fulfilled Anticipation – Culminating in Worship of God and Enrichment of Israel
a. Fulfilled Anticipation Described

*“Surely the coastlands will wait for Me;
And the ships of Tarshish will come first, To bring your sons from afar,
Their silver and their gold with them,”*

Parunak: These white things are the sails of ships -- **Note the approach from the west, not from the east as in the return from Babylon . . .**

Note the symmetry. Israel chose to follow other gods than the one who had made them a people. So he reciprocates, setting them aside from their privileged position for a time in favor of the Gentiles.

Now that the Messiah has come, this dynamic has begun to operate, as Paul writes to the Romans, **Rom 11:11** *I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? 13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.*

Isaiah anticipates a day when this process will be complete, and the salvation of the Gentiles becomes the mechanism for the salvation of “all Israel.” Paul concludes, **Rom 11:25** *blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved:* He does not write, “*and then all Israel shall be saved,*” but “*and so all Israel shall be saved.*”

His point is not just when Israel will be saved, but how. The salvation of the Gentiles is the means for bringing Israel back to the Lord.

- b. Focus of Worship Identified = Holy One of Israel who has glorified His Nation
*“For the name of the LORD your God,
And for the Holy One of Israel
because He has glorified you.”*

Oswalt: This is the next-to-last occurrence of the phrase “*Holy One of Israel*” in the book (the last is in **60:14**), and it expresses the climax in the uses of the term in the book. The phrase

serves to express that unique combination of transcendence and immanence that characterizes the God of the Bible. In his moral perfection, no creature can exist alongside him; in his awesome power, no one can contend with him; in his sole creatorship, he has no rival; in his self-giving to the people of earth, he is unmatched; in the purity of his love, there is nothing else to judge by. In a hundred ways the book has explored the wonder of the Person to whom this phrase applies. Now the Holy One who is the final judge is displayed to the nations as the God of Israel, who has given himself away to his people in love. Is it any wonder that they come flying from earth's remotest bounds to throw themselves at his feet?

Parunak: Our peace and joy may capture people's attention, but in itself it will not save people. We must confront them with the name of the Lord. Giving a testimony of what the Lord means to us is fine, but we must also preach the gospel. The two (testimony and preaching) are different. Both are important. People need to see that our experience is genuine, but they also need to understand the character of the God who lies at the heart of that experience.

III. (:10-14) TRANSFORMATION OF THE NATIONS TO SERVE ISRAEL AND WORSHIP THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

A. (:10-11) Stanza 5 – Edification and Enrichment

1. (:10) Edification of the City by Ministering Nations

*“And foreigners will build up your walls,
And their kings will minister to you;
For in My wrath I struck you,
And in My favor I have had compassion on you.”*

Parunak: A major focus of our discussion in this chapter is whether these events apply to the original return to Babylon, the church in the present evil age, or the coming Day of the Lord. Statements such as this indicate that the entity in view was previously the object of the Lord's wrath, but is now restored. That works if we understand Zion to be the capital of the Jewish nation. It doesn't work if we understand it to be the church, for God has never been wroth with his church, and has never smitten it. The true people of God in every age are shielded from God's wrath by the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus. The reversal that the Lord promises only makes sense if Zion is physical Israel, turned from rebellion to repentance.

2. (:11) Enrichment by the Nations Who Come in Submission

*“And your gates will be open continually;
They will not be closed day or night,
So that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations,
With their kings led in procession.”*

Rev. 21:25 – *And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.* gates can be left open where there is complete peace and security and no enemies threatening to attack

Parunak: But note the distinction. Isaiah envisions a context in which there is day and night, but the gates stay open. John applies the description to an epoch in which there is no night at all, and emphasizes that fact. As we suggested before, Isaiah's vision merges the Millennium (the present earth restored to its Edenic condition) with the New Heavens and the New Earth.

(:12) PIVOT VERSE – CONTRASTING ABRAHAMIC CURSE

*“For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish,
And the nations will be utterly ruined.”*

This entire chapter is about the promised blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant:

*“I will bless those who bless you
[and the one who curses you I will curse.]
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”*

But at the heart of the chapter we are reminded of the contrasting Abrahamic curse

Should this verse impact a nation’s foreign policy **today** with respect to the nation of Israel? I say “Yes!” but understand that others will disagree. You might say that the present nation is not the saved remnant of the end times – that is true, but throughout OT times the nation was not comprised of just the saved remnant either and yet God pronounced judgments against those nations that treated her harshly; Israel is still the nation that God has singled out for His special focus in the eventual establishment of His worldwide kingdom

No sitting on the fence – either you support Israel or you do not and you will be utterly ruined

B. (:13-14) Stanza 6 – Beautification and Bowing Down in Genuine Worship

1. (:13) Beautification of the Temple

*“The glory of Lebanon will come to you,
The juniper, the box tree, and the cypress together,
To beautify the place of My sanctuary;
And I shall make the place of My feet glorious.”*

Constable: The nations will bring all their finest products to Jerusalem as gifts to the Lord.

Young: *The place of God’s feet* is another designation for the Temple, which is often referred to as God’s footstool (e.g. **1 Chron. 28:2**) – testimony of David:

“I had intended to build a permanent home for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God.”

2. (:14) Bowing Down in Genuine Worship

*“And the sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you,
And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet;
And they will call you the city of the LORD,
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”*

Parunak: [The place is important – not just as representing the people who live there –] David is the chosen king, and Jerusalem is the chosen city. We cannot say why God should choose one city over another, any more than we can say why he has chosen the Jews as his people, or David as his king, or each of us as his child. But the fact remains that he has chosen such a place, independent of who happens to live there at the moment: Mount Zion, latitude 31° 46’ N, longitude 35° 14’ E. The medieval churchmen with good reason called this place *omphalos mundi*, “the navel of the world.” There almighty God has chosen to set his name. There he will enthrone his king, and there all nations will come to worship him.

IV. (:15-18) TRANSFORMATION OF ISRAEL

A. (:15-16) Stanza 7 – Superiority of Exaltation Over Rejection

1. (:15-16a) Promise of Exaltation – where there had been rejection

*“Whereas you have been forsaken and hated With no one passing through,
I will make you an everlasting pride, A joy from generation to generation.
You will also suck the milk of nations, And will suck the breast of kings;*

Almost all nations today hate Israel; city will no longer be center of contention and strife

MacArthur: As a mother feeds her infant, so Gentiles and kings will provide wealth and power to Zion.

Young: As a mother gives the milk of her breasts to her child, so do the nations give of their own life and vital energy to the Church so that the Church is in possession of nourishing food for a healthful growth. To show the luxuriant quality and richness of the food that Zion receives, it is stated also that she will suck the *breast of kings*.

The best of what the nations have to offer will belong to Israel

2. (:16b) Purpose of Exaltation

*“Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, And your Redeemer,
the Mighty One of Jacob.”*

Beall: The same names for the Lord also occur in **49:26** in connection with the Gentiles: both Jew and Gentile would, at last, know the person of the Lord.

B. (:17-18) Stanza 8 – Superiority of Substance and Security

1. (:17a) Superiority of Substance -- Precious Metals (Gold and Silver)

*“Instead of bronze I will bring gold,
And instead of iron I will bring silver,
And instead of wood, bronze,
And instead of stones, iron.”*

Progression:

- from wood and stones
- to bronze and iron
- to gold and silver

God is going to make things superior over what they are today – more beautiful; more valuable
In Solomon’s day, so much gold that silver was considered worthless like dust

2. (:17b-18) Superiority of Security – Peace and Salvation

a. Peace and Righteousness

*“And I will make peace your administrators,
And righteousness your overseers.”*

b. No Violence or Destruction

“Violence will not be heard again in your land,

Nor devastation or destruction within your borders;”

No more bombs blowing up in the market place
No fear of missiles being launched against your land

c. Salvation and Praise

*“But you will call your walls salvation,
and your gates praise.”*

V. (:19-22) THE LIGHT OF THE LORD SHINES FOREVER

A. (:19-20) Stanza 9 -- Superiority of Shining –

Presence of the Lord for an Everlasting Light

*“No longer will you have the sun for light by day,
Nor for brightness will the moon give you light;
But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light,
And your God for your glory.
Your sun will set no more, Neither will your moon wane;
For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light,
And the days of your mourning will be finished.”*

MacArthur: Isaiah, looking beyond the millennial kingdom, sees a view of the new Jerusalem following the Millennium (Rev 21:23; 22:5). His prophetic perspective did not allow him to distinguish the eternal phase of the future kingdom from the temporal one, just as the OT prophets could not distinguish between the first and second advent of Christ.

Parunak: The idea that the Messiah is light appears early in the book, when Isaiah promises light first to those in Galilee, where Messiah would arise :

Isa 9:1 *the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, ... the way of the sea ... 9:2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*

Now the later chapters, contemplating the Messiah’s kingdom, are full of promises of light:

58:8 *Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. 58:10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: 60:1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. 60:3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

So the Lord is our light. When we forsake him, we walk in darkness. He sends his Servant to be our light, and promises one day to restore Zion and her citizens to the full light of the Lord. . .

both the Lord and Messiah are described as the source of light.

- The Lord, the Holy One of Israel, is “the light of Israel” (10:17; 60:19, 20).
- He sends Messiah to be “the light of the Gentiles” (42:6; 49:6).
- Messiah himself claims to be “the light of the peoples” (51:4).

B. (:21-22) Stanza 10 -- Superiority of Sustainability – Possessing the Land Forever as a Mighty Nation

*“Then all your people will be righteous;
They will possess the land forever,
The branch of My planting, The work of My hands,
That I may be glorified.
The smallest one will become a clan, And the least one a mighty nation.
I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time.”*

God not pleased when we deny His future plans for His chosen people – Replacement theology does not glorify God
God is glorified by the literal fulfillment of all of His promises

Reference to God’s promises to Abraham – the smallest one; the least one; the one who had no children and no ability to have children
Nothing is too difficult for God; He will usher us into a future that is beyond our wildest expectations and imaginations

Constable: they will possess the Promised Land forever, rather than having to leave it because of their sins (cf. Gen. 17:8). Young wrote, "Inheritance of the land is a symbol of the future spiritual blessings that come to man through Christ."⁶⁹⁵ If this is so, why did God give specific geographical boundaries for the Promised Land several times after Israel possessed the land partially? . . . With posterity come glory, influence, and power (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

CONCLUSION:

As we celebrate the Lord’s Supper this morning I like this closing emphasis on the **speed** in which the Lord is bringing about the fulfillment of these end time events . . . just as the Book of Rev. closes with a longing for the Lord Jesus to **come back quickly** – certainly the nation of Israel in it present downtrodden and oppressed state must say Amen to the promise here of the Lord that *He will hasten it in its time.*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do so few Bible teachers today teach that this passage refers to the ethnic nation of Israel in the millennial kingdom in the physical land of Palestine?
- 2) How do we reconcile the way in which the NT makes reference to some of these OT verses?
- 3) Where does this passage fail to distinguish between the millennial kingdom and the new heavens and the new earth?
- 4) How can we be confident that God will fulfill all of His promises to us?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: The shape of this poem is its message. It consists of ten stanzas (all except one consisting of eight lines), five on each side of the pivotal statement in vs. 12 that the nation which does not serve Zion will perish. This is bracketed by stanzas focusing on the vision of the nations serving (10-11) and subservient to (13-14) Zion, building its walls (10a) and bowing low to it (14a). Thus the poem centres on the Abrahamic theme that those who bless him will be blessed and those who curse him will be cursed. The coming glorious Zion is the consummation of the world-wide purposes of God. The remainder of the poem ripples out from this point in concentric circles:

A1 The Lord, the light of Zion (1-5)

- the city of light, magnet to the world (1-3)
- Zion's response to the gathering nations (4-5)

B1 The new status of the nations: materially and spiritually accepted by the Lord (6-7)

C1 World expectations met in the Lord (8-9)

D1 The serving nations: the Lord's compassion to Zion (:10-11)

E Zion, the key to world destiny (12)

D2 The submissive nations: their recognition of Zion (13-14)

C2 Zion's needs met by the Lord (15-16)

B2 The transformation of Zion, materially and spiritually (17-18b)

A2 The Lord, the light of Zion (18c-22)

- Zion's response to the Lord's blessing (18c-20b)
- The city of light, possessor of the world (20c-22)

Beall: This wealth includes all the sea merchandising (v 5b); camels and dromedaries from Midian (v 6a; Arabian merchants south of the Dead Sea [see Gen 25:2; Judg 6:1-6 mentions the devastation of Israel by Midian and her camels "without number"—in the Millennium, a reversal of this process would take place], and Ephah (v 6a; son of Midian, Gen 25:4, and apparently a branch of the Midianites); gold and incense from Sheba (v 6b; in southern Arabia; according to 1 Kings 10:2, the queen of Sheba brought gold and incense to Solomon; see Jer 6:20); flocks from Kedar (second son of Ishmael [Gen 25:13], lived in northern Arabia) and rams from Nebaioth (v 7; see Gen 25:13; 28:9; 1 Chron 1:29; probably refers to the Nabateans, who also lived in northern Arabia); their sons and silver and gold in ships of Tarshish from the coastlands (v 9); and trees from Lebanon (v 13). Not only wealth would be brought, but praises to the Lord as well (v 6; compare 1 Kings 10:9). In fact, it seems as if the wealth is being brought as an expression of praise to the Lord.

Parunak: This section is characterized by 2fs pronouns ("thee," "thou," "thy"), which throughout Isaiah mark address to "daughter Zion" (1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2). Under this metaphor, God's judgment leaves her a bereaved widow (49:14-50:3) and a barren wife (54:1-17). This chapter describes the blessing brought to this woman by the new covenant of 59:21. It promises

- spiritual enlightenment
- return of the Jews to the land
- worship of God in his sanctuary (destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar)
- rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem
- economic tribute from the Gentiles from every direction

Liberal theologians associate these promises with the return from Babylon in the sixth and fifth centuries BC. Some Jews did return, but by no means all. The temple and city were rebuilt, but the nation did not receive the tribute of the Gentiles. It was itself a puppet state. Also, there is no indication that the restoration community lived under a new covenant marked by a new relation to the Holy Spirit. Instead, they sought to reestablish the Mosaic covenant.

Covenant theologians apply these promises to the church, which they believe has replaced national Israel as the people of God (“replacement theology”). . .

My conviction, and an enduring theme of our study of this chapter, is that the full realization of these promises awaits a future restoration of ethnic Israel after the return of the Lord Jesus.

David Thompson:

Epic text; would be fascinating if peace talks were based on prophecies of Isaiah; futuristic glimpse of future of Israel in Messianic age; will be most prosperous and most peaceful nation; Arab nations will bow down to her and bring her their wealth and honor; you cannot have these blessings until the Redeemer comes; chap. 60 depends on chap. 59; what God intends to do for Israel nationally He is now doing for us individually in salvation; Israel will enjoy the glory of God; right now Jews are scattered all over the world; they will all go back to their Promised Land

5 amazing predictions:

1) God’s Glory will come to Israel – command for Israel to Rise and Shine – not about the church rising and shining; Boettner and roots of replacement theology; on the verge of a brighter day; no more fighting for survival; you will shine as the light of God; word of God and blessings of God upon Israel and nations will be attracted just to get a glimpse of the glory of God; kings will be promoting and leading this parade to Israel; this will all happen when there is a deep darkness in the world; this world is not becoming brighter through 2000 years of the preaching of the gospel by the church; God’s light is typically rejected in the world right now; God will have to make this happen; book of Rev. explains that tribulation period is the darkest hour of the world – dominated by demons

2) All Nations will bring their wealth to Israel – bringing these gifts joyfully and willingly; nations helping Jewish people return to their homeland; nations of the world wanting to support God’s temple and bring offerings there; many of the places named are Arab countries; no longer interested in their idolatrous mosques; there will come a day when people will be interested in coming to worship the Lord – serious, sacred business; treat worship seriously; will there actually be blood animal sacrifices?

Travel by camels, by plane, by ships

Is it justifiable to solicit funds from unsaved world on the basis of this text? But we have clear statements in the NT that God’s work should be supported by God’s people; but here all the nations left on the earth are believing nations; don’t put on pancake breakfasts and rummage sales

3) All nations will come to help and honor Israel – when a political leader stands behind Israel they will be blessed by God; you honor Israel and God will honor you; helping Israel to rebuild cities; they will realize how special Israel is to God; vs. 12 specific judgment against nations that did not honor Israel – especially during Tribulation period; Lebanon = the Arab world; those nations that previously afflicted Israel;

4) (:15-18) God will bring peace and stability to Israel – she has been hated and despised;
Who can give that type of peace and stability? Only Jesus Christ

5) (:19-22) God will shine forth His light from Israel – Rev. 21-22;
G. Campbell Morgan: “the result of perfect govt. will be perfect glory”
She will have all of her land forever; no more efforts to take land from her
Can you imagine if US President walked into a peace treaty meeting and said “We are going to
base our negotiations on Isaiah 60

Applications:

- we must shine forth the glory of God in our lives – comes from personal relationship with our Redeemer
- we should always be supportive of Israel
- we should always remember that those who honor God, God will honor
- God’s future for His people will exceed anything we can think or dream of

TEXT: Isaiah 61:1-2a

TITLE: THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRISTMAS – THE MISSION OF THE ANOINTED ONE

BIG IDEA:

OUR RESPONSE TO THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRISTMAS -- RAGE OR JUBILEE?

INTRODUCTION:

It's hard to imagine that the Christmas season is already upon us. In the providence of God we have arrived after a 2 year journey and over 90 messages at a most appropriate Christmas text – the opening verses of Isaiah 61. Last week we raced through an entire chapter ... this week we will sit and meditate on just a few phrases ...

Todd Beall: As **Young** notes, there is a close relationship between chaps. 60 and 61: chapter 60 described Zion's exaltation, while chapter 61 describes the One who will accomplish that exaltation and deliverance (3:458). Chaps. 61:1-63:6 form a unit, with the theme of redemption and judgment (“*vengeance of our God*”) predominate throughout (see 61:1-2; 63:4).

This is one of those **telescoping prophetic passages** we have mentioned of future events where Isaiah combines in one text a description of what will take place at both the First Coming and the Second Coming of the promised Messiah/Servant. We will see that more clearly in a few minutes where we see the Lord Jesus reading from this passage in the synagogue in his home town in Nazareth as He launches His public ministry.

A very simple outline:

I. THE ANOINTING OF THE SERVANT/MESSIAH WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

II. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF GOOD NEWS TO THE AFFLICTED

What is involved in bringing good news to the afflicted?

III. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS MISSION OF HEALING, DELIVERANCE AND BLESSING

Isaiah has paved the way for this exciting revelation by some prior very clear and detailed descriptions of the anticipated birth of the baby that would be born to a virgin in the little town of Bethlehem and would develop into the one assuming the mantle of the Davidic Kingship who would reign for all eternity in peace and righteousness.

Remember **the problem** that Isaiah has been describing about the pervasive sin of God's chosen nation Israel and their need for repentance and forgiveness:

1:18 “*Come now, and let us reason together,*” says the Lord. *“Thought your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.”*”

There is a stain and defilement from sin that we cannot possibly erase. The only person who can effectively deal with our sin problem is God Himself – so we need a mediator who can come as God in the flesh to reconcile us to God and accomplish the important work of redemption:

7:14 “*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*” [very significant name = **God with us**]

Quite an impressive sign – **John 1:14** speaks of the fulfillment of the Word becoming flesh and dwelling with us so that we could see His glory – *full of grace and truth*

God has a solution to this devastating sin problem – a solution that applies not only to the Jews of Jerusalem but also to the **Gentiles** of all the nations of the world:

9:1-7 *“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them”* The Jews stumbled over this promise and wanted the promises of Messiah to only relate to their nation; in their pride they had nothing but contempt for the Gentiles around them

Of course in the last few weeks we have seen the identification of that light as the long awaited Messiah/Servant – the one that John the Baptist would announce and testify to as the Light of the World – but He would become incarnate as a tiny baby born in a stable in Bethlehem:

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace. On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.”

Isaiah continued his prophecy with some very dark pronouncements about the way God would discipline His people by the cruel Assyrians invading the northern kingdom and then the Babylonians taking the Jews of the southern kingdom into oppressive captivity for a period of 70 years. They needed to learn that **salvation and deliverance could only come from total reliance upon God alone**. This is the lesson we continually need to learn and apply in our lives.

So we come to our text for this morning of Christmas week.

Let’s turn over to **Luke 4:16-30** to study how the Lord Jesus himself used this passage and proclaimed the fulfillment of the portion that applied to His First Coming.

SETTING:

End of Chap. 3 – **vv. 21-22** the important **baptism of the Lord Jesus** – this is going to be referenced as He talks about being anointed by the Holy Spirit for His public ministry

So that when He comes on the scene He is described as being *“full of the Holy Spirit”* – **4:1** We see Him successfully passing the test of being tempted by Satan in the wilderness for 40 days and then we come to our text ... some ministry events have already occurred and Luke skips over them to get to this incident that took place in His home town of Nazareth – wanting to emphasize that Jesus came not just to bring salvation to the Jews but as a light to all who were in darkness ... in fact He came unto His own people and for the most part they did not receive Him and there is going to be a huge transition that culminates in the Apostle Paul being designated the Apostle to the Gentiles

Talk about the providence of God in our coming upon this text for this morning ... this was the portion of the prophets that was appointed to be read that very day [they had already had the appointed reading from the law]; not some arbitrarily chosen passage by Jesus

Look at where Jesus stopped in the reading of Isaiah’s text – right in the middle of verse 2!

I. THE ANOINTING OF THE SERVANT/MESSIAH WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

*“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the Lord has anointed me”*

Jesus speaking here

Is. 42:1 “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.” – sounds like the baptism of Jesus

All 3 members of the Trinity appear here; very special verses in Scripture where you see the Trinity in action with all 3 members of the Godhood actively participating; God the Father speaking here

Constable: He would need divine enablement by the Spirit to fulfill it (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1, 6-7; 16:3; 2 Sam. 23:1-7; Matt. 3:16-17). This Anointed One would do the Servant's work.

Oswalt: In Isaiah the Spirit is especially associated with the power to bring justice and righteousness on the earth, often through the spoken word (11:2; 32:15-16; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 59:21). Thus it is being said here that the Messiah is particularly marked by the counsel and the power of God. But beyond that, he is anointed by God for his task, and the Spirit filling is because of that anointing. Interesting, the only places in the OT where Spirit filling and anointing are mentioned together are in connection with the establishment of the kingship, first in Saul (**1 Sam. 10:1, 6-7**), then in David (**1 Sam. 16:1-4**). The classic statement of this conjunction is found in **2 Sam. 23:1-7**, where David hymns the function and role of the Messiah. . . This is the Messiah, and he is being consciously associated with the Servant by showing that the Messiah does the Servant's work.

The anointed offices:

- Prophet
- Priest
- King

Name Messiah / Christ = the anointed one

Somewhat of a progression in these 3 offices – although Jesus fulfills all 3 of these roles on a perpetual basis

The emphasis in His First Coming in our text for this morning is His **prophetic role**

As the one promises in **Deut. 18:17** Jesus comes to proclaim the Word of the Lord in a way that is unique in terms of His authority and His impact; never a man spoke like this man

His priestly role will be emphasized as He goes to offer Himself on the Cross as our sacrificial lamb and assumes the High priestly function of interceding for us in heaven before the throne of His father even today – His kingly role will be emphasized at His Second Coming as He vanquishes all foes and establishes God's kingdom on earth in peace and righteousness

II. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF GOOD NEWS TO THE AFFLICTED

“to bring good news to the afflicted;”

Luke 2:9 the angels announce birth of Jesus to the shepherds

Thompson: literally mean in Hebrew to *announce* or *proclaim* as a messenger the good news of God

Constable: In other occurrences of this verb, it is the hope of Israel that is in view, specifically deliverance from Babylon and deliverance from sin (cf. **40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 60:6**).

Oswalt: He is not only the preacher of the good news **but He is the good news.** . . . Will the Servant/Messiah simply hurl words at the poor? No, for his words will accomplish what they speak of. He will gather up the broken hearts and bandage them together.

John the Baptist brought this message of good news as he preached the coming of the kingdom: Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand –

There is no good news apart from confessing your condition as poor and afflicted and in need of repentance – **Matt. 3:1-12**

Afflicted = **humble** – those who acknowledge their condition before God; not the proud and self-righteous and self-sufficient like these religious leaders of Jesus' day

Rev. 3:17 *“Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked”*

Skip forward in Luke 4 to the **RESPONSE OF THE CROWD** there in Nazareth and then we will return to our third point

Their response mirrors that of much of the world today as this Christmas season arrives – how many people at work this past week did you find expressing hostility and hatred towards Jesus? For the most part they receive Christmas very positively and yet they don't understand the mission of the Messiah –

Look at the dramatic change in attitude on the part of this crowd as Jesus explains more fully who He is and why He has come . . .

If the world truly understood Christmas they would be filled with **rage and hatred** – instead they are lost in the superficiality of Santa Claus and Christmas trees and tinsel and presents and empty songs sung by choirs that have no comprehension of the underlying theology of the words. Not a chorus of “Joy to the world” but actually the cry of a lynching mob: “Crucify Him”

Look at how **King Herod** responded to the announcement of the birth of the promised Messiah: **Matt. 2:16ff**

Psalm 2 *“Why do the nations rage”*

Can't sit on the fence when it comes to Jesus Christ – you are either with Him or against Him **Matt. 12:30** *“He who is not with Me is against Me”*

What is involved in bringing good news to the afflicted? Now we come to our third point

III. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS MISSION OF HEALING, DELIVERANCE AND BLESSING

A. Healing

“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,”

42:6b-7 *“I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.”*

Bringing hope to those who have no hope

Parunak: The way to meekness leads through chastisement. The Redeemer brings comfort to those who have experienced God's hand of discipline. To "*bind up*" refers to the process of bandaging a wound. God never brings chastisement without also providing the healing that restores, something that was a commonplace with Eliphaz the Temanite, one of Job's friends:

Job 5:17-18 *Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: 18 For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.*

Thompson: There are no greater wounds that need to be bound like the wounds of the heart. It is certainly bad to have broken bones but not nearly as bad as having a broken heart. The one who can heal the broken heart is Jesus Christ. He heals the heart that has been broken by guilt. He heals the heart that has been broken by rejection. He heals the heart that has been broken by bereavement or affliction. Jesus Christ came to bind up broken hearts.

B. Deliverance

*"To proclaim liberty to captives
and freedom to prisoners;"*

Parunak: The first reference to the deliverance is associated with "*open the blind eyes*" (42:7), and the subsequent references are associated with "darkness." Early on, Isaiah used blindness as a description of the spiritual insensitivity of Israel, which he imposed as judgment for their sin (29:10-11, cf. v. 18). Against this background, the "prison" language may be seen as a metaphorical intensification of the "blindness" imagery. We'll see that our passage supports this qualification. . .

The expression "*proclaim liberty*" is a direct reference to the Jubilee:

Lev 25:10 *And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty קרא דרוך throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.*

Those who were set free at the jubilee were not captives in a political sense. They were indentured servants and those in debt. Debts were forgiven, and fields that had been sold were restored to their original families. Certainly, this image is appropriate for the return from Babylon, but it is a much broader image of liberation from every form of oppression.

C. Blessing

"To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord"

[*"And the day of vengeance of our God"*]

Another reference to Jubilee

* * * * *

John Greer: The Jubilee of the King (:1-3)

50th anniversary of the commencement of reign of Queen Elizabeth = Jubilee = anniversary or a time of great joy; also used as a synonym for joy itself; in the Bible has different meaning and usage = 19 of 20 times used in Leviticus – chap. 25 especially – every seventh year was a year of rest for the land; after 7 cycles of those 7 year periods, the next year, the 50th year was appointed as the Jubilee Year; time to celebrate deliverance and liberty – a year of granting deliverance to those who were in various forms of difficulty; not a remembrance of the previous 49 years; a clear gospel application; 61:1-3 are the words of Jesus Christ; speaks of His commission to preach the gospel; good news of a Jubilee; the great gospel Jubilee for lost sinners; the details of Lev. 25 are actually a pointed presentation of the gospel;

I. The Foundation of the Gospel Jubilee = the Atoning Work of Christ

Freedom and peace brought home to the heart of the sinner; that deliverance must have a foundation; what is the basis for the Lord opening up the prison door and releasing the sinner? Anything less than that would be a travesty of divine holiness and justice; must be justly released; cf. consequences of releasing prisoners who have not served their sentence;

“*the acceptable year of the Lord*” – a reference to Jubilee – comes from a word associated with good pleasure of the Lord; satisfied with something; connected to the atonement of Christ **Lev. 1:4** “*accepted for him*” to make atonement; picture of transferring of sin to innocent substitute who dies;

Lev. 25:8-9 sound the jubilee on the day of atonement; God’s good pleasure is then extended to man

What is the Atonement? To cover over so as not to be seen; linked with that word is forgiveness of sins; guilt is no longer seen by God because of the atoning blood; **Lev. 19:21-22** brings together concepts of atonement and forgiveness; to be sent away; released; let go from guilt and condemnation by a God who is satisfied with the atonement that has been made

Rom. 5:10 *by whom we have received the atonement*

John 3:14 *the Son of Man must be lifted up* – on the cross -- it is necessary because of the character of God – our sin is against divine holiness; it is a vain hope to think you can escape the consequences of your sins

The Atonement was successful; if you will trust in the atonement God will be pleased towards you

II. The Fullness of the Gospel Jubilee

Lev. 25 – describes the fullness of the Jubilee = Release / Rest / Restoration

* * * * *

The announcement of the beginning of the Messianic age

Constable: When Jesus Christ read this passage in the Nazareth synagogue and claimed that He fulfilled it, He stopped reading after “*the favorable year of Yahweh*” and did not read “*and the day of vengeance of our God*” (Luke 4:18-19). He meant that He was the Anointed One of whom Isaiah spoke, and that He had come to bring salvation. The day of salvation had begun (cf. 49:8; 2 Cor. 6:2). However, the day of vengeance would not begin until much later, specifically at the end of the Tribulation when He will return (cf. 34:8; 35:4; 63:4; Dan. 7:21, 24-27; Mic. 5:15; 1 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 12:13-17; 19:15-20).

MacArthur: The same as “*a day of salvation*” (**49:8**) and “*My year of redemption*” (**63:4**)

CONCLUSION:

This Christmas season truly brings joy to the hearts of those who understand the good news of Jesus Christ coming to save us from our sins. We are the humble ones who understand our need of deliverance from the affliction and bondage of sin; our need to have the eyes of our understanding opened; to be made whole and forgiven so that we can enjoy fellowship with a holy God. This season is truly one of **Jubilee** for us.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Have we overlooked the importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit as essential in enabling us to live for Jesus Christ?
- 2) Where do we see reactions of rage and hatred towards the person of Jesus Christ?
- 3) What areas in our lives do not reflect the type of liberation that should be characteristic of those who have been delivered from sin by the redemption accomplished by Messiah?
- 4) How can my spirit reflect the type of Jubilee that should dominate my demeanor during this Christmas season?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: The characteristics and work of the Servant are extended to his people. The endowment of the Spirit is one of these, and the distinctive feature of the New Covenant:

Isa 32:15 *Until **the spirit be poured upon us** from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*

Isa 44:3 *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: **I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:***

Isa 59:21 *As for me, **this is my covenant with them**, saith the LORD; **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 the LORD, from henceforth and forever.*

In Israel's history, anointing with oil was the symbol of the empowerment of God's Spirit for divine service . . . Here the Redeemer claims such an anointing. Isaiah describes only one other person in such terms:

Cyrus, the Persian conqueror of Babylon

Isa 45:1 *Thus saith the LORD to his **anointed**, to Cyrus*

Under God's providence, Cyrus sent the Jews back to rebuild Jerusalem:

Isa 44:28 *That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*

As we have seen in ch. 60, the restoration after Babylon is a picture of the ultimate restoration of the City of God, and Cyrus is thus a picture of the ultimate restorer.

Dr. Whitcomb: An Appealing Voice

The voices of the Christmas prophet; Jesus speaking in vv.1-2; **11:1-5** speaks of the qualifications of the one who could speak encouraging words to our needy hearts; we are all afflicted; infinitely superior to words of King David **2 Sam. 23:1-5**;

Luke 4:14ff relationship of Jesus to the Holy Spirit is crucial; anointed one means He is the Messiah; for three and a half years preached a message of repentance to receive the kingdom; hometown crowd amazed at His claims; cut off the second half of the verse which speaks of His Second Coming; we celebrate Christmas but how many really understand the significance of Jesus? People would clamor for signs and wonders and miracles; Jesus loved them enough to convict them of their sin and need of a savior; Elijah sent to a Gentile country the land of Sidon – shocking to these Jews; only leper that was cleansed was a Gentile, a foreigner – had to humble himself and dip his head 7 times into the Jordan River and came up totally cleansed from his leprosy; after he pointed out these 2 examples dramatic change in the attitude of the people towards Jesus – enraged against Him; what a treatment of a guest speaker! Motivated by Satan; thought they were the people of special privilege; steep cliff in Nazareth; looks like a hopeless situation – but it was not the time or manner for Jesus to die; not bringing a message to the proud and self-confident and self-righteous; we are all captive by sin nature; Repent and you shall be saved; remember Nicodemus speaking highly of Jesus and His miracles – he needed to repent and be born again;

TEXT: Isaiah 61:2b-11

TITLE: THE MISSION OF MESSIAH

BIG IDEA:

THE PROMISED MESSIAH COMES IN BLESSING AND VENGEANCE TO TRANSFORM ISRAEL AND REJOICE IN HIS MISSION

INTRODUCTION:

Context:

58:1-14 ONLY GENUINE WORSHIP BRINGS BLESSING

“Why have we fasted and you did not see?” vs.3

59:1-15a THE PERVASIVE, CORRUPTING IMPACT OF SIN LEAVES SOCIETY DEVOID OF TRUTH, JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

“your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God” vs.2

Having laid out the problem, Isaiah introduces the solution – requires divine intervention
59:16-21 **setting the stage for the details that will be unfolded in the concluding chapters of Isaiah’s prophecy THE REDEEMER-WARRIOR COMES TO EXECUTE SALVATION AND VENGEANCE**

Chap. 60:

THE LIGHT OF THE LORD WILL BE REFLECTED IN TRANSFORMED ISRAEL, SERVED BY TRANSFORMED NATIONS IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

Come today to **Chap. 61** in its entirety --

It always seems like Christmas comes to an **abrupt end** – so it is in Chap. 61. We move quickly from the Mission of the Messiah at His First Coming to that of His Second Coming.

Parunak: Structural observation: v. 1 begins in the first person, with somebody other than the Lord [God the Father] (because the speaker claims to have been anointed by the Lord). This first person voice speaking about the Lord returns in v. 10. At least part of what comes between (v. 8) is spoken by the Lord [God the Father].

THE PROMISED MESSIAH COMES IN BLESSING AND VENGEANCE TO TRANSFORM ISRAEL AND REJOICE IN HIS MISSION

God has a plan for Israel and the Gentile nations which He will execute until it comes to completion; that plan will establish the righteousness of God on earth; will transform Israel and the nations; and will bring glory to God – it all hinges on the work of the Redeemer whom God has sent

I. (:1-3) THE MISSION OF MESSIAH INVOLVES BOTH BLESSING AND VENGEANCE

[Review of our Christmas message and now extension to New Year’s Emphasis]

A. (:1-2a) Messiah’s Mission at His First Coming

1. The Anointing of the Servant/Messiah with the Holy Spirit

*“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the Lord has anointed me”*

2. The Announcement of Good News to the Afflicted

“to bring good news to the afflicted;”

3. The Accomplishment of His Mission of Healing, Deliverance and Blessing

a. Healing

“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,”

b. Deliverance

*“To proclaim liberty to captives
and freedom to prisoners;”*

c. Blessing

*“To proclaim the **favorable year** of the Lord”*

The year in which the Lord shows His favor; His acceptance; associated with receiving God’s favor and blessing: [only use of entire phrase ... but look at usage of “favorable”]

- In terms of favor in general (dispensed by a sovereign)

Deuteronomy 33:23 *And of Naphtali he said, "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, And full of the blessing of the LORD, Take possession of the sea and the south.*

Psalms 5:12 *For it is Thou who dost bless the righteous man, O LORD, Thou dost surround him with favor as with a shield.*

Proverbs 12:2 *A good man will obtain favor from the LORD, But He will condemn a man who devises evil.*

Proverbs 14:35 *The king's favor is toward a servant who acts wisely, But his anger is toward him who acts shamefully.*

Proverbs 18:22 *He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD.*
[Specific example of a particular blessing]

- in terms of response to our prayers

Psalms 69:13 *But as for me, my prayer is to Thee, O LORD, at an acceptable time; O God, in the greatness of Thy lovingkindness, Answer me with Thy saving truth.*

- in terms of association with salvation and the granting of new life

Proverbs 8:35 *For he who finds me finds life, And obtains favor from the LORD.*

Isaiah 49:8 *Thus says the LORD, "In a favorable time I have answered You, And in a day of salvation I have helped You; And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, To restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages;"* [quoted in **2 Cor. 6:2** in conjunction with receiving the **grace of God** in salvation – **grace and truth** come through Jesus Christ; appeal to live a life of holiness and separation unto God]

Isaiah 60:7 *All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you, The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you; They will go up with acceptance on My altar, And I shall glorify My glorious house.*

- combining these 3 aspects: bringing God's favor and blessing in association with salvation and spiritual life and deliverance in response to prayers of desperation

Psalm 145:19 *He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.*

Application:

2016 is going to be a year in which the world continues to moan with despair over the desperate and dangerous times in which we live; things are tenuous; the threat from terrorism continues to grow; the economy is uncertain; racial relations in our own country are antagonistic; everywhere we turn there will continue to be negative news dominating the headlines

Hollowness of New Year's Eve revelry – fireworks displays; firing off of soundmakers; dancing in the streets; partying all night – but where is the deep and lasting joy and security? Stars on TV proclaiming that their New Year's resolution for 2016 is "World Peace" – how empty is that wish?

But for those who put their trust in the grace and salvation which the Lord Jesus brought to us at His First Coming, 2016 for us should be **a year of God's favor and blessing**

That is why I am making this verse **our key verse for 2016**

That is why I spent so much of this sermon reviewing the OT usage of this word

B. (:2b-3) Messiah's Mission at His Second Coming

1. Vengeance Upon God's Enemies

"And the day of vengeance of our God"

Contrasted with blessing towards God's people

Prominent theme in Isaiah – 34:8; 35:4; 47:3; 59:17; 63:4

Constable: The day of salvation had begun (cf. 49:8; 2 Cor. 6:2). However, the day of vengeance would not begin until much later, specifically at the end of the Tribulation when He will return (cf. 34:8; 35:4; 63:4; Dan. 7:21, 24-27; Mic. 5:15; 1 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 12:13-17; 19:15-20).

Dan. 7:21 *until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.*

Micah 5:15 *And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations which have not obeyed.*

Nah. 1:2 *A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.*

Parunak: The noun “vengeance” is what we would call “revenge,” getting back at people who have opposed us:

Jdg 16:28 *And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.*

Pro 6:34 *For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.* The Scriptures exhort us not to seek vengeance for ourselves, but God is entitled to seek it:

Rom 12:19 *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

These two periods differ not only in their description, but also in their duration and the title taken by their author:

- **Vengeance** is the work of a day, but acceptance is described as a year. Compare **63:4**, where the Redeemer announces, “*the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.*” God’s vengeance is real, and terrible, but it is not where he puts the emphasis. In **28:21**, he describes judgment as his “*strange work.*” His delight is not in judgment, but in redemption.

- In describing his work of **acceptance**, God takes the name יהוה, his covenant name, emphasizing his relationship with his people. The work of vengeance is ascribed to him as אלהים, simply “*God.*”

2. Comfort and Joy Upon God’s People

*“To comfort all who mourn,
To grant those who mourn in Zion,
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.”*

“all who mourn”

Isa 3:26 *And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.*

Isa 60:20 *the days of thy mourning shall be ended.*

Parunak: -Mourners did away not only with the beautiful turban, but also with the oil with which they anointed themselves.

J. Vernon McGee: Isaiah is making a play upon words with “*beauty*” and “*ashes*”—it is like saying in English that He will exchange joy for judgment or a song for a sigh.

Ps. 45:7 *“You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your god, has anointed You with the **oil of joy** above Your fellows.”*

3. Glory Upon the God Who Establishes Righteousness

*“So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”*

Images of stability and permanence

Parunak: This prominent tree marked the idolatrous groves that Isaiah earlier condemned:

Isa 1:29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.

Isa 57:5 *Enflaming yourselves with idols* [אֵלִים, perhaps with reference to the sacred pillars] *under every green tree*, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks? Now they will be “*oaks of righteousness*,” emblems of obedience to God’s word just as much as the pagan groves were of disobedience

II. (:4-9) THE MISSION OF MESSIAH TRANSFORMS ISRAEL’S STATUS AMONG THE NATIONS -- DISTINCT ROLES FOR BOTH GENTILE NATIONS AND THE NATION OF ISRAEL IN THE REDEEMER’S MISSION

What had God promised would be the status of the nation of Israel in the world?

What has Israel’s status been during these times of the Gentiles?

What will change when the Messiah returns to usher in His Millennial Kingdom?

A. (:4-5) Relationship of the Gentile Nations to Israel = Ministering to Israel

1. (:4) Ministry of Rebuilding and Restoring

*“Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,
They will raise up the former devastations;
And they will repair the ruined cities,
The desolations of many generations.”*

Beall: **Young’s** comment that the reference here is “to the building up of the Church from the ravages sin has made throughout the ages” (3:462) shows the inadequacy of the non-literal amillennial approach. In v. 5, Gentiles are again pictured as contributing to Israel’s prosperity, much as in chapter 60 (esp. v. 10). They will serve Israel as shepherds, plowmen, and vinedressers. On the other hand, v. 6 explains that the Israelites will be called priests and servants of the Lord—they will be the spiritual leaders of the nation, while Gentiles provide the physical strength. The Israelites will receive the wealth of the Gentiles (see Isa 60:5, 11), and will be given a double portion for her inheritance. As **Grogan** explains, Israelite laws of inheritance gave the firstborn a double portion (Deut 21:17); so here, the “*firstborn*” of the nations (Exod 4:22) would receive a double portion in their land (p. 334). Note that earlier in the book Israel had received “*double*” punishment for her sins (40:2); now she would receive double blessing and everlasting joy.

Oswalt: the fact of the rebuilding itself, not the builders, is what is important. At various points Isaiah had said that the great cities of Israel’s enemies and oppressors would be destroyed never to be rebuilt (13:19-22; 34:8-17). No matter how vigorous the efforts, all rebuilding attempts will fail. But the opposite is true for Jerusalem and Judah. No matter how long the ruins may

have existed, they will be rebuilt, and no matter how terrible the desolation, new life for Israel will spring up again (cf. 35:1-2).

2. (:5) Ministry of Caretaker Over Flocks and Fields and Vineyards

*“Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks,
And foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.”*

Parunak: The central section shows a conspicuous change in grammatical person in describing the redeemed. Contrast the exclusive use of 3mp pronouns in vv. 3-4 and 7b-9 with the exclusive use of 2mp pronouns in 5-7a. . . Since the prophets are the mouthpiece of the Spirit, we can understand this central paragraph (:5-7a) as the Spirit’s communication to us of what God has done for us

- The Lord is our Shepherd – tremendous imagery comes to mind
- The Lord is our True Vine and His Father is the Vinedresser; we are the branches that bear much fruit as we abide in the true vine

In the millennial kingdom the Lord will use Gentile nations to perform these precious ministries of serving as shepherd and farmer and vinedresser

Motyer: The picture is not of a slave-state or of second-class citizenship but of glad co-operation, or former aliens taking their place in the life of the people

B. (:6-7) Relationship of Israel to the Gentile Nations = Fulfilling Their High Calling

1. (:6a) Priests to the Gentiles

*“But you will be called the priests of the Lord;
You will be spoken of as ministers of our God.”*

No clergy-laity distinction here

All of the saved – Jews and Gentiles alike participate in this priesthood of believers
Apparently in the millennial kingdom, the administration of the revived sacrificial system in the temple will have a Jewish orientation – not diminishing the application to the church of the priesthood of all believers [somewhat of a problem text – not what we would expect]

2. (:6b) Prospered and Supported by the Wealth of the Gentiles

*“You will eat the wealth of nations,
And in their riches you will boast.”*

Constable: However, the Israelites would not oppress their former oppressors. Rather than tilling the land and tending flocks, the Israelites would serve in the exalted position of being priests of Yahweh. They would mediate between God and the Gentiles. As the priests in Israel lived off the contributions of their fellow Israelites in the past, so all the Israelites would live off the contributions of the Gentiles in the future. The nation would finally become the kingdom of priests that God intended it to be (cf. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 33:10).

How radically different from the climate Israel faces today in the world of nations

3. (:7) Possessors of a Double Portion of Full Inheritance in Their Land – Everlasting Joy vs. Humiliation and Shame

*“Instead of your shame you will have a double portion,
And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion.
Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land,
Everlasting joy will be theirs.”*

C. (:8-9) Reasons Given for This Transformation (Reversal of Fortunes)

1. (:8) Faithfulness of the Covenant-Keeping God

a. Detesting Any Form of Hypocritical Commitment in Worship

*“For I, the Lord, love justice,
I hate robbery in the burnt offering;”*

2 possibilities:

1) if the verse is directed against Israel (**Parunak**) – “robbery with burnt offering” (cf. 1:13; Mal. 1:17; 3:8). In this case the verse would be attacking that same combination of hypocritical religion and social injustice that chs. 56-59 and 63-66 address.

2) If the verse is spoken on behalf of Israel (**Oswalt**), God is promising to reward them; not to do so would be robbery and injustice

Parunak: The AV translation “with the burnt offering” would thus be saying that God is displeased when people engage in both robbery (more generally, selfish grasping) and burnt offering; when they presume to worship him while still continuing in their sinful habits. . . The whole history of Israel may be understood at one level as driven by the inconsistency between the worship that God prescribed for them and their disobedience of his moral commandments. It is a precious privilege to worship the Lord, and the symbols and structures he gives us to assist our worship are treasures of grace. But they become an abomination to him if we presume to exercise them while we are rebelling against him

Motyer: The Lord required unreserved commitment from his people, and anything less was robbery. He now recalls this in order to illustrate the fact that in his faithfulness he will himself hold nothing back when he recompenses his people. He will live up to his own standards.

b. Bestowing Full Blessing Ultimately in Fulfillment of Covenant Promises

*“And I will faithfully give them their recompense
and make an everlasting covenant with them.”*

2. (:9) Trophy Recognition of What Transformation Looks Like

*“Then their offspring will be known among the nations,
And their descendants in the midst of the peoples.
All who see them will recognize them,
Because they are the offspring whom the Lord has blessed.”*

Trophies are a recognition of Accomplishment – at least they should be

Illustration: TV commercial of Dad taking participation trophy from his son and writing Champions instead

The saved of the Lord are the trophies of His grace because by His power He has transformed them into something they were not

Constable: The physical seed of Abraham would continue to exist and to be identifiable as Israel, as God promised the patriarch and his descendants (Gen. 12:1-3). Furthermore, Israel would be a witness to the rest of the earth's population. Thus all the earth would be able to worship and praise Yahweh.

Oswalt: The second aspect of the promise is that not only will Israel have historical continuity, but it will also be a witness to the peoples of the world.

Motyer: so transformed will the Lord's people be that world-wide they will be quite distinct because of a quality discerned in them which can be explained only as an act of divine blessing.

III. (:10-11) THE MISSION OF MESSIAH BRINGS GREAT JOY FOR ITS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND FRUITFULNESS

A. Boasting of Exultation in God

*"I will rejoice greatly in the Lord,
My soul will exult in my God;"*

Is this Messiah speaking (**Parunak, Motyer**) or the redeemed of Israel (**Beall, Oswalt**)??
My preference is that the Messiah is speaking here

- Because of same first person singular pronouns used as in opening verses
- Because the emphasis is on the Mission of the Messiah

Beall: Finally, in vv. 10-11 redeemed Israel responds to the message of vv. 1-9. The remnant will rejoice greatly in the Lord (inf. abs. used to strengthen the verb). The root is used 9 times in Isaiah (out of 24 uses in the entire OT), nearly all in the final 5 chapters of the book (35:1; 61:10 [2]; 62:5; 64:4; 65:18, 19; 66:10, 14). As **Oswalt** notes, "it conveys ecstatic joy, and is used of God rejoicing over Israel about as often as it is used of Israel rejoicing over God" (Isaiah 40-66, 574). God has clothed His people with the clothes of salvation and righteousness (compare the Lord's own "clothing" in Isa 59:17)

B. Beauty of Garments of Righteousness

1. Spiritual Imagery

*"For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,"*

2. Marriage Imagery

*"As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."*

Constable: Israel's joy in that day (the Millennium) will be like that of a bride on her wedding day, ecstatically adorned with a turban and jewels.

C. Bounty of Productive Fruit

*“For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up,
So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.”*

Parunak: *Righteousness and praise* correspond to the plants in the two similes. He speaks of praise rather than *salvation*, perhaps because he sees that salvation has had its effect, and now people praise God for the deliverance they have experienced. This praise, and their practical righteousness, “*spring up*” as plants do. They are the natural result of the life that God gives. They are not just wild plants, but the object of the tender care that he offers as the gardener.

Motyer: This verse adds a second explanation of the joy in verse 10ab. This task for which he is endowed will be fruitful. *Soil* has a spontaneous power of growth; *garden* is cultivated in order to produce. So *righteousness* is the product alike of the spontaneous activity of the divine nature and of the cultivating care of the God who keeps his promise. *Righteousness* is the saving work as it satisfies God and produces the fruit of righteousness in its recipients; praise is the saving work as it excites a response.

CONCLUSION:

As we enter into the new year of 2016, let us have the expectation that the Lord will continue to shower us with His blessings – we continue to live in that season of *the favorable year of the Lord* – where our Redeemer through His sacrifice on the cross has made us accepted before the Father on the basis of His righteousness and showered us with every spiritual blessing. Yes, **vengeance** lies ahead when the Lord returns ... but that purging will mean comfort and joy for the Lord’s people.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do you have the sense of living in the context of “*the favorable year of the Lord?*”
- 2) Is the tone of your life consistent with the *oil of gladness* the great exultation of the Messiah over His accomplished work of redemption?
- 3) What are the ramifications for all believers being viewed as priests and ministers? Does our practical functioning in the local church reflect this reality?
- 4) How does our transformation present us today before the world as trophies of God’s grace and the vindication of God’s faithfulness to His promises?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: The point of **Gal 3:26** is that regardless of ethnicity, gender, or social status, faith in Christ makes us children of God. Other verses that discuss the Jew-Gentile distinction make similar, very specific points about the ways in which that distinction is not applicable: the ability

to call on the name of the Lord (Rom 10), access to righteousness by faith (Gal 5), membership in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12), and the privilege of being renewed into the likeness of Christ (Col 3). But children of God have **different roles** in society and in the church—now and in the kingdom.

There is no physical sanctuary with cultic ritual in this present age. We have previously suggested (in our study of **Isa 60:7**) that this circumstance goes along with the present form of our Savior's kingdom as "*not of this world*" (**John 18:36**). Under these conditions, we, as a universal priesthood, can offer up spiritual sacrifices, just as all Israel did throughout the Old Testament. We, like they, can come directly to God with our sacrifice of praise. But we also saw evidence that when our Lord returns to set up his physical kingdom, the physical sanctuary will be restored, and with it, animal sacrifices of a memorial character. There is nothing inconsistent with the restoration of a specific cultic priesthood at that time, and with a distinctive role for Jews in leading the ritual in the restored temple.

David Thompson: The results of Christ's Second Coming into this world. 61:4-9

There are nine results of Jesus Christ coming into this world. All of these results will be realized by Israel when Jesus Christ returns again.

Result #1 - The ancient devastated areas will be rebuilt and repaired. 61:4

Result #2 - Non-Jewish people will serve Jewish people. 61:5

Result #3 - Israel will be called the priests and ministers of God. 61:6

Result #4 - Israel will be given the wealth of the nations. 61:6b

Result #5 - Israel will have joy in her land and not shame or humiliation. 61:7

Result #6 - Israel will have a true worship . 61:8a

Result #7 - Israel will have an everlasting covenant with God recognized by all nations. 61:8b-9

Result #8 - Israel will rejoice and exalt God because she is finally saved and righteous. 61:10

Result #9 - Israel will blossom into becoming a beautiful and fruitful nation of righteousness and praise. 61:11

Todd Nibert: The True Clergy

Distinction between clergy (the men of the cloth) and laity (the common people); the professionals vs. the lay people; **Rev. 2:15** the doctrine of the Nicolaitans – which the Lord hates; lot of speculation about what this means; means “above the people” – this is where the idea of clergy and laity began; all of God's people are God's inheritance – all saved the same way; **Acts 15:7** – Gentiles saved the same way as Jews – all by grace; we are all brethren; not a top dog and underdogs; Gentiles idea of leadership is to exercise authority over others; **Is. 61:6** – you shall be priests and ministers;

When this was written the cities of Israel were uninhabited; they needed to be rebuilt and inhabited;

A *priest* is someone who represents men before God who is holy; we are sinful; I need someone to represent me with whom the Father is pleased;

Heb. 7:25 – He is our great high priest; able to save men to the uttermost that come to God by Him; because of His priesthood every believer is a priest and is able to come into God's presence; a royal priesthood and a kingdom of priests; for any man to claim to be a priest over his fellow men is an act of rash presumption

TEXT: Isaiah 62:1-12

TITLE: JERUSALEM – A CITY NOT FORSAKEN

BIG IDEA:

THE LORD SWEARS HE WILL BRING SALVATION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS TO HIS HOLY CITY JERUSALEM

INTRODUCTION:

Integrity if it means anything, surely means that a person can be trusted to keep his word, to stand by his promises. Nothing less than the integrity of the Lord is at stake with respect to the City of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel ultimately experiencing salvation and the righteousness of God. That is what the Lord promises here in Chap. 62 and that is what He will surely deliver. How sad it is that so few believers today actually believe that the Lord will keep this simple and clear promise.

Yes, the NT opens up for us new dimensions of understanding as it speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem in **Heb. 12:22** and all the blessings of salvation and righteousness that the people of God – Jew and Gentile – will experience in heaven for all eternity. But the **added complexity** and **depth** of the NT applications of God’s OT promises do not negate or abolish the simple fulfillment of God’s original promises to the physical city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel and the Jewish people. Remember, there are many varied layers of application, but only one literal fulfillment of the prophecy.

What testimony would it be to the Gentile nations to see that God has abolished His program for the nation of Israel and now is dealing instead with the church – with Jew and Gentile without distinction? How does that bring glory to God. Do you think God is saying to the Jews – “I fooled you guys. You took what I was saying for all of those hundreds of years **literally**; you actually thought that the promises applied to you; instead, all of the time I was speaking of higher spiritual realities that you could never have realized. What would Abraham and David think of that approach – to say nothing of the Jewish disciples of Jesus Christ who asked Him after His resurrection, “*Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?*”

Let’s look this morning and the clear and simple promise that God makes here to His holy city of Jerusalem.

THE LORD SWEARS HE WILL BRING SALVATION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS TO HIS HOLY CITY JERUSALEM

How can we be sure that these glorious promises will actually come true?

I. (:1-5) PROMISE OF FULFILLMENT

A. (:1-2a) Great Promise

1. (:1a) Great Because of the Players Involved = Messiah and Jerusalem

*“For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet,”*

Not messing around here with some minor promise; with some peripheral issue; with something of little significance

Speaker here continues to be the **Messiah** as in closing verses of chap. 61:10-11 that are transitional – could just as easily be taken with this paragraph

Motivation of Messiah – “*For Zion’s sake*” – His ultimate motivation is always for His own glory – **Is. 48:11** – but that drives God acting on our behalf to bless His people; has love and compassion for His people

Motyer: (:1-3) The Anointed One expresses his determination that Zion may so come to possess the blessings of righteousness and salvation that it may be plain for all to see; and to possess, too, a new name and royal dignity. . . The verbs combine to say that the Anointed One will give himself to both ceaseless prayer and ceaseless action.

Oswalt: God is depicted as responding to the charges that he has been silent to the pleas of his people (cf. 42:14; 45:15-19; 57:11; 64:12; 65:6).

Borgman: Conveys both actions (vs. inactive, idle) and words (vs. not saying anything) Messiah speaking and working on Jerusalem’s behalf until she fulfills God’s high calling for her; statement of absolute determination

2. (:1b) Great Because of the Transformation Promised = Righteousness and Salvation

*“Until her righteousness goes forth like brightness,
And her salvation like a torch that is burning.”*

This is practical righteousness that can be seen as a result of imputed righteousness

Glorious Imagery = Shining light and blazing torch

Borgman: you are a walking billboard for Me;
Jesus described John the Baptist as a burning and shining light – zeal and knowledge of light for the benefit of others

Oswalt: *nogah, brightness* – This word appears in **59:9**, which uses the absence of brightness to express the absence of justice and righteousness in the Israelite community. Thus its appearance in 60:3, 19 and here expresses the presence of the divine character as reflected in his people by his grace (see also 9:2 and Prov. 4:18). It is God’s character dawning on an Israel that confesses its inability to do righteousness that will draw all the nations to its light. God here promises to be indefatigable in bringing that day to pass.

3. (:2a) Great Because of the Worldwide Stage = Nations and Kings

*“And the nations will see your righteousness,
And all kings your glory;”*

David Thompson: Here is proof that this has never happened to this day. When Jesus Christ returns, all the world political leaders will honor Israel and recognize her glory. World leaders today are debating whether or not Israel even has a right to exist. There will come a day when

they will all honor Israel.

Rev. 21:24 – certainly the church has not accomplished this; this is the eternal state God’s purposes don’t fail; only dispensational perspective can handle this accurately
Brian Borgman: we would have said church did poorly in its mission; God sees picture better; looks at the success of the church in a much different light = amillennial perspective; God’s purpose is triumphing; He is much more optimistic than we are

B. (:2b-5) Glorious Promise

1. (:2b) Glorious Because It Involves Divine Transformation = a New Name

*“And you will be called by a new name,
Which the mouth of the LORD will designate.”*

Oswalt: What will be the manifestation of that glory? It will be a change of condition and character as evidenced by a new name. In Israelite culture, as in that of the entire ancient Near East, name and character were intimately associated. This is the reason for the importance attached to the naming of children (cf. 7:3, 14; 8:3; 9:6). It also explains the significance of important name changes in the patriarchal accounts (Gen. 17:5, at the institution of circumcision as covenant sign; Gen. 32:28, at the point of Jacob’s admission of dependence on God). Thus here the proclamation of a new name for Zion indicates the new condition and character that God’s salvation will provide for her. That this is solely the work of God is expressed in the final colon by the statement that the very mouth of the Lord has designated the name.

David Thompson: As we just mentioned, Israel will be called by a specific new name given to her by God. There are a bunch of them mentioned in this chapter: “*married to the land*” (verse 4); “*the holy people*” (verse 12); “*the redeemed of the LORD*” (verse 12); and “*the sought out*” (verse 12). Whatever the new name is, it will signal that all of this has happened.

James Barker – **Future Restoration of Israel**

Israel over 4000 years old; God gave Jacob a new name = Israel = the prince of God; **Gen. 32:28**; 62:10 – God again will give the nation a new name; Jer. 33:16 – those days haven’t arrived yet; “*the Lord is our righteousness*” ; will be fulfilled when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to Zion – **Is. 59:20**; **Rom. 11:26**

2. (:3) Glorious Because It Involves Majestic Beauty

*“You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
And a royal diadem in the hand of your God.”*

Motyer: Zion is not said to wear but, twice over, to be the *crown* or *diadem* in the Lord’s hand. To be in his hand is to be kept, guarded and upheld; to be a crown is to be that which expresses kingliness – not the exercise of royal power (the wearing of a crown) but the possession of royal worth and dignity. The Lord’s people will be the sign that he is King.

Oswalt: mixed metaphor – The people of God, Zion/Jerusalem, are in his hand, i.e., in his care and under his control. But they are not in his hand as slaves or lumps of wood or stone. They are there as a priceless possession, a thing of delight, honor, and beauty.

3. (:4) Glorious Because It Involves Ultimate Acceptance and Security

- a. (:4a) Expressed Negatively
*“It will no longer be said to you, ‘Forsaken,’
 Nor to your land will it any longer be said, ‘Desolate’;”*

Cf. the renaming that takes place in Hosea 1

- b. (:4b) Expressed Positively
*“But you will be called, ‘My delight is in her,’
 And your land, ‘Married’;

 For the LORD delights in you,
 And to Him your land will be married.”*

Oswalt: basic sense of the word is “to possess” . . . In the modern setting “owned” is objectionable in the context of marriage. But in the ancient setting the alternative was “unwanted,” and to “belong to” someone was far better. . . Translate: “Belongs to” or “Dwelt in” – “your sons will dwell in you” . . . At the same time, it is clear that the relational element is important to the writer.

4. (:5) Glorious Because It Involves Ecstatic Joy – Image of Bridegroom and Bride

- a. (:5a) Ecstatic Joy Pictured in the Marriage of a Virgin
*“For as a young man marries a virgin,
 So your sons will marry you;”*

MacArthur: “Marry” in the sense of occupying and possessing the city.

- b. (:5b) Ecstatic Joy Pictured in the Marriage Consummation
*“And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
 So your God will rejoice over you.”*

Constable: Quoting **Grogan:** So often in the OT a new name (v. 2) is the pledge of divine action to change the status or character of a person (cf., e.g., Gen 17:5, 15[; John 1:42]). . .

The new name promised in verse 2 would be Hephzibah (My delight is in her; cf. 2 Kings 21:1) and Beulah (Married). These names would replace former designations of Israel's condition: Azubah (Forsaken; cf. 1 Kings 22:42) and Shemamah (Desolate). These new names would reflect God's delight in His people and His work of uniting them with their land.

Motyer: The two halves of the verse are, respectively, the wedding and the honeymoon; the marriage covenant, which includes the bridegroom's promise to “love and to cherish”, and the entry upon the delights of married life in which the bridegroom rejoices in his bride. So Zion will be the object of the cherishing love of her own sons, and the Lord will enjoy honeymoon-delight with those whom the Anointed One has saved and made right with him.

II. (:6-9) TWO GUARANTEES OF FULFILLMENT

A. (:6-7) Ordination of the Watchmen – Make Sure God Remembers His Promise

Charged with a very important mission

1. (:6a) Their Appointment

“On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen;”

Oswalt: could be angelic beings here (cf., e.g., Dan. 4:13) who have been appointed by God as functionaries in the heavenly court. *Those who remind.* As 2 Sam. 18:6; 1 Ki. 4:3; and Isa. 36:3 show, the Israelite kings had officials whose title was, as here, “The One Who Reminds.” This person’s task was probably to be certain that the king remembered what he had committed himself to do. [not the same context as Ezekiel where the watchmen are warning the people of impending danger]

2. (:6b) Their Activity

“All day and all night they will never keep silent.

3. (:7) Their Alertness

a. Unceasing in the Performance of Their Duties

“You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves;”

b. Unceasing in the Demands Upon the Promise Keeping God

“And give Him no rest

until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

Grogan: This passage may well furnish part at least of the OT background to the parables of importunate prayer told by our Lord (Luke 11:5-10; 18:1-8).

B. (:8-9) Oath of the Lord – I Will Keep My Promise

1. (:8a) Guarantee Based on Power to Perform

“The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm,”

Strength, power; associated with work of His Servant/Messiah

2. (:8b) Guarantee Based on Compassion for Oppression

The Lord does not take delight in disciplining His people

a. No More Discipline By Way of Famine

“I will never again give your grain as food for your enemies;”

Deut. 28:33-34 *“A people whom you do not know shall eat up the produce of your ground and all your labors, and you will never be anything but oppressed and crushed continually. You shall be driven mad by the sight of what you see.”*

Mic. 6:15 *“You shall sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; And the grapes, but you will not drink wine.”*

Examples:

- days of Gideon – **Judges 6:1-6**
- days of Assyrian oppression
- days of Babylonian oppression

b. No More Discipline By Way of Frustration

“Nor will foreigners drink your new wine, for which you have labored.”

Motyer: Loss of crops to an invader was a common pre-exilic experience, and it would have spoken deeply to Isaiah’s people about their coming security to be told that this would never happen again.

3. (:9) Guarantee Based on Encouragement to Worship

God is a Spirit and seeks people to worship Him in Spirit and in truth

a. Feasting Coupled with Praise

“But those who garner it will eat it, and praise the LORD;”

b. Drinking Coupled with Worship

“And those who gather it will drink it in the courts of My sanctuary.”

Constable: The Lord revealed that He had appointed watchmen, whose job it was to remind Him of His promises to Israel, so that He would not forget them (cf. 36:3; 2 Sam. 8:16; 1 Kings 4:3; Luke 2:36-38). Obviously the Lord does not forget His promises, but this assurance, in the language of the common practice of the day, underscored the fact that He would not forget. The watchmen in view may be angels and or human intercessors (cf. Ezek. 33; Dan. 4:13; Luke 11:5-10; 18:1-8).

Another reference to rebuilt temple in the millennial kingdom

III. (:10-12) ANTICIPATION OF FULFILLMENT

A. (:10) Make Preparations

1. Open Gates

“Go through, go through the gates;”

2. Clear Path

“Clear the way for the people;”

3. Paved Highway

“Build up, build up the highway;”

Illustration: Resurfacing of our street – as you turn down it now it has a welcoming presence, rather than the bumpy, pot-hole obstacle course we used to have to navigate

Oswalt: this is the highway over which the nations will flow to Zion, bringing Zion’s children with them as they come to worship Zion’s God.

4. Cleared Obstacles

“Remove the stones,”

5. Visible Banner

“lift up a standard over the peoples.”

Signal, standard, banner

Is. 11:10 *“Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.”*

Is. 49:22 *“Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations and set up My standard to the peoples”*

B. (:11) Boast in God’s Promise

1. Command to Boast

a. God’s Word to the Gentile Nations

“Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth,”

Or is God talking to the Jews who are scattered throughout the world??

b. God’s Word to His Elect Nation

“Say to the daughter of Zion,”

2. Reason to Boast

a. Salvation

“Lo, your salvation comes;”

b. Reward

“Behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.”

The reward and recompense are the elect people whom the Messiah has redeemed and regathered to the land of Israel

C. (:12) Embrace Your Transformed Identity – What’s in a Name?

1. Testimony of the Gentile Nations

“And they will call them, ‘The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD’;”

Ex. 19:6 – they will not fulfill their calling to be a holy nation

Restored relationship

2. Security of the City of Jerusalem

“And you will be called, ‘Sought out, a city not forsaken.’”

Is. 49:14 – this complaint of Israel will no longer be voiced

Beall: According to vv. 11-12, the Lord will be bringing salvation when He comes, and His

people will be called holy and redeemed. The people constitute His “reward”: the people will be brought by the Lord to Jerusalem. As was mentioned above, these verses are almost identical to **Isa 40:10**. The people will receive a new name (“Holy People”) as well as the city (“sought out; a city not forsaken”). These names would be quite a great contrast to the names mentioned in v. 4 (“forsaken” and “desolate”).

Motyer: “*sought out*” – here it refers to the Lord assiduously finding and gathering his world-wide people (Ezk. 34:11; Jn. 1:43; 9:35).

CONCLUSION:

As we rejoice in our **transformed identity** this morning, let’s focus our worship and praise on our Redeemer – the one who gave up His holy life as a perfect sacrifice on the cross so that we could be the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; the one who sought us out so that we would be no longer forsaken, the enemies of God – but now members of God’s own household forever – beloved and secure in our new relationship.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When are the nations and kings going to see the glory and righteousness of Israel?
- 2) How does the Lord demonstrate that He delights in His redeemed people?
- 3) Do our prayers call upon the Lord to be faithful in keeping His promises to His people?
- 4) What is your response to being labeled as holy, redeemed, sought after by the Lord?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: The coming of the Lord and restoration of Zion are depicted in a more dramatic way in chapter 62, much as in chapter 40. The theme of the chapter is likewise similar to 40:1-11: note in particular the emphasis that everyone will see the glory of the Lord (62:2; 40:5); building the highway and preparing the way (62:10 and 40:3); and especially the arm of the Lord whose reward is with Him (62:8, 11; 40:10). Though some regard the speaker here as Isaiah, it seems best to take it as the Lord, especially in view of v. 6.

Parunak: **Chiastic structure** of chaps. 58-66

False vs. True Worship	58:1-14	66:1-24
Indictment & Confession	59:1-15a	63:7-65:25
The Redeemer	59:15b-21	63:1-7
Zion's Glory (2fs)	60:1-22	62:1-12
The Redeemer	61:1-11	

David Thompson: IN VIEW OF WHAT GOD WILL PROPHETICALLY DO FOR ISRAEL WHEN JESUS CHRIST RETURNS, GOD WANTS ISRAEL HIGHLY ESTEEMED AND HIS PROPHETIC TRUTH CONTINUALLY PROCLAIMED TO ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

Oswalt: Calvin points out that Isaiah's first hearers were still on the other side of the exile, and for them what was to come could only seem to make a cruel mockery of the glowing words in ch. 60. Thus these assertions on God's part would serve to indicate both awareness of the grim realities of the intervening situations and the continued affirmation that the promises were not just words.

Brian Borgman: God Will Rejoice Over You

Encouraging and comforting words; easier to preach message of conviction than one of comfort and encouragement; the Lord excels in comforting and encouraging His people
Passage of "insteads" – beauty instead of ashes

Great argument in prayer – God will bless His people to honor His name among the watching world; God threatens to wipe out Israel but Moses intervenes; committed to His own glory
God is working in us until His purposes are accomplished; *He who began a good work in you will complete it*

Nations and kings drawn to the light of Zion and changed by it

Cf. baby name books – what drives our choice of a name normally?? I like the way it sounds is big consideration for us; name closely associated with character in ancient Near East; changing of a name important – cf. Abraham – God changed His name to father of a vast multitude not just father of many; cf. Jacob (usurper, heel catcher) changed to Israel (you have striven with God and overcome and are now a prince with God) – cf. Simon to Peter – changed by Jesus

New name – new status and new character; mark of genuine membership in household of God; Rev. 2:17; 3:12 – when does a person get a new name? When they get married. New identity and new status; bride assumes His name;

Prov. 12 a good wife is a crown to her husband; Paul writes: "*you are my joy and crown*" = a priceless possession, thing of joy, object of affection
To be kept, guarded, upheld, under his control as his dearest possession; *the apple of his eye*
God will protect Israel at all cost

The language of marriage bliss; of the honeymoon;

God rejoices over us because of Christ; He delights in His Son

TEXT: Isaiah 63:1-6

TITLE: ANSWERING TWO KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT DIVINE VENGEANCE

BIG IDEA:

THE ONE COMING TO EXECUTE DIVINE VENGEANCE IS THE MESSIAH WARRIOR STAINED WITH BLOOD

INTRODUCTION:

People have a lot of questions about Divine Vengeance – about the wrath of God poured out on His creation. How could a loving God consign anyone to an eternal destiny of suffering in Hell? Aren't blood and gore reserved for the God of the OT, not the loving Jesus of the NT? What's the big deal about sin, about loose living – as long as I am a Christian what does it really matter how I live? So you have large mega churches today with leaders exercising no discipline or oversight over the blatant sinful lifestyles of their members. There is very little appreciation for the holiness of God and His hatred of sin. There is very little focus on **Divine Vengeance**.

But just because it is not a pleasant topic doesn't mean that we should skip over it – that's the benefit of preaching through a book of the bible paragraph by paragraph.

Remember: 2 aspects of the Lord's coming: (Luke 4)

- to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord – chap. 61-62
- to proclaim the day of the vengeance of our God – chap. 63

David Thompson: When most think of Jesus Christ, they think in terms of a loving person who would never hurt anyone. What most neglect to realize about Jesus Christ is that His eternality means He was behind the destruction of the flood; He was behind the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; He was behind the destruction of Jericho. In fact, that night 185,000 Assyrian soldiers dropped dead; it was Jesus Christ who did it as "*the angel of the LORD*" (**Isaiah 37:36**). There have been lots of moments in history when Christ has demonstrated He is a **God of wrath**, but the ultimate demonstration is yet to come. . . Sometimes we sing "*What a Friend We Have in Jesus,*" but do not ever forget "*What a Judge we have in Jesus.*" Deep in the heart of Jesus Christ is a mindset that says there is coming a day when He will pour out God's wrath.

John 5:27 "*the Father gave the Son authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man*"

Acts 17:31

Just as the Son of God was faithful in His First Coming to freely offer salvation to those who would trust Him; so He will be faithful in His mission at His Second Coming to execute Divine Vengeance – that is the picture we have in Isaiah 63

THE ONE COMING TO EXECUTE DIVINE VENGEANCE IS THE MESSIAH WARRIOR STAINED WITH BLOOD

I. (:1) QUESTION #1 -- WHO?

WHO IS COMING TO EXECUTE DIVINE VENGEANCE?

(Beall: similar in theme to **59:15-20**)

Parunak: The exchange is what one might expect from a watchman on the city wall, interrogating someone who approaches the city. The first question has to do with the identity of one who approaches. The second asks an explanation for the striking appearance of his garments.

Grogan: The oracle is most dramatic. The only OT passage that in any way resembles it is the account of Joshua's encounter with the angelic captain of the Lord's host (Josh. 5:13—6:5). There too, as here, there are two questions and two answers; and there is a similar anxious inquiry: "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

A. (:1a) Question Asked

1. Distinguished as Red

*"Who is this who comes from Edom,
With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah,"*

Something that catches that attention of the watchmen on the walls:

- Based on where this individual is coming from – Edom means red
- Based on how this individual looks – red stained garments

Delitzsche: Babylon and Edom are always to be taken literally, so far as the primary meaning of the prophecy is concerned; but they are also representative, Babylon standing for the violent and tyrannical world-power, and Edom for the world as cherishing hostility and manifesting hostility to Israel as Israel, *i.e.* as the people of God.

Beall: Judgment upon Edom was also mentioned in Isa 11:14 and especially in Isa 34:5-6 . . . Edom is singled out in a context that would seem to speak of universal judgment upon Israel's enemies—perhaps because Edom was a perpetual enemy of Israel. Also, the name "Edom" means "red," and fits well the imagery of blood that is used in these verses. The Lord is seen as coming from Bozrah (the capital city in Edom 20 miles southeast of the southern tip of the Dead Sea), a name which itself comes from a root meaning "*grape-gathering*," also fitting quite well with the imagery of treading the winepress in vv. 2-3.

How can there be an enduring peace for Jerusalem as long as her enemies flourish? They must be dealt with decisively. Speaking of modern day Jordan – just south and east of the Dead Sea

Young: Bozra was the capital of ancient Edom [fortress city in north]. The Edomites were descended from Esau (Gen. 36:1, 8, 9) and were related to the Israelites. Throughout their history they displayed a vicious attitude toward Israel (cf. e.g. **Amos 1:11-12**). The Psalmist calls attention to their attitude (Ps. 137:7). Edom is mentioned as a representative of the powers that oppose God, and in its destruction we see their destruction.

Rev. 19:11-16 – much of the same imagery

2. Distinguished as Regal

*"This One who is majestic in His apparel,
Marching in the greatness of His strength?"*

Parunak: travelling in the greatness of his strength?--The verb is very rare, and seems to mean "tilting" or "bending." In the context of glorious apparel and evident strength, "swaggering" would be appropriate.

Motyer: *striding forward* is used here of the natural swing of the body when walking energetically. There is no weakness in this figure but rather greatness/abundance of *strength*.

B. (:1b) Question Answered – The Messiah Warrior Who is Also Mighty to Save

1. Self Disclosure

“It is I”

Remember how God has revealed Himself to His people down through history:

- To Moses at the burning bush – Ex. 3:13-15
- To Manoah, father of Samson – Judges 13:17-23 name is really incomprehensible, Awe-inspiring, majestic and wonderful
- The *I am* statements in the Gospel of John

2. Source of Truth and Righteousness

“who speak in righteousness,”

This one who comes is the *Word*, the *Logos* of John 1; the one who comes to reveal the righteousness of God as Paul writes in the book of **Romans – 10:4** *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”*

3. Sufficiently Powerful to Save

“mighty to save.”

Vengeance and destruction and judgment were not His first priority

He came the first time to bring salvation – as a light to the world; there was no limit to His capacity or sufficiency to save anyone who would repent of their sins and put their faith in Him

He is truly mighty to save

The one who came with the primary motivation of bringing salvation is the same one who comes in righteousness to perform God’s work of divine vengeance.

Parunak: The traveler considers this twofold claim of righteous speech and powerful action sufficient to identify himself. As Jeremiah later recognizes, this combination applies only to the Lord:

Jer 32:18 *the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name, 19 Great in counsel, and mighty in work*

Only God can speak absolute truth, because only he has the power to carry out what he decrees. In particular, his promise of salvation is absolutely reliable, because he makes it happen.

David Thompson: I agree with **Mr. Spurgeon** who said the best proof you have that Jesus Christ is mighty to save is that he saved you (Spurgeon’s Sermons, Vol. 3, p. 412). There is only One who can save you, who is mighty enough, and that is Jesus Christ.

II. (:2-6) QUESTION #2 – WHY?

WHY DOES HE LOOK LIKE HE LOOKS? GARMENTS STAINED WITH RED BLOOD

A. (:2) Question Asked

*“Why is Your apparel red,
And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?”*

Messy business treading out grapes in the wine press; your garments end up all stained; don't wear your Sunday best

Like the clothes you wear for painting – but this is far messier

B. (:3-6) Question Answered

1. (:3) His Mission of Vengeance

a) Accomplished in Surprising Isolation

*“I have trodden the wine trough alone,
And from the peoples there was no man with Me.”*

Parunak: this was usually a communal activity, but no one joined him in this activity. The reason is that they were the grapes! **Rev. 19:11-16**

John Martin: A winepress was usually a shallow pit with a hole on the side leading out to a container. As individuals trampled on grapes in the press, the juice flowed through the hole into the container. Obviously some juice would also splatter on the workers' clothes.

Rev. 14:19-20

Rev. 5:2 *Who is worthy to open the book* and break the seven seals? Similar question; **chap. 6** when the seals are opened begin the judgments of the Tribulation Period

b) Accomplished in Determined Anger

*“I also trod them in My anger,
And trampled them in My wrath;”*

Couplet – parallel statements with the second one heightening the intensity of the first

Trod to trampled

Anger to wrath

c) Accomplished with Horrific Finality

*“And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,
And I stained all My raiment.”*

Ken Wimer: So we have here the picture of garments that are covered in blood, basically. The picture here is of a warrior that goes forth to war and comes back victorious, his garments covered with blood. Do you see how that pictures the Lord Jesus Christ? I go back to the picture of the priest in the Old Testament. And I know when you look in story books they are pristine clean. They have got white garments and they just look like Mr. Clean. I really don't believe that that is the way it was. When you think about what their job was, what their task was, think about the butchers that you find in the meat markets when you go in and they... I have yet to figure out

why they wear white. Everybody you go back there and talk to the butcher, he has got his white coat on. But that thing is stained with blood. I don't know whether they throw that thing out at the end of the day or if they really try to get those stains out or whether they don't even worry about it. He just comes in the next day and puts it back on. I don't know. I have thought about that. But their garment is stained with blood. They are around bloody meat day in and day out.

2. (:4-6) His Motivation of Wrath

- a) (:4) Motivated by the Necessary Link Between Redemption and Vengeance
*“For the day of vengeance was in My heart,
And My year of redemption has come.”*

Grogan: God's act of judgment against Edom is clearly conceived to be a putting right of the wrongs done to Zion (see **34:5, 8-15**), especially when the Edomites took advantage of Judah's weakness after the Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (Lam 4:21-22; Ezek 25:12-14; 35:1-15). Thus, as at the Exodus from Egypt and also at the return from Exile – preceded as it was by the judgment on Babylon through the Persians – judgment and redemption would be effected through the same events.

Matthew Henry: the day fixed in the eternal counsels for taking vengeance on them; this was written in his heart, so that he could not forget it, could not let it slip; his heart was full of it, and it lay as a charge, as a weight, upon him, which made him push on this holy war with so much vigour. Note, there is a day fixed for divine vengeance, which may be long deferred, but will come at last; and we may be content to wait for it, for the Redeemer himself does, though his heart is upon it.

Ken Wimer: There never has been redemption without his wrath having been poured out. Vengeance. That is why those two terms go together. Vengeance and redemption go all the way back to the fall when Adam and Eve first fell and they clothed themselves with those fig leaves in that garden, what did God do? He took away the fig leaves, killed an innocent animal. You talk about Adam and Eve watching blood shed for the first time, flowing out of an innocent victim and then God taking those skins and clothing them and giving by that a demonstration of what he would do thousands of years later. See, God can't just overlook sin. He is just. He ever is just. His wrath must be against sin and the sinner.

Zep. 3:17 *The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior*

- b) (:5) Motivated by His Isolated Availability to Act
*“And I looked, and there was no one to help,
And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold;
So My own arm brought salvation to Me;
And My wrath upheld Me.”*

The Lord acted alone on the Cross and He will act alone when it comes to executing divine vengeance

- c) (:6) Motivated by His Determined Anger to Accomplish This Work of Horrific Finality
*“And I trod down the peoples in My anger,
And made them drunk in My wrath,*

And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

Motyer: vivid way of saying that that particular living entity can never be reconstituted (cf. 2 Sa. 14:14). Thus, like the Servant’s work of price-paying and sin-bearing, the Anointed One’s work of vengeance is finished work.

CONCLUSION:

James Barker: Sodom and Gomorrah no joke; God will judge America for homosexuality; so much wickedness; what happened to Say No to premarital sex; the wrath of the Lamb – **Rev. 6:16** -- the same Lamb who came to take away the sin of the world; **2 Thess. 1:7** – pretty strong words in NT – not just the God of the OT

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where do we see the wrath of Jesus demonstrated in OT times?
- 2) How can the sacrificial lamb also be the Lamb of the Wrath of God?
- 3) How close is America to experiencing the type of judgment that befell Sodom and Gomorrah?
- 4) Does this picture of the coming wrath of the Lord evoke greater evangelical zeal?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Thompson: JESUS CHRIST IS COMING BACK AGAIN, AND WHEN HE DOES HE WILL POUR OUT THE VENGEANCE OF GOD AND THE FULL WRATH OF GOD.

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #1 – When Jesus Christ returns He will specifically pour out wrath on the Arab world. 63:1a

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #2 – When Jesus Christ returns He will wear red wrath garments. 63:1b-2 [or white garments spattered with red blood]

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #3 – When Jesus Christ returns He will be majestic . 63:1c

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #4 – When Jesus Christ returns He will come displaying His great strength . 63:1d

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #5 – When Jesus Christ returns He will speak in righteousness . 63:1e

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #6 – When Jesus Christ returns He will mightily save . 63:1f

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #7 – When Jesus Christ returns, He alone will pour out the full brunt of the wrath of God. 63:2-3

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #8 – When Jesus Christ returns, He will have the day of

vengeance in His heart. 63:4a

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #9 – When Jesus Christ returns He will have His own year of redemption . 63:4b

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #10 – When Jesus Christ came into this world, His own arm brought salvation . 63:5

PERSONAL PROPHETIC FACT #11 – When Jesus Christ returns, His own arm will bring about wrath . 63:6

James Barker: God's Day of Vengeance

Zech 14:4 – the Lord will return to Mt of Olives from which He ascended to heaven in Acts 1; Is. 59:20 – Redeemer will come back to Jerusalem; Rev – Christ will return to Armageddon; but here we are told Lord will return to Edom; Psalm 83:6 describes the plans of the enemies of Israel; Edom mentioned first as part of this confederacy; Edom is literal place and also representative of enemies of Israel and of the Lord; means red; frightening picture of judgment; day of vengeance is coming in the future – maybe soon

Blood in Is. 63 is not that of Jesus shed on the cross for our sins as it is in Is. 53; here the blood is that of trampled sinners; look at differences between Is. 53 and 63 – Suffering Savior that is despised vs. majestic conquering king with glorious raiment; here it is our Lord who will do the slaughtering; cf. similarities to Rev. 19

Jesus went to the Cross alone and is coming back for work of judgment alone

Blood will flow all the way 200 miles from Bozrah to Jerusalem up to the horses' bridle at the Battle of Armageddon; quite a slaughter; similar picture in Job 3:13-14 "*the winepress is full for their wickedness is great*"

John 5:22 the Father has committed all judgment unto the Son; Acts 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1 shall judge the living and the dead at His appearing

Why will the Lord tread down these people in His anger? Must understand God's holiness and man's wickedness; so much loose living going on today in churches with nobody doing anything about it – the reason is that they don't properly understand the holiness of God

Brian Borgman: The Divine Warrior Marches in Victory

Divine warrior figure – we know it is the Lord Jesus from Rev 14 and Rev 19; the watchmen on the wall of the city ask the question; 2 things catch their attention

- The direction from which He comes
- The blood spattered garments

Edom – symbolizes the world as cherishing and manifesting hostility to the people of God; descended from that reprobate Esau who sold his birthright and rejected God; antagonistic towards Israel; would taunt and persecute Israel; judgment on Edom is typical of judgment of God upon the whole world in end times; Is. 34:5 judgment upon Edom;

Very majestic in his appearance; bright, striking colors; has something regal about it; awe-inspiring; their garments reflected the magnitude of their dignity; noticeable majesty; body language of the walk and his posture – visible evidence of strength; *Who is this? It is I = God's self identification formula; God gives self disclosure; Why should I tell you my name seeing that it is wonderful?* Angel speaking to Manoah; **Judges 13:18**

TEXT: Isaiah 63:7-64:12

TITLE: ANCHOR DOWN

BIG IDEA:

GOD'S ELECT WRESTLE WITH THE TENSION BETWEEN THE FATHER'S FAITHFUL LOVE AND HIS CHILDREN'S RECURRING REBELLION

INTRODUCTION:

Most college sports teams have some type of **rally cry** to unify their student body as they enter into the battle. Some are more impressive than others – here are just several that our family have experienced:

- Locally, we follow the University of Maryland: **“Fear the Turtle”** ... (I guess that is better than having a spider for a mascot like the Univ of Richmond); basketball team having a great season
- For Princeton: **“Going back to Nassau Hall”** – more appropriate for reunions; not much of a fight song
- The Vanderbilt Commodores (referencing a navy-oriented theme) have a saying that is more powerful and applies well to today's subject matter: **“Anchor Down”**

The Vanderbilt Anchor was adopted in 2004 as a symbol of unity and strength and accompanies the team to all home and away games. Before each home game, a group or individual is selected to run onto the field with the anchor and “drop the anchor” at midfield to mark the beginning of the sporting event.

As we enter into these final chapters of the book of Isaiah, we find a people that desperately need to **Anchor Down** – they need something to hang onto that will give stability and a sure foundation amidst the perplexities and uncertainties of life. They find themselves in an intense spiritual struggle – reminded of the love and faithfulness of their heavenly Father who has chosen them and remains committed to their future blessing, yet seeing around them in their immediate circumstances the consequences of their sin and rebellion. Theology does not present itself to them in a neat, tidy little package all wrapped up with a nice bow on it. They are wrestling with tension and paradox as they fight their spiritual battles.

Has not this been true for all of God's people – even the giants of the faith?

- Think of the struggles of Abraham as he clung to the promises of God and yet compromised his integrity by repeatedly lying about Sarah while in Egypt?
- Or Moses who ended up being banned from entering the Promised Land despite such heroic leadership efforts;
- Or King David, the man after God's own heart, who fell into the horrendous sins of adultery and murder. Look at his honest dialogue with God in the Psalms where he vacillates between despair and overwhelming joy.
- Or even the great Apostle Paul who characterized himself as the chief of sinners and revealed to us some of his inner struggles in Romans 7.
- We should not be surprised that we struggle in the same way to walk by faith and obedience.

GOD'S ELECT WRESTLE WITH THE TENSION BETWEEN THE FATHER'S FAITHFUL LOVE AND HIS CHILDREN'S RECURRING REBELLION

I. (:7-14) REMEMBERING GOD'S FAITHFUL LOVE – HISTORY LESSON: 4 RECURRING STAGES IN GOD'S DEALING WITH HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

(similar to what we studied in the Book of Judges)

A. (:7) The One Anchor for Conflicted Souls = The Lovingkindness of the Lord

1. Main Focus Highlighted

“I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the LORD,”

Verse has 2 bookends of focus on lovingkindnesses of the Lord – hesed at beginning and end of the verse

Not enough to just **reflect** on the Lord's lovingkindnesses – although that is essential; we must go beyond that to **make mention** verbally to others – first back to the Lord in praise and worship and then in testimony to others

Constable: This part of Isaiah's lament consists of a review of Israel's relationship with the Lord (vv.7-10) and a call for Israel to remember who He is (vv. 11-14).

Parunak: In these eight verses (7-14) Isaiah presents a **summary history of Israel**, recalling four distinct phases: • God's grace to his people • their rebellion • his judgment • their awakening as they recognize what they have forsaken.

2. Major Components

a. Praises

*“The praises of the LORD,
According to all that the LORD has granted us,”*

These are not **empty platitudes**; based in the historical reality of what the Lord has done in demonstrating His goodness and faithfulness to us in the past
Recognizing that all that we have from the Lord is a gift of His grace – something He has **granted us**

b. Goodness

“And the great goodness toward the house of Israel,”

Parunak: Just as “*praises*” describes God's deeds in terms of what they mean to him, “*goodness*” describes them in terms of what they mean to us: blessing, happiness, and care.

Not just goodness, but great goodness

Nehemiah 9:25-26 *“And they captured fortified cities and a fertile land. They took possession of houses full of every good thing, Hewn cisterns, vineyards, olive groves, Fruit trees in abundance. So they ate, were filled, and grew fat, And reveled in Thy **great goodness**. But they became disobedient and rebelled against You, And cast Your law behind their backs and killed Your prophets who had admonished them so that they might return to You and them committed great blasphemies.”*

Entire chapter is similar in content and expands the themes dealt with here by Isaiah

3. Motivation = the Lord's Compassion

"Which He has granted them according to His compassion,"

4. Main Focus Restated

"And according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses."

MacArthur: All the plurals in this verse imply that language is inadequate to recite all the goodness and undeserved mercies God has showered on the nation time after time because of His everlasting covenant with them. By His elective choice, they became His people and He their Savior (43:1, 3); this guarantees that they will not always be false, but someday true and faithful to God because of His sovereign election of them (cf. Eph 1:3,4).

B. (:8-9) Stage 1 = RESCUE/REDEMPTION -- God's Saving Presence Demonstrated in His Initiative of Love and Compassion and Mercy

1. (:8) Commitment to Save Israel

*"For He said, 'Surely, they are My people, Sons who will not deal falsely.'
So He became their Savior."*

Hesed of God shown fundamentally in His election of Israel to be His people; adopting them as sons into His own family

Oswalt: But an expectation went with that election, one that is particularly important in the context of Isa. 56-66. That is the expectation that his people would respond to their election with lives of absolute loyalty and integrity; they would not be *false*. . . God's relationship to them was one of deliverer. Interestingly, this assumes that he will not prevent hard things from coming to them because they are in this favored relationship, but that when they come, they can know he is at their side to deliver them from (or even through) those circumstances.

Imagery sets up God in the role of the disappointed Father as He has every expectation that his children will be appreciative and loyal but is heartbroken at their unfaithfulness

2. (:9) Commitment to Care for Them

*"In all their affliction He was afflicted,
And the angel of His presence saved them;
In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them;
And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old."*

MacArthur: The angel, who delivered the Israelites from Egypt, was none other than the Lord Himself (Ex 14:19; 23:20-23; 33:12, 14, 15; Nu 20:16). He is sometimes identified as the Angel of the Lord. He was close enough to His people that He felt their afflictions as if they were His own.

Young: The language used points out forcefully that God bears our burdens and carries our

sorrows. When affliction is directed against us and we must suffer for His sake, we may remember that He too is bearing that affliction and suffering.

Motyer: The noun *love (ahba)* is used here for the only time in Isaiah; it is the love which delights in the companionship of the loved one.

Sufficiency of Christ – He has done all for us

Borgman: God never came to a point where He said: “You are grown up children now, so you should go out from the house and live on your own”; instead He constantly carried His people in His arms as little lambs; we mature but we never become independent of our Father; spiritual self-sufficiency and autonomy always ends in tragedy; we were designed to be carried all the days of our lives; God never gets tired of carrying us; we cast all our anxieties on God; He delights in that; in spiritual life (unlike physical) greater maturity leads to greater dependence! What’s lacking on God’s part? Nothing! Even more true for us under the New Covenant God has done it all and promises to continue to do it all; we lack nothing

C. (:10a) Stage 2 = REBELLION -- Recurring Rebellion of Israel and Its Impact on the Holy Spirit

“But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit;”

Emphatic: “*But they*” = exact opposite of what we would have expected;

The entire history of the nation of Israel (and of mankind as a whole) is one of **rebellion** with brief cycles of repentance and deliverance

Only a person can be grieved

Ephes. 4:30 “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*”

Rebellion and idolatry grieve the Holy Spirit

Oswalt: rebellion shows a hostility to the transcendent power and moral perfection of God. Thus sin is finally a matter of the will, and until the will has been brought into submission to the Holy Spirit, consistently holy behavior is not possible.

Presence of Trinity here – Yahweh / the Angel of the Lord / the Holy Spirit

Constable: If the Lord was capable of defeating Israel's enemies, as the previous revelation of the Warrior claimed, why had He not acted for Israel already? This intercessory communal lament explains that delayed salvation was not because of Yahweh's inability or disinterest, but because of Israel's manipulative attitude toward Him. . . Even though the Israelites pledged themselves to follow the Lord faithfully, they rebelled against Him and so grieved His Holy Spirit. This verse helps us understand what grieving the Holy Spirit involves, namely, rebelling against the Lord (cf. Eph. 4:30). This verse, the next, and Psalm 51:11 are the only places in the Old Testament where "holy" describes God's "Spirit." We offend the holiness of God when we rebel against

Him. Of course, we also offend His love since we "grieve" or "hurt" Him. Holy behavior is impossible without a will that is compliant rather than rebellious toward God.

D. (:10b) Stage 3 = RETRIBUTION -- Judgment and Discipline by Way of Opposition and Estrangement

“Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.”

Finally, they came to an end of their rope and God acted in judgment and discipline; used wicked and cruel enemy nations as his instrument of chastening
Good father would not spare the rod and spoil the child

E. (:11-14) Stage 4 = REPENTANCE AND RESTITUTION -- Israel’s Return to the Lord -- Remembering His Faithful Shepherding at the Red Sea in the days of the Exodus

1. (:11a) Encouragement From the Past

“Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses.”

2. (:11b) Anxiety Over Apparent Abandonment

a. Where is the Shepherding that Leads Us to Deliverance and Victory?

“Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock?”

b. Where is the Spirit’s Presence and empowerment?

“Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them,”

3. (:12-13) Memorials of God’s Past Faithfulness – Miraculous Red Sea Crossing

a. (:12) Miracle of Dividing the Waters

*“Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses,
Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name,”*

Nothing is too difficult for God

b. (:13) Miracle of Leading Them Safely Through the Depths

*“Who led them through the depths?
Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble;”*

Seeing His people safely through to the other side

4. (:14) Ending With a Good Conclusion

a. Rest for God’s People

*“As the cattle which go down into the valley,
The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.”*

Motyer: Flocks are brought down from the high pastures to feed in lush valleys; even so the

Spirit gave them rest in Canaan.

We all long for the rest spoken of here

Heb. 4 -- **MacArthur**: God's true rest did not come through Joshua or Moses, but through Jesus Christ, who is greater than either one. Joshua led the nation of Israel into the land of their promised rest. However, that was merely the earthly rest which was only the shadow of what was involved in the heavenly rest. The very act that, according to Ps 95, God was still offering His rest in the time of David (long after Israel had been in the Land) meant that the rest being offered was spiritual – superior to that which Joshua obtained. Israel's earthly rest was filled with the attacks of enemies and the daily cycle of work. The heavenly rest is characterized by the fullness of heavenly promise (Eph 1:3) and the absence of any labor to obtain it.

b. Glory for God's Name

*“So didst Thou lead Thy people,
To make for Thyself a glorious name.”*

Keep your theology God-oriented; not man-centered

Ultimately God is working to glorify His name – that is why the actual unfolding of events and the timetable are not understandable within our finite frame of reference

CONCLUSION:

You have seen here in our text in Isaiah 63 the struggle of God's people to fully embrace the love and mercy and compassion and goodness of God regardless of outward circumstances. So I am asking you today to **Anchor Down** in a sense – commit yourself to the struggle against sin and the spiritual warfare that faces each one of us because God is faithful and He loves us dearly.

He knows the struggles that each of us face –

- That is why He has provided **Jesus Christ** as our great High Priest who is intimately familiar with all our weaknesses and yet acts as our Advocate before the Father
- That is why God promises that no **temptation** is too great but that His grace has provided a way to be victorious
- That is why He has given us His **Holy Spirit** to indwell us and empower us
- That is why He exhorts us to put on the **armor of God** and stand up and fight the spiritual battles with courage and perseverance
- That is why **Jesus promises to come again** soon and take us to glory – helping us to Anchor Down as we fix our eyes on this glorious hope

Lam. 3:21-25 *“This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 22 The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Thy faithfulness. 24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him." 25 The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him.”*

ANCHOR DOWN!

WHERE IS OUR HELP?

INTRODUCTION:

Last week the message was **Anchor Down!** – Focus on the lovingkindness of God

I. (:7-14) REMEMBERING GOD'S FAITHFUL LOVE – HISTORY LESSON: 4 RECURRING STAGES IN GOD'S DEALING WITH HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

- A. (:8-9) Stage 1 = **RESCUE / REDEMPTION**
- B. (:10a) Stage 2 = **REBELLION**
- C. (:10b) Stage 3 = **RETRIBUTION**
- D. (:11-14) Stage 4 = **REPENTANCE / RESTITUTION**

The Big Idea statement from last week remains the same for the 2nd part of this 2 part message:

GOD'S ELECT WRESTLE WITH THE TENSION BETWEEN THE FATHER'S FAITHFUL LOVE AND HIS CHILDREN'S RECURRING REBELLION

This wrestling and struggle and tension and dialogue we have with God over the **disconnect** between our experience (our present circumstances) and our high calling (as God's chosen holy people) intensifies when we can't see the blessing of God – Where is our God when we need Him? Where is our Help or are we left to struggle on our own? Will God deliver us?

The **complexity of the different layers** of our life only makes the struggle more difficult. Think of these different layers and how they are **interconnected**: 7 main layers:

- Family / Friends / Relationships
- Finances / Material Possessions
- Health
- Devotional Life
- Work / School
- Country / Government
- Church

What is going on in our life in each arena? How can we anchor down on the lovingkindnesses of God? Where does God seem distant and not coming to our aid? Where has our sin impacted our experience of God's blessing?

Form = community lament

Follow **Motyer's** outline and analysis in this section:

Motyer: The remembrance has now established a basis for prayer (63:7-14) by reminding himself and the Lord of the ever-unfailing-love in the divine nature, the special place before God of his people and sons. To such a God prayer can confidently be made for such a people. This prayer is a powerful poem in seven stanzas of which the first (15-16) is slightly longer, and the sixth (8-9) slightly shorter, than the eight-line norm established by the rest. . . the basic elements of historical reminiscence, complaint, confession, petition, and declaration of trust are all manifestly present.

Beautiful chiasmic structure with the heart of the prophet's message at its center core; so we will attack the onion by peeling away the outlying sections and finishing up with the core takeaway at the center of the passage.

II. (63:15-64:12) REACHING OUT TO GOD FOR MERCY AND DELIVERANCE – PRAYERS OF CONFESSION AND PLEADINGS FOR HELP

A1. (63:15-16) Appealing for Deliverance to the Mighty God in His Heavenly Habitation – Where is Our Help?

1. (:15) Appealing to the Compassion of Almighty God

“Look down from heaven, and see from Thy holy and glorious habitation; Where are Thy zeal and Thy mighty deeds?”

The stirrings of Thy heart and Thy compassion are restrained toward me.”

Constable: Isaiah called on God to condescend to look down from His holy and glorious habitation, heaven, on His miserable chosen people below (cf. **1 Kings 8:44-53**). The prophet could see no evidence of His zeal and mighty deeds for them. Even His affection and compassion for them were hidden from view (cf. Ps. 22:1). The poet knew of God's commitment to His people (vv. 7-14), but he saw no evidence of it.

Beall: Where is Your zeal for Your people? (63:15-19) Given this history as background, Isaiah then asks that the Lord evaluate His current relationship with Israel (vv 15-19). In v. 15, Isaiah asks the Lord to look down from His holy and beautiful habitation. He wonders where the Lord's zeal, strength, and compassion have gone. He wonders if the Lord's mercy has somehow been restrained. In a similar way, Ps 22:1 says, *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* It is a cry that many over the ages have echoed.

Parunak: *“the sounding of Thy bowels”* -- In unusually graphic language, Isaiah depicts the emotional turmoil that God feels at the abuse of his people in terms of internal discomfort so great that it causes the bowels to rumble. Compare an earlier verse,

Isa 16:11 *Wherefore my bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kirharesh.*

Oswalt: In contrast to God's intimate nearness through his Holy Spirit during the days of the exodus and conquest, Isaiah envisions a time when God will seem far away. He will have restored his people from the exile, yet it will seem as though he is doing no mighty miracles. The people will seem helpless before their enemies, and much more, before their own sinfulness. Where is God in moments like these?

2. (:16) Appealing to the Family Relationship as Father and Redeemer

*“For Thou art our Father,
though Abraham does not know us, And Israel does not recognize us.
Thou, O LORD, art our Father,
Our Redeemer from of old is Thy name.”*

As our Father and Redeemer you have an obligation to come to our aid

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name”

Act as our Father; Act as our Redeemer in our present distress

Your name and reputation are at stake in how the nations of the world look on our circumstances

They had not been faithful to live in accordance with the traditions of Abraham and the elect

nation – their character and lifestyle would be unrecognizable to the father of their faith [as opposed to most commentators who take this as a recognition that God is their true Father in contrast to Abraham]

Oswalt: Not only is God our Father but his name, his reputation, is inseparably tied to us. What is that name? Our Redeemer from ancient times. This is who God has been known to be. He is the one who has redeemed Israel not only from Egypt (v. 12) but also from hosts of other enemies (v. 14). Can he now afford to allow his people to go unredeemed? Can he continue to allow them to be held in bondage by their sin and unrighteousness? Can he continue to leave them in a condition where there is no distinction between them and the pagan peoples around them? Will he be able to leave his temple in a state of ruin? Can a God like this continue to leave the nations of the world in darkness? Surely not! Surely he will take whatever steps he needs to protect and preserve the great name he has made for himself.

B1 (63:17-19) Complaining That the People of God Are Not Being Treated Like the People of God

1. (:17a) Questioning the Opposition of God

a. Opposing Us in our Course of Life

“Why, O LORD, dost Thou cause us to stray from Thy ways,”

Very difficult verse from theological sense since we know that God is not the author of sin

b. Opposing Us in the Condition of Our Heart

“And harden our heart from fearing Thee?”

Constable: Isaiah meant that God had caused Israel to sin and had hardened the hearts of the people in a judicial sense (cf. 6:9-13; Rom. 1:18-32). Because they had chosen to continue in sin, He judged them by allowing sin to dominate them. Isaiah wanted to place as much responsibility for the Israelites' condition on God as possible. He had not saved them, so He could be said to have caused them to stray from Him and to harden their hearts. Really Israel had done these things, but because God had allowed it He could be said to be responsible for it.

Oswalt: Whatever else this verse claims, it does not claim that the people are not responsible for their sinfulness. No one could read this book and believe that Isaiah thought the people were forced to sin by God. At the same time, Isaiah is obviously at one with the rest of Scripture, which insists that a person's relationship with God is not a matter of human initiative with an essentially passive deity. If persons turn to God, it is because God in his grace has enabled them to do so. If persons do not turn to him, it is because God has not given them the desire to do so.

2. (:17b-19) Pleading for a Restoration to God's Favor – How Long Before Our Situation Matches Our High Calling?

a. (:17b) Pleading Based on Their Status as God's Heritage

*“Return for the sake of Thy servants,
the tribes of Thy heritage.”*

We have been called to belong to God in a special sense as His privileged servants, dwelling in the Promised Land which had been allocated by tribe for an ongoing possession; Instead we are scattered about the world with no place to call home

Grogan: The word “return” may suggest the return of the shekinah glory to the temple as the symbol of God’s dwelling among his people (cf. Ezek 43:6-12). Certainly v. 18 implies that their sense of alienation from him is not unconnected with the destruction of their sanctuary. There is a deep sense of special election in v.19.

b. (:18) Pleading Based on Their Calling to Holiness

*“Thy holy people possessed Thy sanctuary for a little while,
Our adversaries have trodden it down.”*

We have been called to holiness and worship – centered around the temple in Jerusalem;
Instead the wicked and the profane have trodden down the temple ruins

c. (:19) Pleading Based on Their Kingdom Identity

*“We have become like those over whom Thou hast never ruled,
Like those who were not called by Thy name.”*

We have been called to be member of God’s kingdom; ruled over by God; reflecting the name of God;
Instead we look no different than any other impoverished, vanquished, suffering nation

C1. (64:1-3) Testifying to the Awesome Impact of God’s Manifest Presence on the Nations

1. (64:1-2) Desiring God to Manifest His Presence in the Present

*“Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at Your presence –
As fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil—
To make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence!”*

Fire often associated with the presence of God

Parunak: The metaphor presents God’s wrath as expected and unexceptional. It is as straightforward to him, as ordinary and common a process, as the kindling of a cooking fire and the boiling of water, something that happened thousands of times every day among the tents of Israel. “Lord, it is nothing to you to intervene. It’s no harder than making tea in the morning.”

2. (64:3) Reflecting on the Impact of God Manifesting His Presence in the Past

*“When Thou didst awesome things which we did not expect,
Thou didst come down, the mountains quaked at Thy presence.”*

Ex. 34:10 – a new thing; a terrifying and dreadful thing

Deut. 10:20-21 -- has done these great and awesome and terrible things for you

Parunak: (64:1-3; 5b-7) In the first paragraph of this level, they ask that God would *unveil his face* to the nations to destroy them. But in the second, they recognize that they have also become his adversaries by sinning against him, and it is the *hiding of his face* of care and blessing that is the source of their distress.

***** **D. (64:4-5a) God's People Must Wait in Faith and Obedience for God to Intervene and Deliver His People** *****

1. (:4) Only God Can Intervene in Such Amazing Ways On Behalf of Those Who Wait for Him

*“For from of old they have not heard nor perceived by ear,
neither has the eye seen a God besides Thee,
Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.”*

This is the heart of the lament/prayer – this is the core takeaway

Young: There is a waiting in which hope, confidence, and patience are combined.

Rom. 4:18-20 Abraham shows what it means to wait on God

2. (:5a) God Will Intervene and Deliver Those Who Wait in Faith and Obedience

*“Thou dost meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness,
who remembers Thee in Thy ways.”*

Our context is one of agitation and perplexity and confusion and wrestling with how things are vs. how we think things should be; but God's answer is one of peace and rest and submission and waiting in faith and obedience

* * * *

Parunak: stark contrast between God's responsibility and ours:

- God “doeth”. This verb, which appears 2640 times in the OT, is the most generic, vanilla term for action in Hebrew, very much like “do” or “make” in English, without the notion of purpose included in “prepared.” God is characterized by action, by doing.
- Our job is to “wait for him.” He is active; we are passive. We naturally try to fix things ourselves. But the Lord insists that he is to do, and we are to wait.

So Moses exhorts the people at the shore of the Red Sea:

Exo 14:13 *Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD*

Or Jehoshaphat to the nation, faced with invasion by a powerful alliance:

2Ch 20:17 *Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem:*

Or the Lord, encouraging Ahaz not to go to Egypt for help:

Isa 30:15 *For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.*

David bore witness,

Psa 40:1 *I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.*

And Isaiah summarizes his introduction to this whole section with the promise,

Isa 40:31 *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount*

up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Other gods place impossible demands on their worshippers. The God of Israel does for those who wait.

* * * *

C2. (64:5b-7) Confessing the Devastating Impact of Sin – Causing God to Hide His Face From His Chosen Nation

1. (:5b) Devastating Due to the Unleashing of God’s Anger --

Is Deliverance Possible?

a. God’s Anger Justified

“Behold, Thou wast angry, for we sinned,”

b. Persistence in Sin Inexcusable

“We continued in them a long time;”

c. Salvation in Question

“And shall we be saved?”

Parunak: “We have been going on like this for a long time; is salvation possible for us?”

2. (:6) Devastating Due to the Impact of Sin on the Nation

a. Defiled the People

*“For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;”*

b. Destroyed the People

*“And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”*

Grogan: Verses 5-7 present a many-sided doctrine of sin, remarkably full for an OT passage. Sin is a continual practice, it is defiling, it is destructive, and it creates a barrier between God and man – both from man’s side, for we do not want to pray, and from God’s, because he will not hear us.

3. (:7) Devastating Due to the Bondage of Sin

a. No Ability to Turn to God

*“And there is no one who calls on Thy name,
Who arouses himself to take hold of Thee;”*

MacArthur: Such seeking and calling on the Lord as Isaiah describes in **55:6,7** cannot occur apart from the powerful conviction and awakening of the sinful heart by the Holy Spirit.

b. No Escaping the Bondage of Sin

*“For Thou hast hidden Thy face from us,
And hast delivered us into the power of our iniquities.”*

Oswalt: Because God would not look on the people with mercy (63:15), they are at the mercy of their iniquities. God has given them into the power (hand) of that which they have chosen (Rom. 1:18-24), and the result is that the people are helpless. They had thought that they would be independent if they could just free themselves from the tiresome constraints of the God of heaven. Instead, they have discovered a worse bondage than they ever dreamed possible. They are like leaves on the wind, not even having a desire to call on the name of the Lord.

B2. (64:8-9) Submitting as the People of God to Their Sovereign Designer, Righteous Judge and Covenant-Keeping Father

1. (:8) Submitting to the Sovereign Designer – Sovereign Controls Our Destiny

*“But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father,
We are the clay, and Thou our potter;
And all of us are the work of Thy hand.”*

Illustration: Carrie Underwood song: **Jesus, Take the Wheel** – about a woman who is driving along with her baby strapped in a car seat in the back and hits a patch of black ice – as many of us find on the road of life – could just as easily be submitting to the potter who takes control of his wheel of designing the clay pot

Young: Great as is the wickedness of the people, they know that Yahweh is their Father and they expect His grace.

2. (:9a) Submitting to the Righteous Judge – Judge Will Do What is Appropriate

*“Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD,
Neither remember iniquity forever;”*

Young: To remember iniquity is to visit it with the punishment that is its due. The prayer is that this remembrance will not be eternal (cf. **54:7,8**)

3. (:9b) Submitting to the Covenant-Keeping Father – Covenant God Loves His Elect Nation

“Behold, look now, all of us are Thy people.”

A2. (64:10-12) Appealing for Deliverance to the Jealous God Who Must Lament the Devastation of His Earthly Habitation – Where is Our Help?

1. (:10-11) Shocking Devastation – Stirring God to Jealousy

a. (:10) Devastation of the Holy Cities – Especially Jerusalem

*“Thy holy cities have become a wilderness,
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.”*

b. (:11) Devastation of the Holy Temple – Impacting the Praise Offered to God

*“Our holy and beautiful house, Where our fathers praised Thee, Has been
burned by fire;
And all our precious things have become a ruin.”*

At the time Isaiah wrote, this was a prophecy of future burning and destruction of the temple.

2. (:12) Silence of God is Deafening – Final Appeal for Deliverance

*“Wilt Thou restrain Thyself at these things, O LORD?
Wilt Thou keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?”*

Oswalt: Will God restrain the compassion that Israel’s history has shown to be his most characteristic quality, and will he refuse to respond to their cries (*be silent*) for mercy and so continue to *afflict* them to the point of extinction (*extremity*)?

There is no question of God’s justice, nor are any excuses offered for Israel’s persistent sinning. There is clearly no hope at all in those directions. The only question is whether God’s pity for the condition of his children and his concern for his name, which is inextricably linked with Israel, might prompt him to intervene in the hearts and lives of his people, doing in them what they cannot do for themselves.

Ps. 10:1 *“Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?”*

Ps. 13:1 *“How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?”*

CONCLUSION:

The questions in this lament are not definitively answered in this section alone.

Ps. 121 *“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are the ramifications of getting off balance in our perspective on the Christian life and viewing it either too positively – as if God has promised you a bed of roses with no difficulties – or too negatively – as if any trial or hardship leads you to conclude that God has abandoned you?
- 2) How often do you encourage yourself by recounting the Lord’s lovingkindnesses?
- 3) Are you honest with God about your struggles as you wrestle with some of the tensions in your Christian experience?
- 4) What sustains you during those dark days where God seems so distant?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: From the eschatological vision of the Lord’s adequacy we turn to a touching statement of human inadequacy and a lament over the Lord’s seeming unwillingness to intervene in his people’s situation. If He has the power to destroy Israel’s enemies with a single blow, as it were, why does Israel remain enslaved to its unrighteousness? To this God responds that it was not a

matter of his willingness or unwillingness, but of their manipulative attitude toward him (65:1-7). They call themselves his servants, but they do not act the part (65:8-16).

Most commentators today . . . agree that 63:7-64:12 has the basic character of a **community lament**. As far as the actual formal characteristics go, there is a great deal of freedom from the typical form, but the basic elements of historical reminiscence, complaint, confession, petition, and declaration of trust are all manifestly present. There appear to be four structural segments. The first is the historical reminiscence in greatly expanded form (63:7-14); the second is the complaint (63:15-19); the third is the confession, in that elements of appeal and declaration of trust are present (64:1-7); and the fourth is the appeal (64:8-12).

Brian Borgman: Intercession: Past Goodness and Present Trouble

Fairly long prayer; is prayer answered in chaps. 65-66?

Begins with a recollection of God's mercies;

Models **62:7** with powerful intercession

2 themes:

- 1) Things used to be a lot better for us and I wonder if they could be again by God's grace
- 2) The past history is really a revelation of God's character which always serves for God's people as the foundation for their hope and future confidence

I. Remember the Good Old Days

Vs. 7 -- He is a God who remembers and He tells His people to remember; "*I will recount, bring to remembrance*"

Hesed is a reference to God's covenant love – designed to draw forth praise and worship from God's people

Prophet gushing forth because of abundance of God's goodness in the past

Concrete expressions in history; not just abstractions

God has been so good to us; better than we ever deserved; like a never-ending fountain

Think about it, people of God; also in our prayers remind God of that; stirs up gratitude in our hearts

Vs. 8 – Remembering God's covenant and His salvation – "*I will be their God and they will be my people*"; God's election of Abraham and of Israel as His particular covenant nation; was God naïve or was baby switched at birth? Got something He wasn't expecting?? I had every reason to rightly expect grateful and faithful obedience; does not nullify God's omniscience; language that is conveying the dynamics of relationship;

Delivered them from the Red Sea and then any time after that when they needed deliverance

Vs. 9 – You don't have a God who is removed and distant; the Incarnation proves it
Sufficiency of Christ and His grace; we are complete in Christ; no need to go on sinful adventures to try to fill what is lacking

No matter what the external circumstances are, God is enough

Psalms 73 (like Job) – Why do the wicked seem to prosper? I see the righteous oppressed; what is going on? Payday someday!

Vs. 10 – Why did they rebel? Normally don't people rebel because of injustice and poor treatment? Often presupposes that something is wrong; against the backdrop of God having done everything for them; this is the history of Israel and of mankind in a nutshell = "*They rebelled*" – against whom? An intolerant and inflexible dictator? NO but against a benevolent

and loving Heavenly Father

This is the most incongruent thing you could ever imagine

Sad thing is that though God beat them in discipline from head to toe so that they were black and blue they still persisted in their rebellion – their history is a mirror reflecting back on me

None of God's children live up to His standards except for One

Vs. 15 – raw honesty here; look down and pay attention to us; seems like you are totally disinterested; where is your passionate commitment to keep your promises; immersed in the suffering of the people in time of Babylonian exile; you used to pay attention to your people and perform heroic deeds on their behalf in the olden days; Why have you abandoned us? You used to really love us and have compassion on us; God seems distant from his people; his great compassion and lovingkindness deals harshly with me; What has changed in the heart of God? Language of divine desertion; language of the dark night of the soul; the heavens are brass; no sense of God's presence; there are times we may feel there is a barrier between us and God;

2 extreme reactions:

- living emotionally neutered (“since I know truth it doesn't matter how I feel”)
- or living as if God has abandoned you;

This describes an occasional reality for the people of God

Vs. 16 – mixed emotion; “*You are our Father*” = not the typical way God is addressed in OT; the patriarchs, the first fathers, the beginning fathers don't know us; Abraham stands for faith and covenant; Israel = the father of the ten tribes; wrestling with God and prevails and has a closeness and intimacy with God; our sins have distorted us so we don't look like them; glimmer of hope maintained by thread of faith – a tenacious clinging to God no matter what the outside circumstances look like

Applications: We need to be awakened to our sin and rebellion; We need to appeal to God on a number of levels – as our Father, as a merciful God, etc.; God will ultimately come through for His people

Vs. 17 – times our tough; our sins have brought us into this trouble; you have caused us to stray from your ways; usually the heart begins to grow cold first before our feet leave the path; that is why we need to guard our heart; fearing God means: dependence on Him; turning away from evil; walking in His ways; why didn't you stop me from straying;

Why does Isaiah attribute this to God – Possibilities:

- 1) speaking out of frustration; speaking in language of appearance; not interpreting reality properly
- 2) may be implying that since God did not prevent this, ultimately the responsibility comes back to God; part of God's judgment on us
- 3) God really did do this as judgment; sometimes God punishes sin with more sin

Ultimately due to our provocation and comes down to some form of God's judgment; God is the author of blinding and hardening but not the author of sin even though He punishes sin with more sin; the guilt belongs to us

When God seems far away we know fundamentally that we are the ones who have moved; the plea is pretty straightforward – “*return*” – we belong to you; come back; don't show me your back forever; let me see your face

Vs. 18 – God's sanctuary is trampled down; the Babylonians have invaded and occupied and trampled down God's temple; the promise was that they would inhabit the land forever; that God would dwell in their midst forever; Our testimony on our deathbed: “God has been faithful to me

every day of my life”; God never left me or forsook regardless of what difficulties I faced day by day; it may seem when times are dark like God’s promises have fallen to the ground; disappointments serve a greater purpose that we can’t see right now;

Vs. 19 – language of despair; it doesn’t seem like you have ever been our King; God doesn’t leave his people in this state; but let’s not be Pollyanish about the Christian life as if it is a bed of roses; “I never promised you a rose garden”;

64:1 – continuation of the prayer; very real pain and desperation; cry and distress; we have the bedrock assurance that God will never leave us or forsake us, but that is not always how we feel in the midst of our experience; prayer for divine intervention; expression of what they wish God would have already done; not a hope that God would do something in the future? But it is an imperative of entreaty; very parallel with 63:15; difficult to tell which interpretation is right; God we want you to show up; split the heavens and come right down through them; make an appearance; classic OT theophany language; do something cataclysmic and big and dramatic; dramatic intervention; do something that grips our attention; radical, powerful intervention; “*mountains*” – sometimes symbols of rulers and governments; sometimes symbols of what is immoveable and permanent and stable

Vs. 2 – God, come down, make sure everybody knows it is you, and deal with your enemies; make your name known – evangelistic bent – not just judgment and destruction; look at Ps. 86:9 (missionary psalms); bring these adversaries to the point where they come to know your name

Vs. 3 – Isaiah uses **redemptive history** as part of his petition; Thou hast . . . therefore Thou wilt; God works for those who wait on Him; Ex. 15:11 working terrifying deeds; Ex. 34:10 miracles which have not been produced before; full of awe; causing ones to tremble; revealed God’s incredibly raw power; drowned the entire army of Pharaoh; revelation of our smallness, weakness and helplessness in light of that power; Deut. 4:32; unexpected works of wonder; You did in the past what we are asking you to do now; Matthew Henry: this is good arguing at the throne of grace

Vs. 4 – one of the great faith-building verses in all of the bible; this verse comes right in the midst of the pain and the cries and the fading hope; very bold declaration of faith and confidence in God; there is no God like you who will work on behalf of those who wait for Him; take the made-up gods of the Assyrians and the Babylonians and compare those gods to the one true God; cf. world religions down through history; all other deities have a remarkable resemblance to their worshippers; manifest all of the lusts and desires of overgrown, immature children; beyond all imagining; unique, majestic, transcendent God; both transcendent and immanent; both holy and merciful; Who is like Yahweh (Micah) – No one; Lord, I need you today for everything; Is. 46:4; we are weak, He is strong and supplies everything we need; don’t try to serve God as if He needs your help; Carry Me; Strengthen Me; Help Me – then God gets the glory; How many of you like waiting? What does it mean to wait on the Lord? **Rom. 4:18**

- Believe in Him even when it doesn’t look hopeful; I know what God has said but I know what I see
- Trust Him for the duration; “*he didn’t waver in unbelief*” – each passing day didn’t diminish his faith in the promise

God’s watch and calendar different than ours; it would be a mess if God let us write the calendar; Isaiah is a book about waiting for a restoration for a people who had yet to be exiled; common theme throughout Isaiah; If you wait on God, He will work for you; instead of entering into panic

mood and trying to manipulate the situation

Parunak: The confession begins and ends with God. The first and last paragraphs focus on God's habitation—his heavenly house in 63:15a, and the earthly temple, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, in 64:11. The thought of both houses leads Isaiah to ask, on behalf of the people, why God isn't intervening. To understand his logic, we have to go back to the prayer that Solomon offered in 1 Kings 8 when he dedicated the temple.

This prayer has a very regular structure, repeated seven times (chart):

- If something happens that requires divine aid
- And people bring that matter to the temple,
- Then God should hear in heaven.

In other words, the temple is seen as a portal to heaven, an earthly place through which an earthly people can access a heavenly God.

One paragraph of that prayer in particular requires our attention:

1Ki 8:46 *If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; 47 Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; 48 And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: 49 Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause,*

This portion of Isaiah is written for the people that will find themselves in the situation that Solomon anticipated, in captivity in a foreign land. But there is a problem. Solomon assumed that the temple would still be there so that they could direct their prayer to God through it. In fact, the temple will be destroyed. The final paragraph captures this dilemma:

[64:10]

Now that the temple is gone, is their access to God cut off? Will God now “*refrain himself*” from acting on behalf of his people “*for these things*”? “These things” are the destruction of the temple, which Solomon dedicated to give them this access. Because it is gone, will God no longer hear them?

[Misplaced trust in the temple building – Jer. 7:4-14; Is. 1:11-15]

Grogan: The Exodus had been followed by the great revelation at Sinai, when the mountain trembled at the presence of God (Exod 19:16-19). On that occasion God descended on the mount (Exod 19:18). . . The Sinai revelation had made God's people tremble; this new disclosure of him would terrify the nations of the world. What was this God like, this God of the Exodus and Sinai who revealed himself to his people? He was the God of the unexpected (v.3), for in so many of the plagues the ordinary course of nature was interrupted. He was a unique God, for all other so-called deities are impotent. . . He was also a God of righteousness, caring about the obedience of his people to his laws.

TEXT: Isaiah 65:1-16

TITLE: PRIMER ON PROVOKING GOD

BIG IDEA:

PROVOKING GOD BY FALSE WORSHIP BRINGS DIVINE RETRIBUTION IN CONTRAST TO THE BLESSING PROMISED TO HIS SERVANTS

INTRODUCTION:

A “primer” is a book that covers the basic elements of a subject. In the field of education, you have various primers on the subject of reading or grammar or other fundamental topics. Usually you think of a primer as a positive treatment of a particular topic. But here in Isaiah 65 we find a primer on **how to provoke God via false worship** and the consequences of such activity.

Some children seem to have a special ability to provoke their parents – more so than their siblings. They know how to push Mom and Dad’s buttons; they are very bold and brazen and up front in their rebellion; not concealing their sins in some sneaky and stealthy fashion; They arrogantly assert their independence and shake their fist right in the face of authority.

You know that it would be foolish to go up to a ferocious bear and poke it. Why would people want to provoke Almighty God to wrath?

Chap. 64 – Context: Looking to God for immediate deliverance – Where is Our Help? Why are those who come from the physical bloodline of Israel not being treated like the spiritual elect of God? **Problem** = their persistence in sin and rebellion; Here in **Chap. 65** they did not get the type of response from God that they probably desired – although the ultimate future for the faithful remnant is still glorious

PROVOKING GOD BY FALSE WORSHIP BRINGS DIVINE RETRIBUTION IN CONTRAST TO THE BLESSING PROMISED TO HIS SERVANTS

I. (:1-7) DIVINE RETRIBUTION FOR FALSE WORSHIP -- ROLE REVERSAL FOR BOTH FAITHFUL GENTILES AND FAITHLESS ISRAEL

A. (:1) Receptivity Provided to Directionless Gentiles – What Does Sovereign Grace Look Like? God Does Not Deserve to Be Provoked by False Worship

“I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me;

I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me.

I said, 'Here am I, here am I,' To a nation which did not call on My name.”

New section begins marked by a change in the speaker – from the people of Israel in confession to the Lord Himself.

Can’t be talking about Israel here; must be a foreshadowing of the future salvation of Gentiles

Rom. 10:20-21 – Apostle Paul applies this verse to the Gentiles and verse 2 to the Jews

Ephes 2:12 – remember the former state of the Gentiles

No explanation but sovereign grace – God drawing rebellious people to Himself

Motyer: We only seek because God has first sought us (**John 15:16**)

Parunak: the Lord is expressing his receptiveness to those who would never think of seeking him in the first place.

Left in awe of the compassion and mercy and grace of a God who reaches out and takes the initiative to save even a group of people that didn't even have God on their radar

B. (:2-5) Rebellion Practiced by Idolatrous Israel – What Does False Worship Look Like?

1. (:2) General Indictment of Idolatrous People of Rebellion – 3 Characterizations:

a. Persistently Rebellious

“I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people,”

Prov. 1:24-33

After having witnessed the power of Sovereign Grace in vs. 1, how can we digest this picture of a frustrated God who spreads out His hands in entreaty and invitation and pleading all day long without any positive response from his own nation of Israel?

Parunak: They accuse him of being remote and unmoved (63:15). He responds to them that he has never been inaccessible to them; the separation has been on their part, because of their willful worship.

b. Irrevocably Perverted

“Who walk in the way which is not good,”

Not inclined to follow the **law** and **wisdom** of God:

- Look at the way of the Lord which is revealed in Psalm 119 as His **Word** is extolled
- Look at the way of the Lord as His **wisdom** is revealed in Proverbs

c. Arrogantly Unsubmissive

“following their own thoughts,”

Sinatra song: “I did it my way”

Look at the detailed instructions the Lord had given His people about worship; certainly He wanted them to take His instructions seriously and follow them in obedience rather than come up with their own system of worship

Look how little attention is being devoted in churches today to understanding the Word of God – people are not interested in learning what God has said; they want freedom to express their own thoughts and adopt their preferred methodologies for worship – most of which border more on entertainment

Constable: The Lord had not hidden His face from the Israelites, but on the contrary, had offered Himself to His people. It was not He who needed to change in His orientation toward them, but they needed to change. They were rebellious and pursued their own agenda (cf. 59:1-2; Rom. 10:21). He was not unresponsive. They wanted to have Him on their own terms (cf. 55:6-11).

Parunak: The summary description of Israel includes **three characterizations**. Unlike the details in vv. 3-5, these are all very generic.

- They are rebellious נִוּוּ “stubborn,” resistant to being led, as Hosea describes a young cow in **4:16**.
- Their way is “*not good*.” It will not profit them in the long run, and it does not agree with God’s standards.
- They are walking “*after their own thoughts*.” Here is the root of the problem, people who follow their own ideas instead of seeking to know God’s thoughts and submitting their minds and wills to those thoughts. Contrast those praised in **66:2, 5**, who “*tremble at his word*.”

This is what False Worship looks like – but in order to flesh out the picture, we get a more detailed look in the next few verses

2. (:3-5) Detailed Indictment of Idolatrous People of Rebellion

Chiastic structure here – at the heart = **Proclivity for Unclean Cultic Rituals**

a1. (:3a) Persistence in False Worship Provokes God’s Wrath

“*A people who continually provoke Me to My face,*”

Parunak: If this book teaches us anything, it teaches us to beware the wrath of God. A reasonable person recognizes dangerous animals or hostile people and tries to avoid upsetting them. Israel is clearly not reasonable. . .

With good reason, the **Westminster** divines advised their flock,

WCF 21:1 the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

David Thompson: Instead of Israel responding to God, she thumbed her nose at the gracious invitation of God. What Israel specifically did is to continually provoke God to His face. The Hebrew word “*provoke*” is one that means to irritate and anger God by continually doing things He finds very offensive (**William Gesenius**, Hebrew Lexicon, p. 409). The Hiphil stem of the participle means that this action of angering God has been completely caused by His own people. In other words, they blatantly rebelled right in the face of God.

Four Provoking Actions follow:

b1. (:3b) Pride in Their Humanistic Worship

“*Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks;*”

Lots of religious activity pictured here

Parunak: The “*gardens*” are the groves and sacred trees that were central to Canaanite worship. Isaiah recalls this failing at the start of the book:

Isa 1:29 *For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.*

A garden is a great place to worship God. God put our first parents in a garden. But because of their sin, he excluded them, and any effort to construct such a garden in our own strength is an assertion that we can regain paradise by our own efforts.

“*Altars of brick*” similarly emphasize human efforts to worship God based on our own worthiness. The Law authorized two kinds of altars, apart from those in the Tabernacle: a pile of earth, and uncut stones.

Exo 20:24 *An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.*

25 *And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.*

The restriction on the stone altar emphasizes the need to use materials in their natural state, as God gave them. Brick altars are not authorized, and involve human effort inappropriate to a sinful person approaching a holy God. Brick was widely used in Babylon, and the reference may be to those in captivity who would adopt elements of Babylonian religion.

Constable: The Israelites provoked the Lord by offering their sacrifices in ways that were unacceptable to Him—and then claimed that He was unresponsive to them. Gardens were unauthorized places for sacrificing, and bricks were unauthorized materials for an altar (cf. Exod. 20:25; Deut. 27:5-6; Josh. 8:31).

Motyer: Just as the garden was an unauthorized place for sacrificing, so bricks were an unauthorized material for an altar. Isaiah will press his condemnations deeper, but he starts with the simplicities of religious practice, for disobedience often begins at a point where obedience would be easy but we do not think it important.

c1. (:4a) Proclivity for Unclean Cultic Rituals

*“Who sit among graves,
and spend the night in secret places;”*

Watts (quoted by **Constable**): appear to be rituals of the cult of the dead, that is, necromancy in which one contacts the spirits of the dead by spending the night in the cemeteries.

Parunak: Someone who “remains” among the graves and “lodges” in the monuments remains perpetually unclean, cut off from the worship that God ordains. Yet these people offer their sacrifices in spite of their pollution.

c2. (:4b) Proclivity for Unclean Cultic Rituals

*“Who eat swine’s flesh,
And the broth of unclean meat is in their pots.”*

Cf. Lev. 11

Allen Ross: The same verse tells of their eating unclean meat, such as the pig, probably at sacrificial meals (cf. 66:17). It was believed that to eat animals considered unclean would be not merely an act of rebellion but a means of communion with supernatural powers, the animals being totems, and the eating being a religious act allowing the consumer to receive the qualities of the ancestor which the totem animal represented. The pagan connections and ideas for the pig

are some of the reasons why it was outlawed in Israel. It was not merely that it was meat that easily turned bad.

b2. (:5a) Pride in Their Hypocritical Worship
“Who say, ‘Keep to yourself, do not come near me,
For I am holier than you!’”

Is. 5:20-21 “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;
Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!
Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!”

David Thompson: These are proud religious people. Don’t miss this point - people involved in false religion that is not after the truth of God are proud of themselves and their religion. People who go to churches where they are not really carefully taught God’s Word are proud of their church. They don’t care if the church ever takes them through one book of the Bible. They have their worship, their rituals and liturgy and they are proud of it. They would rather have that than an accurate understanding of the Word of God.

Motyer: they developed their own notions of holiness, in particular a holiness of elitism that stood aloof from fellowship and created divisions, a first-class and second-class citizenship of special experiences or claims such as find no place in the Bible.

a2. (:5b) Persistence in False Worship Provokes God’s Wrath
“These are smoke in My nostrils,
A fire that burns all the day.”

C. (:6-7) Retribution Promised for Idolatrous Israel – What Will Be the Destiny for Those Practicing False Worship?

1. (:6-7a) Certainty of Retribution

“Behold, it is written before Me, I will not keep silent, but I will repay;
I will even repay into their bosom,
Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together,’
says the LORD.”

Written down so the Lord remembers and holds people accountable for their sins – the sons ended up committing the same type of transgressions as their fathers did

Young: As Boaz measured the barley into the lap of the garment covering the bosom (cf. Ruth 3:15), so God will exact retribution.

Parunak: So far, this section describes the false worship to which Israel was often tempted. The next section (vv. 8-16) will talk about the judgments that God will bring on them for this sin. Vv. 6-7 are a transitional device called a hinge, containing key elements of the sections on either side. In this case, it is chiasmic. In the center we have a summary of the false worship from vv. 2-7, while the outer members anticipate the judgment of vv. 8-16.

Motyer: The divine reaction is:

- (i) certain, for *it is written before me*
- (ii) personal, *I will not keep silent/quiet*
- (iii) a measured requital, *pay back in full*
- (iv) individual in application, *into their laps/bosom*
- (v) a final settlement

From generation to generation there is a heaping up of guilt before God, and failure to break with the past involves accepting the inheritance of the past

2. (:7b) Cause of Retribution = False Worship

*“Because they have burned incense on the mountains,
And scorned Me on the hills,
Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom.”*

Constable: Repayment would be for the sins of all His people, since dependence on cultic righteousness had long been their sin. They had heaped up guilt from generation to generation, and failure to break with the past resulted in their having to accept the inheritance of the past. They had worshipped Yahweh at mountain shrines for a long time, and this amounted to scorning, not worshipping, the Lord. He would, therefore, pay them back in measure for their sins.

II. (:8-16) TWO CONTRASTS BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARE BLESSED AND THOSE WHO ARE CURSED

A. (:8-12) First Contrast Between Blessing and Cursing

1. (:8-10) Blessing for Those Who Seek the Lord

a. (:8) Remnant Preserved

“Thus says the LORD, ‘As the new wine is found in the cluster, And one says, ‘Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it,’ So I will act on behalf of My servants In order not to destroy all of them.’”

Cf. **5:1-7** vinedresser found nothing but wild, sour grapes; but what if he found a few good grapes amidst the cluster; wouldn’t he spare the vine

b. (:9) Possession of the Promised Land

“And I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, And an heir of My mountains from Judah; Even My chosen ones shall inherit it, And My servants shall dwell there.”

Parunak: Throughout Isaiah, we have seen this geographical emphasis as part of the promise of the redemption of Israel. Such promises are very difficult to reconcile with a covenant view that spiritualizes Israel into the church

c. (:10) Reminder of the Boundaries of the Promised Land

*“And Sharon shall be a pasture land for flocks,
And the valley of Achor a resting place for herds,
For My people who seek Me.”*

Oswalt: *Sharon* is the fertile coastal plain that stretches north and south along the Mediterranean

Sea from Joppa to Mt. Carmel. By contrast, the Valley of Achor is one of the almost barren wadis that lead up from the region of Jericho toward the central ridge. . . Most commentators believe that these places have been chosen because by being on the west and the east of the country, they represent the country as a whole. It may also be significant that one (Sharon) is naturally fertile and the other (Achor) is naturally barren, and that the one has pleasant associations and the other tragic ones. These factors may further enable the parts to represent the whole.

Parunak: The plain of Sharon is the natural route for armies to follow moving north and south, and Isaiah describes it as desolate under the Lord's judgment (Is. 33:9)

Valley of Achor received this name because it was the place where Joshua caused Achan to be stoned for his violation of the ban on Jericho:

Jos 7:25-26 *And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled ðëø us? the LORD shall trouble ðëø thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. 26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor ðëåø , unto this day.*

As with Sharon, the point is that a place previously marked by judgment will now become a peaceful, pastoral scene.

Constable: The faithful who truly sought the Lord would inhabit the fertile western coastal plain and the barren eastern area west of Jericho, in other words, the whole land. Some interpreters regard both the Sharon and the valley of Achor as favorite places in Palestine. Those who sought the Lord were not necessarily those who engaged in religious activity but those who obeyed His covenant requirements.

2. (:11-12) Cursing for Those Who Forsake the Lord

a. (:11-12a) Four-fold Indictment

*“But you who forsake the LORD,
Who forget My holy mountain,
Who set a table for Fortune,
And who fill cups with mixed wine for Destiny,”*

Cf. 1:28 for same participial expression – “the forsakers of the Lord”

Constable (using **Delitzsch**): "Fortune" (Heb. *gd*) was an Aramean god (cf. Josh. 11:17; 15:37), and "Destiny" (Heb. *mny*) means "apportionment (of fate)" and may have a connection with the goddess "Manat" of Arabian mythology. These may have been what became identified later with the planets Jupiter ("the greater luck") and Venus ("the lesser luck"), or with the sun and moon.

Beall: It is interesting today how many are also bowing down to fortune and destiny, playing the lottery to solve all their problems.

Oswalt: One of the perennial concerns of humans is the control of the future. The fear of the unknown keeps driving us to a variety of sources in our attempt to know what is going to happen to us. . . these persons seek the gods of Fortune and Destiny in an attempt to propitiate them and gain good luck in the future.

b. (:12b) Devastating Punishment
*“I will destine you for the sword,
And all of you shall bow down to the slaughter.”*

c. (:12c) Undeniable Culpability
1) Deaf to God’s Entreaties
*“Because I called, but you did not answer;
I spoke, but you did not hear.”*

Tremendous amount of revelation from God who was reaching out to them continually with outstretched arms

2) Perverted in Moral Choices
*“And you did evil in My sight,
And chose that in which I did not delight.”*

Parunak: These four clauses are repeated nearly verbatim in **66:4**, at the end of the “false worship” section, by way of transition to the consequences.

Jer. 2:13 *“For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”*
We should find our delight in obeying the Lord

B. (:13-16) Second Contrast Between Blessing and Cursing
“Therefore, thus says the Lord God,”

1. (:13-15a) Emphasis on Contrasting Destinies

a. Regarding Eating and Drinking
*“Behold, My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry.
Behold, My servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty.”*

b. Regarding Joy and Shame/Sorrow
*“Behold, My servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame.
Behold, My servants shall shout joyfully with a glad heart,
But you shall cry out with a heavy heart,
And you shall wail with a broken spirit.
And you will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones,
And the Lord God will slay you.”*

2. (:15b-16) Emphasis on the Destiny of Those Who are Blessed

a. Blessed with a New Identity
“But My servants will be called by another name.”

Oswalt: The criteria for inclusion is not ethnicity but whole-hearted commitment to God and his

ways

b. Blessed with the Solid Foundation of the God of Truth

“Because he who is blessed in the earth Shall be blessed by the God of truth;

And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth;”

“The God of the amen”

Talk about building your house on the solid rock instead of shifting sand

c. Blessed with Eternal Forgiveness and Prosperity

“Because the former troubles are forgotten,

And because they are hidden from My sight!”

CONCLUSION:

Remember the warning in Hebrews against resisting the Voice of the Lord and provoking Him to wrath:

Heb. 3:7-11 finish with vs. 6

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) As parents, how did your children provoke you?
- 2) What parallels do you see between the characteristics of false worship listed in this passage and how people today try to follow some false worship system?
- 3) What does the Bible have to say about fortune telling; about playing the Lottery and gambling; about séances and attempts to communicate with the dead; etc.?
- 4) How is our nation provoking the wrath of God by its blatant in-your-face type of transgressions?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Beall: The Lord's response to Isaiah's prayer in chap. 65 is twofold: He explains why He must judge His own people on the one hand (because they are acting worse than the Gentiles); yet, on the other hand, he reassures the prophet (and the believing remnant) that all Israel will not be destroyed—for those who are truly His servants, there will be an abundance of blessing in the Millennium.

David Thompson: BECAUSE ISRAEL HAS REJECTED GOD AND MADE HIM ANGRY, HE WILL PERMIT HER TO EXPERIENCE SOME NEGATIVE JUDGMENTS; BUT HE

WILL ALWAYS PRESERVE A REMNANT FROM ISRAEL, AND ONE DAY ISRAEL WILL RECEIVE ALL OF HIS PROMISED BLESSINGS

Brian Borgman: Sovereign Grace and Outstretched Hands

Vs. 1 -- God's response to Israel's intercession; not just a surface response but addresses their heart; focuses on the sovereignty and freeness of his own grace – especially to the Gentiles; expresses his frustration with the idolatry of his own people; Jonathan Edwards: we not only believe that God is Sovereign but that He acts out this sovereignty in control of all things; how then can God be frustrated? Cf. childish perspective of over-analyzing statements of the father and arriving at ridiculous conclusions (If God loves me with his whole heart then there is no love left over for my siblings??); reality is nobody wants to know God and all of a sudden He makes himself known in sovereign, effectual fashion; What free will? There is nobody who seeks after God; we are only free to continue in sin – that is the bondage of the will; we are born as truth suppressors; not truth seekers; Abram was worshipping the gods of the Chaldees; God acts in free and sovereign grace; all of a sudden the seeker-less sinner now seeks him; we find God when we are not looking! Grace is not just what is offered to us; it is the very prevenient (power that goes before) power that makes us want what is offered; grace is not just making the offer and waiting for man to choose whether he will respond; not some sort of cooperative effort with dead people

Vs. 2 – element of tension – sovereign grace and outstretched hands towards rebellious people; image of entreaty most of the times; even pleading; if we do not comply with his invitation the fault must lie entirely with us; not just an invitation for a second – but done continually over a long time; child could over-analyze – has God abdicated his power and authority because I know He has the power of sovereign grace; is this an authentic, genuine pleading? Don't suck the juice out of the verse; this is a different dimension that we are looking at whether we can harmonize this with verse 1 or not; Ezek 18:23, 31-32; God we know your heart and it will break if the lost are not converted; that doesn't nullify God's election; this God weeps for the unconverted; you can offer the gospel freely because you know that God pleads with sinners; make my heart more like your heart; William Carey – 5 point Calvinist – heart burned with missionary zeal – was told: If God wants to save the heathen He doesn't need your help; Carey wrote treatise on necessity of bringing the gospel to the heathen

Way which is not good = Path void of God's law and God's wisdom; living life independent of God's revelation – talking about the professed people of God here; foolish and rebellious to follow our own thoughts; God's thoughts which reveal His ways are better than my thoughts; both intellectual and moral autonomy joined together; sin of autonomy at the root of other sins – cf. the Fall; "I did it my way" = the battle cry of every depraved person; but our way is never original – borrowed from the world, the flesh and the devil; myth of autonomy is that it leads to freedom; always leads to deeper slavery;

Vs. 3 – more detailed delineation of sin; something shocking about sin that is right in your face; not sinning in sneaky, subtle fashion here; but bold and brazen right in front of the face of God; the sin of the high hand; no sense of fear of God; reference to occult practices; contacting the dead; spending time in burial grounds;

Vs. 5b-7 – God's indignation to those who are the hypocrites; vows that He will repay; He will not forget their transgressions; just recompense that will hit the very heart of their life; measured judgment

Vs. 8 -- Promises of protection for His remnant; cluster of good grapes that is not part of the stink crop; God promises to act on their behalf; a group within the group;

Vs. 11-12 – God promises retribution to the rebels; to forsake the Lord is to abandon the covenant; His presence and His people; abandoned concept of God's sovereign control over all things; put their hope in Destiny and Fortune as the pagan cultures do; play on words in Hebrew text; they set a table and God brings about a slaughter – words sound the same; we believe in effectual calling but also in moral culpability of those who refuse the call of God; blatant sin adds insult to injury; Jer. 2:13;

Vs. 13 – terrible contrast if you are a rebel; Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 – covenantal blessings and cursings; it does not pay to rebel against God; absolutely foolish; Ps. 16:4; Prov. 13:15; Prov. 1:24 picture of street hawker – trying to get people's attention; calling people to embrace the way of wisdom;

Vs. 15 – there is coming a time when I will indeed be done with this people; no longer protected by the covenant made with Abraham; their name memorialized in connection with the judgment of God itself; what comes to your mind when you hear the name Judas; Those who believe in replacement theology (that God is done with the physical nation of Israel – God fulfills all of His promises to Jesus Christ as the seed of Abraham – even the land promises fulfilled in new heaven and new earth) find support from this passage – followed up by: Mark 11 – Jesus curses the fig tree that has no fruit; Matt. 21:43; 1 Thess. 2:14; what warrant is there for respecting a future resurrection of this nation Israel?

Vs. 16 – The covenant is not nullified just because the hypocrites are cursed; God who keeps all of his promises; Amen comes from idea of faithfulness; God's steadfastness in keeping His word; 2 Cor. 1:20; to swear by God's name is an act of worship; God will have a people and they will be under His blessing and will worship Him; Ps. 103:12;

TEXT: Isaiah 65:17-25

TITLE: GOD SAVES THE BEST FOR LAST

BIG IDEA:
REJOICE IN ANTICIPATION OF GOD'S NEW CREATION – MILLENNIAL BLESSINGS

INTRODUCTION:

This earth is headed for a glorious finish as God's *holy mountain* – the establishment of His kingdom of **righteousness and peace** on a global scale. Hard to imagine when we look around us at the fallen and depraved conditions of our day. But only this type of glorious finish realizes God's original intent in creating the heavens and the earth. It has always been His intention to establish His Son on the throne to rule over the earth and administer justice within a context of worship and holiness. God's law will be taught and embraced by all the subjects of the kingdom. God's purposes will not be thwarted by Satan. In fact, God will exercise His dominion by binding Satan for the 1000 year Millennial period. Make no mistake, God will demonstrate His control visibly on the earth and glorify Himself in that way.

This great hope is what so motivated the OT Jews. They died in faith it says in **Heb. 11:13-16** – *“without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for He has prepared a city for them.”* That heavenly New Jerusalem is the extension of the revitalized New Jerusalem seen in this millennial passage just as the eternal state of the kingdom is the final extension of the millennial kingdom seen here.

The disciples of Jesus' day were motivated by this hope as well so that when He appeared after His resurrection they eagerly asked Him: *“Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”* [**Acts 1:6**]

Peter's writings indicate that we are to be motivated by such a hope as well as he jumps forward to the ultimate end: *“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of “God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”* [**2 Pet. 3:10-13**]

The study of future prophecy is not something that Jesus wants us to dismiss as just pious speculation. It had practical application to how we live today.

Constable: As the book opened with an emphasis on judgment (chs. 1—5), so it closes with an emphasis on hope (65:17—66:24). Amid judgment, Israel could have hope. References to

"new heavens" and a "new earth" form an *inclusio* for this final section of the book (65:17; 66:22).

Oswalt: How will humans ever be able to live the righteousness of God, to be the evidence to the nations that he alone is God? Only in one way: if God himself intervenes and exercises His creative power to remake us and our world.

David Thompson: The world in which we are living is depressing, but God wants His people joyful. Look carefully in this context and see the emphasis on joy and gladness (Isaiah 65:13, 14, 18, 19). Where in the world can Israel find joy and happiness right now and where can we find it? We certainly cannot find it in the threats and intimidations of this world. We cannot find it in a bunch of lying politicians who say one thing and do another.

REJOICE IN ANTICIPATION OF GOD'S NEW CREATION – MILLENNIAL BLESSINGS

I. (:17-19a) CREATION OF NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

A. The Timeframe – Possibilities

1. Eternal State – after the Millennial Kingdom – Rev. 21:1 following Rev. 20 we know that everything here cannot be speaking of the eternal state:

- Death and sin in vs. 20 = problem for Amillennial view
- Similar language to what has been described in other parts of Isaiah
Isa 11:1-9

2. Millennial Kingdom – a refurbished new heavens and new earth is then created after the Millennial Kingdom to lead into the eternal state; the first stage of what merges into eternity

3. Passage starts with description of eternal state but then flashes back to characteristics of Millennial Kingdom –

4. Telescoping comingling where there is no precise differentiation here between the Millennial Kingdom and the Eternal State

Beall quoting **Wolf:** the description of the messianic age in vv. 17-25 in many respects could find its fulfillment during the Millennium, but some of the features of Isaiah's description of the messianic age seem to look ahead to the eternal state" [*Interpreting Isaiah*, p. 251].)

Oswalt quoting **Delitzsch:** in speaking of the kingdom of God here Isaiah amalgamates several aspects of it that may be chronologically distinct but are spiritually identical. Thus in its present manifestation in the lives of believers, the kingdom is a "*new creation*" (2 Cor. 5:17), "*the world to come*" (Heb. 2:5). But there is also the millennial kingdom, in which this world will be redeemed and renewed (Rev. 20:4-6). Finally, there are "*new heavens and a new earth*" that will exist after "*the first heaven and the first earth had passed away*" (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). All three of these manifestations of the kingdom of God and of his Messiah seem to be telescoped together in the prophet's mind, much as the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world seem to have been telescoped for Jesus (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). The point is that the God who made this world and sustains it to the present moment is not locked in by anything that has happened up to now. He is not any part of the system. He is the Creator! And that means that

the destructive power of sin can be broken, beginning now, and forever at the last day.

Alva McClain: *The Greatness of the Kingdom* – definition of the concept of a kingdom

At least three essential elements:

- 1) ruler with adequate authority and power
- 2) realm of subjects to be ruled
- 3) actual exercise of the function of rulership

All 3 of these are found in the **Millennial Kingdom**

What will be our role? Understanding that the millennium is populated by those saved believers who are still alive at the end of the Tribulation Period – includes both saved Jews and Gentiles – 3 different groups of resurrected believers that will be participating in some fashion and have some role of leadership –

- 1) OT resurrected saints
- 2) NT resurrected saints – the church ... along with those raptured before the Tribulation [even though our home is described as heaven where Jesus has gone to make a place for us; we must commute back and forth or reign as angels do now]
- 3) Tribulation period martyrs

Remember, the resurrection of the unsaved does not happen until after the Millennial Kingdom when they face the Great White Throne Judgment described in Rev. 20:11

McClain: 6 Key characteristics:

- **Spiritual** in nature – still real and tangible on the earth but governed by the Messiah by the power of the Holy Spirit – emphasis on righteousness, spiritual cleansing, regeneration
- **Ethical** conduct – God’s law embraced world-wide
- Restoration of **perfect social conditions** – no more war or conflict among nations
- **Physical transformation** back into almost pre-Fall conditions – yet still sin present – geological changes; climate changes; increased fertility for growing crops; restoration of long life
- **Political changes** – Jerusalem and Israel will be the focus; centralized authority
- **Religious purification** – centralized worship centered around rebuilt temple in Jerusalem; Messiah following pattern of Melchizedek as both king and priest; Shekinah glory resident in the temple

B. (:17) The Transformation

1. The New Comes Into Existence

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;”

Parunak: This expression, which recurs in **66:22**, is quoted twice in the NT: in **2 Pet 3:13**, and **Rev 21:1**.

That significant word of introduction and attention-getting “*Behold*” – look and marvel

God is not part of His creation; He stands outside and distinct from it; He creates ex nihilo – out of nothing

Transformation of an individual or of a nation or of a planet cannot come from human effort; only God can affect the transformation that is needed; don’t we all long for a new heavens and new earth?? Our current environment is so marred by sin; it is polluted; it is beyond cleaning up;

nothing short of a new heavens and new earth will suffice

2. The Old is Forgotten

“And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.”

Parunak: The “*former things*” might be a reference to the former heaven and earth, a tempting option in view of the insistence of Peter and John that the old heaven and old earth will be done away. But the expression is a favorite of Isaiah, who accounts for 5/6 of its instances in the Bible, and in all the others (**41:22; 42:9; 48:3; 65:16** “*former troubles*”), it refers to past events. The point is not that the old heavens and old earth are not remembered, but that the former chastisements fade away in the glory of the new order.

Oswalt: All the ways in which sin has stamped this world with its own deformed image will be wiped away, not only from reality but even from memory (cf. Rev. 21:4). They will not even *come to mind*.

David Thompson: God is going to reprogram our minds one day and we will never even remember the bad stuff we did or the bad things others did. No more sad things, no more bad things, no more things that make you cry

Application: In Christ we are a new creation

2 Cor. 5:17 “*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*”

C. (:18-19a) The Tone = Supreme Rejoicing

1. Command to Rejoice

“But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;”

Look at how pleased God was with His original creation – looked around and saw what He had created – *that it was good*

Remember that God formed you and made you the unique person that you are – we enter this world with the image of God marred and disfigured because of sin but with the potential to have God redeem us and create the NEW YOU – “*seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust*” – [**2 Pet. 1:3-4**]

Are you rejoicing in what God has created in you or are you complaining?

Remember the Apostle Paul’s prescription for a healthy Christian life: [**1 Thess. 5:16-18**]

“*Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus*” – should be no confusion about God’s will – despite all the books written on the subject – very simple – are we obeying??

2. Intent of Creating the New Jerusalem

“For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing,

And her people for gladness.”

Certainly Jerusalem today is more associated with weeping and mourning than with rejoicing and gladness; God’s purposes have not yet been realized

Motyer: The nouns *delight* and *joy* are in apposition, respectively, to *Jerusalem* and *people*. Hebrew uses apposition when one thing is so identifiable with another that they can be said to be the same, i.e. here Jerusalem and delight, its people and joy, are interchangeable (cf. 60:18).

God’s design accomplishes His intended purpose

David Thompson: The New Jerusalem is described in Revelation 21 and there it is called a “new” Jerusalem, meaning this will be brand new, not just refurbished. Some of the things we learn about the city in Revelation are amazing:

- 1) It will be a city of brilliant light . Rev. 21:11b - It will be the “zenith of beauty”
- 2) It will be a city surrounded by an impressive wall . Rev. 21:12a
- 3) It will be a city that has twelve gates . Rev. 21:12b-13 A. Each has a specific angel B. Each is named after one of the twelve tribes of Israel C. Each has a specific location
- 4) It will be a city that has twelve foundation stones . Rev. 21:14 - each with the name of an apostle
- 5) It will be a city of precise measurements . Rev. 21:15-17 - a perfect cube of 1500 miles
- 6) It will be a city surrounded by a beautiful wall 72 yards high - Rev. 21:17
- 7) It will be a city of amazing wealth and beauty. Rev. 21:18-20 - stones are costly
- 8) It will have twelve gates made out of pearls . Rev. 21:21a
- 9) It will have one major street made of gold . Rev. 21:21b
- 10) It will be a city where God , Himself, will live. Rev. 21:22-23
- 11) It will be a city of visited by believers of all nationalities. Rev. 21:24
- 12) It will be a city that will never shut down. Rev. 21:25
- 13) It will be a city where God will receive glory and honor. Rev. 21:26
- 14) It will be a city that no unbeliever will ever enter. Rev. 21:27

3. Delight of God

*“I will also rejoice in Jerusalem,
and be glad in My people;”*

Constable: Isaiah wrote many times that God presently lamented over old Jerusalem and her inhabitants (e.g., **24:7-12**).

Application: Are we rejoicing in how God is transforming us right now?

II. (:19B-25) CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH / MILLENNIAL BLESSINGS

A. (:19b-20) Blessing of Old Age vs. Premature Death

“And there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying. No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed.”

Rev 21:4

Is. 25:8 *“He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken.”*

Illustration: just celebrated 90 year birthday for my Mom – quite a milestone in this age – nothing special in the Millennium

Motyer: in this present order of things death cuts life off before it has well begun or before it has fully matured. But it will not be so then.

Cf. length of life in pre-flood time period -- **Gen 5:1-32**

Chuck Smith: So during the millennial age... now, we will not die. We're in our new bodies. We've moved out of our tents and we'll be in our new bodies during the Kingdom Age. But there will be people that will live through the time of the Great Tribulation who will also live through the judgment of the nations when Jesus returns and they will live into the Kingdom Age. And they are the one that will be bearing children and so forth during the Kingdom Age. But we will be here to reign with Christ as enforcers of righteousness. As a kingdom of priests upon the earth, representing Christ to the people and the people to Christ. And we will be here to rule and to reign upon the earth with Him during this millennial age in our new bodies. Now what will our new bodies be like? I really don't know. Vastly superior to the one I'm presently in.

Application: Are our lives right now characterized by joy rather than weeping and crying?

B. (:21-23) Blessing of Fruitful Labor vs. Vanity

*“And they shall build houses and inhabit them;
They shall also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
They shall not build, and another inhabit,
They shall not plant, and another eat;
For as the lifetime of a tree, so shall be the days of My people,
And My chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands.
They shall not labor in vain, Or bear children for calamity;
For they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD,
And their descendants with them.”*

Beall: *productive labor* for the man and the woman (the man's labor being in the vineyard, enjoying “*the work of their hands*”; the woman's labor being physical labor in bringing forth children) . . . Note how in this section the curse of Gen 3:16-19 is reversed, with man tilling the garden productively [compare Gen 2:15 and 3:17-19], and the woman similarly experiencing blessing in her child-bearing

Constable: The blessing of work will characterize the messianic age, though people will not have to labor as they did under the curse (Gen. 3:17-19).

Parunak: The curse warned that others would enjoy the fruit of their labors:

Deu 28:30 *thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a*

vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.

This element echoes the experience of the Amorites at the time of the conquest:

Deu 6:10 *the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, 11 And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; ...*

In the light of modern ideas of justice, it is remarkable that the Lord defines the ideal state in a way that condemns redistribution. God does command us to be sensitive to the needs of the poor and care for them, as a matter of individual discretion and obedience. But for a higher power to take the fruit of one person's labor and give it to another is not justice. It is a curse, imposed on people for some moral fault, such as the Amorite culture when their iniquity was full (Gen 15:16). When the Day of the Lord arrives, such redistribution will end.

Motyer: Vineyards are the chosen example because they took so long to cultivate and bring into production that they required settled conditions

Oswalt: Labor will not be for nothing (cf. Job 9:29), and children will not be born for tragedy (Lev. 26:16; Ps. 78:33; Jer. 15:8). Again the theme is the canceling out of futility. How futile to expend the energy to build something, and never be able to enjoy the results. Likewise, how futile to undergo the life-threatening pain of giving birth while knowing that disease or famine or sword could send those children to the grave even before their parents.

Application: Are we laboring right now for the Lord in a way that is productive and fruitful?
John 15 – His goal is that we abide in Jesus and bear much fruit;
Psalm 127

1 Cor. 15:58 *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”*

C. (:24) Blessing of Access to God's Favor vs. Separation and Silence

*“It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer;
and while they are still speaking, I will hear.”*

Contrast **Is. 59:1-2**

“Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”

Efficacy of our prayers when our requests are perfectly in harmony with the will of God

Application: Are we communicating effectively with God right now and enjoying the access to His favor in our lives?

1 John 5:14-15 *“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”*

D. (:25) Blessing of Peace and Tranquility vs. Fear and Violence Man's Dominion Over Nature Restored

*“The wolf and the lamb shall graze together,
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
and dust shall be the serpent's food.
They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,’ says the LORD.”*

One commentator pointed out that if a wolf and lamb are lying down together now, it is because the wolf is feeding on the lamb.

Wolf, lion and serpent are all creatures that pose a threat to man in the world's present fallen condition; no more will they be predatory creatures

Motyer: The only point in the whole of the new creation where there is no change (cf. verse 20fg) is in the curse pronounced on sin, which still stands (cf. Gn. 3:14).

“dust shall be the serpent's food” – 2 possibilities:

- 1) no more will the venom of the serpent attack humans
- 2) the curse on the serpent continues despite all of the other areas of change and transformation

F. B. Hole: Moreover mercy will be extended even to the animal creation, which at the outset was placed under man, and so has suffered as the result of his fall. No longer shall strong animals slay and devour the weak Those most opposed, like the wolf and the lamb, will feed together, and the most voracious, like the lion, will be satisfied with vegetable food. All hurt and destruction shall cease.

To this there will be just one exception. The serpent was used by Satan in deceiving Eve, and the curse upon it ran, "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:11). Now this sentence is not to be revoked. It seems that in the ranks of the lower creation it will be retained as a sign and reminder of the tragic effects of sin. The serpent will not be able to hurt nor destroy, but its degraded and miserable state will remain.

Application: Are we experiencing God's peace and tranquility right now?

CONCLUSION:

Value of focusing on the coming **Millennial Kingdom:**

- **Matt. 24:15** *“Let the reader understand”* – Christ commands us to understand future prophecy – not unimportant to Him
- Tells us where history is going – the end game for God's agenda
- Provides hope
- Context for Messiah to govern the kingdom of God on earth in visible form
- Shows us God's design for the world

The rule of Christ in the Millennial Kingdom is simply the door to Christ ushering in the final chapter of the eternal dominion of God as described in **1 Cor. 15:24-26** – that great resurrection chapter:

“then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power, For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.”

REJOICE IN ANTICIPATION OF GOD’S NEW CREATION

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can I increase the level of joy and rejoicing in my life today?
- 2) Why do I beat myself up over past failures when God says these “*former things*” will be remembered no more?
- 3) How should the concept of productive work during the Millennial kingdom elevate my concept of work in this present age?
- 4) Do I appreciate how much God delights in His new creation – including His work of transforming me into the image of His Son?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Oswalt: This poem introduces the final section of this division and of the book (65:17-66:24). Here, as in chs.1-5, judgment and hope are juxtaposed. As chs.1-5 begin and end with judgment, this section begins and ends with hope (65:17-25; 66:18-24). In between these segments are two judgment passages (66:1-6, 15-17), with a hope passage between them (66:7-14). Thus the pattern is: hope, judgment, hope, judgement, hope, which is a reversal of the pattern in chs.1-5. It is not important whether this reversal is intentional. Of greater importance is the changed emphasis from judgment there to hope here. Because of all that has transpired in the book between 6:1 and 65:16, God able to declare that while hope does not do away with the possibility of judgment, neither need judgment be the final word for those who will hear God’s call (ch.6), relinquish their trust in the nations (chs. 7-39), believe God’s promise of unmerited grace (chs..40-48), accept the sin offering of God’s Servant on their behalf (chs.49-55), and allow the power of God to produce his righteousness in them before the nations (chs.56-66).

TEXT: Isaiah 66:1-6

TITLE: WORD TREMBLERS VS RELIGIOUS HYPOCRITES

BIG IDEA:

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORD OF GOD DETERMINES THE LEGITIMACY OF OUR WORSHIP

INTRODUCTION:

People have all kinds of opinion about what type of worship pleases God.

- Some people think it is all about **ambiance** – you must have the type of environment that inspires awe and wonder; your building structure and your stained glass windows and your plush pews and your vaulted ceiling and your lofty pulpit should lift your hearts up to truly give God the glory due His name; If this is truly what God desires, we are in trouble here at Solid Rock
- Others put the focus on **music** – the type of music and the quality of music that creates a worshipful atmosphere. Now their answer might come in different forms. It might involve majestic pipe organs or invigorating rock bands; certainly our emphasis at Solid Rock has not been on the quality of our singing and of our special music
- Others put the focus on the more **mystical, experiential or charismatic** impact of the service – how close to God did you feel during the service; how were your emotions touched and how were you brought to some type of mountain-top state of spiritual ecstasy? If that is they type of worship that God is looking for, we are missing the mark here at Solid Rock

Let's read **66:1-6** – Fortunately God does not leave us guessing as to what type of worshipers he approves of; He presents a contrast in these opening verses of the final chapter of Isaiah's prophecy between those who tremble at God's Word (as Brian Borgman does, we will shorten that expression to the Word Tremblers) and those who are religious hypocrites – who check all the boxes regarding externals but whose heart is far from God

Context:

Beall: This final chapter of the book brings out many of the central themes for a last time: the hypocrisy of the people in their half-hearted worship (in reality worshipping idols) and their judgment; the future restoration of Israel and Jerusalem in peace, and judgment of her enemies; Israel as a light to the Gentiles, who will come and worship the Lord; and the ultimate eternal doom of those who continue to sin against the Lord.

Takes us back to where the book started in chap. **1:11-20** God is addressing people who **consider themselves to be religious** – not the vast pagan world that makes no claim to be the true Israel of God

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORD OF GOD DETERMINES THE LEGITIMACY OF OUR WORSHIP

I. (:1-2) DISTINCTION BETWEEN HYPOCRITICAL, FALSE WORSHIP VS TRUE WORSHIP – AT ITS CORE

What is the fundamental distinction?

A. (:1-2a) Fundamental Error of Hypocritical, False Worship

1. Worshiping the Symbol in Place of the Reality / Substituting Externals for Authenticity

*“Thus says the LORD,
‘Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.
Where then is a house you could build for Me?
And where is a place that I may rest?’”*

Quoted in **Acts 7:44-53** (what was their reaction to the Word of God as communicated by God’s messengers the prophets?) – don’t worship the symbol in place of the reality; not saying don’t build God a temple; the postexilic temple was built at the command of God

1 Kings 8:27, 61 – Solomon got it – obedience to God’s Word was at the core of God’s blessing

- Man-centered religion focuses on the religious trappings, the externals and loses sight of Who God is
- Man-centered religion things that we have something to offer that God wants or needs

Motyer: here it is his sheer greatness that is the topic, his *immensity* whereby earth itself is no more than his footstool . . . it is a matter of priority – I Sam. 15:22 *“to obey is better than sacrifice”* – On the one hand, though he is still the transcendent God, filling all heaven, touching earth with his foot. On the other hand, though the house is rightly a centre of sacrifice, the primary call of God to his people is for their obedience to his word

2. Minimizing the Majesty of God – Failing to Understand the Great Gulf Between the Creator (in all of His immensity) and His Creation

*“‘For My hand made all these things,
Thus all these things came into being,’ declares the LORD.”*

Don’t minimize the Majesty of God

Motyer: By coming to live in the house he does not become beholden to those who built it, for he is himself the maker of all. Just as his transcendent universality is not limited by his condescending to live in one particular place, neither is his sovereign freedom of action limited by accepting a house at the hands of human beings.

Parunak: A persistent error throughout Israel’s history was trusting in the sanctuary itself, rather than in the Lord whose presence it symbolized.

Recall **1 Samuel 4**, when Israel was smitten before the Philistines. Their remedy was to fetch the ark of the covenant to aid them in battle:

1Sa 4:3 *the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.*

God allowed the ark to be captured. It remained in exile seven months (1 Sam 6:1), and then was stored in the house of Abinadab in Kiriath-Jearim for twenty years (1 Sam 7:1-2).

A hundred years later, when the Babylonian threat drew closer, the people again sought confidence in the physical artifacts of religion. Jeremiah rebuked them:

Jer 7:4 *Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. ... 9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD. 12 But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.*

Now, anticipating the return, the Lord warns the people that true worship is not defined by architecture but by relationship. . .

Application: In modern church talk, “worship” typically means contemporary music, led by an energetic “worship leader” and accompanied by rock instruments, designed to make us feel happy. Given what we have read, it might be well to recall the Hebrew word for worship, which means “*to prostrate oneself*.” These verses in Isaiah unfold for us the meaning of true worship—not an emotional high fueled by lively music, but a sober recognition of how hopeless we are before the true God, as we cast ourselves entirely on his mercy with a full awareness of our sin and his majesty. May God give us grace not to be led astray by false notions of worship in the modern church, and instead to see ourselves in our true helpless condition.

Borgman: Man is irrepressibly religious; has innate desire to be a worshiper; but man wants not the God of heaven or truth but a manageable deity that he can control through externals and ritual and religion; let’s do something nice for God and he will be in our debt and do something nice for us; my hands made everything – that includes you; **Rev. 5:12; Job 41:11** “*Who has first given to me that I should have to give something back*”; **1 Chron. 29:14**; if I do X then God will have to do Y; you cannot put the omnipotent sovereign into your debt; not some sort of cosmic vending machine where you put in the coins and push the button and get what you want; it does not work that way; what about with raising kids; I did this and this; you were supposed to Lord do that and that; I read the books; I followed the steps; I did the formulas; God says: Did you forget you are clay and I am the potter; you can’t dictate how things turn out; that is my prerogative

God has exposed the error – now He reveals the essence of genuine, authentic worship

B. (:2b) 3 Essential Heart Attitudes for Genuine Worship -- Acceptable to God

*“But to this one I will look,
To him who is humble
and contrite of spirit,
and who trembles at My word.”*

1. Humble

We live in a vacuum of humility? Where is humility to be found?

No humility in our political process today

No humility in our business world

No humility in our sports heroes

No humility in the world of entertainment

Parunak: The key to true worship is not a sanctuary, but a right attitude toward God. This verse recalls **57:15** --

Isa 57:15 *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 ones.*

Both verses mention the “*contrite spirit*,” but the terms are different; all together we have five descriptions of the person who attracts God’s attention.

- “Contrite” in 57:15 is דכא “crushed.” It is used twice in ch. 53 to describe the affliction of our Savior (v. 5 “bruised for our iniquities,” v. 10 “it pleased the Lord to bruise him”). The contrite person is the person who has been crushed under God’s judgment, who realizes his guilt. We are crushed when we recognize that because of our sin, we offend God in the very act of taking up his holy name in prayer.
- “Humble spirit” in 57:15 שפל־רוח is literally “*low of spirit*,” an expression that appears twice in Proverbs as the opposite of pride (**16:19; 29:23**). Any attitude of self-worthiness immediately disqualifies us for access to God.
- “Poor” עני refers to a socially disadvantaged person, someone without independent means, a “have not.” Physical poverty does not guarantee godliness, but it puts a person in a position in which they may more readily trust in God because they have no other resources. What is more important is that we recognize our spiritual poverty, our recognition that “what things were gain to me, those I counted loss” (Phil 3:7), and our Lord reflects this characteristic when he proclaims a blessing on “*the poor in spirit*” **Matt 5:3**.
- “Contrite spirit” is נכה־רוח . The adjective appears elsewhere only in **2 Sam 4:4; 9:3** where it describes Mephibosheth as נכי־רגלים, “*crippled in his feet*.” The one who attracts God’s attention is “crippled in spirit,” without natural spiritual aptitude or qualifications to seek the Lord.

2. Contrite of Spirit

Motyer: This is not the sense of sin but the sense of the damage wrought by sin in the personality and helplessness to please God.

How do we demonstrate that we are truly humble and truly contrite of spirit?

By our attitude towards the Word of God!

3. Who Trembles at My Word

You must have a lofty view of the word of God; you must have a desire to hear, to understand and to obey the word of God – regardless how others receive the same word

Ps. 119 – longest chapter in the bible – written to extol the virtues of the word of God:
(:1-8) **OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO BLESSING**

(:9-16) **DEVOTION TO GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO PURITY**
(:17-24) **UNDERSTANDING GOD'S REVELATION IS THE PATHWAY TO ENCOURAGEMENT**
(:25-32) **COMMITMENT TO GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO PERSONAL REVIVAL (= REVIVED SPIRITUAL STRENGTH)**
(:105-112) **THE WORD OF GOD LIGHTS OUR PATHWAYS ON THE ROAD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**
(:161-168) **LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD IS THE PATHWAY TO A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE THAT BRINGS PEACE AND HOPE**

I. (:161-164) FOUR WAYS TO EXPRESS LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

- A. (:161) Fear God's Word in Awe and Wonderment /
But Don't Fear the Unjust Persecution of Men
"Princes persecute me without cause, But my heart stands in awe of Thy words."
- B. (:162) Get Excited About God's Word (Like Winning the Lottery)
"I rejoice at Thy word; As one who finds great spoil."
- C. (:163) Hate Every Lie / But Love the Truth
"I hate and despise falsehood, But I love Thy law."
- D. (:164) Praise God Continually Because His Word is Righteous
"Seven times a day I praise Thee, Because of Thy righteous ordinances."

Motyer: (Ezr. 9:4; 10:3) denotes a sensitive longing to obey.

Parunak: • The final characteristic of one who attracts the Lord's attention is that he "*trembleth at my word.*" He does not seek to evade God's commands or explain them away, but accepts them as the revelation of the all-powerful creator, and responds with the **fear of the Lord**, which is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10; Prov. 1:7). . .

Constable: It is people who are not self-assertive or preoccupied with their own rights, but rather who delight in the Lord's Word, that He favors (cf. Exod. 20:18-21; Luke 18:9-14; 23:39-43). . . The person who relies on ritual to satisfy God is repulsive to Him. . . Burning incense with such an attitude is just pagan worship (cf. 43:23-24; Jer. 7:21-22; Amos 5:21-25; Mic. 6:6-8; Mal. 1:10; Matt. 23:27).

Wrong ways to respond to the Word of the Lord:

- Ignoring the Word
- Perverting the Word
- Doubting the Word
- Disobeying the Word
- Mocking the Word

Example of Temptation account of Jesus and His interaction with Satan – Jesus was one who trembled at God's Word

Oswalt: If cult is performed to curry favor with God, to satisfy God's supposed needs, and thereby get something for ourselves from him, we should shut the doors of the temple at once and abandon the whole thing. But if our attitude in worship is the opposite of such arrogance as to think we can do something for God, and is instead the humble recognition that we can do nothing either for or to him (*afflicted*), the awareness that we deserve nothing but destruction

from him (*broken in spirit*), and the desire to do nothing other than what he commands (*trembles at my word*), then the expression of such a spirit through the medium of ritual and symbolic worship is entirely pleasing to God. This thought is best expressed in brief compass in **Ps. 51:16-19**.

Look at examples of those in Scripture who failed to Tremble at God's Word:
Hypocrites – despite trying to pass themselves off as genuine worshipers of the true God --

- Sin of Achan – **Joshua 7:21**
- King Saul – **1 Sam. 13, 15**
- Ananias and Sapphira – **Acts 5:1-11**

“God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

II. (:3-4) ESSENCE OF FALSE VS TRUE WORSHIP – IN ITS PRACTICE -- RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY CANNOT BE SUBSTITUTED FOR GENUINE HEART WORSHIP

A. (:3a) 4 Illustrations – The Sacrifices from Unclean Hearts are Themselves Unclean

1. Sacrificing an Ox From an Unclean Heart

“But he who kills an ox is like one who slays a man;”

Motyer: contrasting the lawful with the sinful

No value on human life

Oswalt: statements here clearly framed for their shock value

2. Sacrificing a Lamb From an Unclean Heart

“He who sacrifices a lamb is like the one who breaks a dog's neck;”

Motyer: contrasting the lawful with the meaningless

No value on God's instructions regarding what is clean and unclean

3. Offering a Grain Offering From an Unclean Heart

“He who offers a grain offering is like one who offers swine's blood;”

Motyer: contrasting the lawful with the unacceptable

No regard for God's instructions regarding clean and unclean

4. Burning Incense From an Unclean Heart

“He who burns incense is like the one who blesses an idol.”

Motyer: contrasting the lawful with the apostate . . .

The distinction between the two lists is that one expresses a consent to the word of God and the other is deviationist. The building of a house means nothing of itself; the sacrificial cult divorced from “*trembling at the Lord's word*” is sinful, meaningless, unacceptable and apostate.

When Amos said “*Go to Bethel and sin*” (4:4-5) his meaning was the same – ritual conformity without moral obedience only extends sin into another area of life. It is possible to be religiously meticulous and at worst incur guilt, at best achieve nothing. **The word of God is the key to everything.**

*“Enter Bethel and transgress; in Gilgal multiply transgression!
Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes very three days.
Offer a thank offering also from that which is leavened,
And proclaim freewill offerings, make them known.
For so you love to do, you sons of Israel,’ Declares the Lord.”*

B. (:3b-4) Hypocritical Religious Practitioners Will Be Severely Condemned

1. For Their Scandalous Choices

*“As they have chosen their own ways,
And their soul delights in their abominations,
so I will choose their punishments,
And I will bring on them what they dread.”*

Prov. 10:24 *what the wicked fears will come upon them*

2. For Their Stubborn Choices

*“Because I called, but no one answered;
I spoke, but they did not listen.
And they did evil in My sight,
And chose that in which I did not delight.”*

Root problem = rejection of God’s word

Repeating **65:12** *“Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight and chose that in which I did not delight.”*

III. (:5a) KEY TO LEGITIMATE WORSHIP = OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORD OF GOD

A. Prime Importance of the Word of God

“Hear the word of the LORD,”

B. Proper Attitude Towards the Word of God

“you who tremble at His word:”

Gives a word of comfort to the Word Tremblers

IV. (:5b-6) HYPOCRITICAL, FALSE WORSHIPERS WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR SHUNNING OF GENUINE WORSHIPERS

A. (:5b) Genuine Worshipers Will Be Mocked and Shunned

*“Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name's sake,
Have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy.’”*

Motyer: *Because of my name* may express the motive behind the would-be excommunication: they really think that the name of the Lord is more truly honoured and the good of his people better served by their compromises and their willingness to accommodate theologies without foundation in the word. . . The Lord holds out to his beleaguered *word-tremblers* the hope of the eschatological reversal.

Young: cf. Matt. 10:22; John 15:18; 17:14; 1 Thess. 2:14

B. (:5c-6) Mockers Will Be Paid Back in Full With Shame and Destruction

“But they will be put to shame.

A voice of uproar from the city,

a voice from the temple,

The voice of the LORD who is rendering recompense to His enemies.”

Word of comfort to those experiencing persecution -- **2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rev. 6:11**

Martin: People in Israel who professed to know the Lord but who actually hated and discriminated against God’s people would be shamed by His discipline when the temple would be destroyed by the Babylonians.

Oswalt: The outcasts are those who wish to keep God’s covenant carefully form the heart, treating the poor equitably, avoiding intermarriage with pagans, carefully observing the Sabbath, and performing the rituals exactly as God has prescribed. By and large, they are not the persons in power. Those who are doing the casting out are the wealthy, the priests, and the nobles. Their major concern is their own aggrandizement. Their religion, their marriages, their treatment of the poor are all designed for one end: their own benefit. Careful obedience to God’s Word is not important to them. To appear to be religious is of some significance, but the thought of a life of self-denial for the sake of others as an expression of determined obedience to God was almost ludicrous.

CONCLUSION:

What would I like engraved on my tombstone: “He trembled at the Word of the Lord”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we expand our concept of Who God is to be more consistent with His majesty and His immensity?
- 2) In what ways do we try to manipulate God or do we act as if God needs our spiritual service?
- 3) What are the characteristics of a person who truly trembles at God’s Word?
- 4) In what ways have you been mocked or shunned because of your convictions regarding the Word of God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Brian Borgman: vv.1-6 is a paragraph; contrast between those who have humility and tremble at God's Word vs those who only have external religion (going back to chap. 1); God wants the whole person devoted to Him; those who tremble at God's word are comforted in vs. 5 while the hypocrites are threatened with judgment in vs. 6

Heaven is God's throne – place of vast immensity; used as a plural of majesty in the Hebrew; the text doesn't say "My throne is in heaven" even though that is true; the majesty and sovereignty of God fills all in all; is not confined or restricted in any way; His throne, the symbol of His power and sovereignty and majesty, is actually the heavens themselves; our perspective on God is too small; we haven't even scratched the tip of the tip of the iceberg of who God is; footstool is symbol of place that is in complete subjection; not a place where you prop up your feet like an ottoman; everything about this planet that seems so gigantic to us is under the cosmic rule of a sovereign God; awesome, transcendent, unrivaled, sovereign God; those words don't even actually capture who He is; the idea of building God a house is not inherently wrong; David felt convicted to build God a house as he looked around at his palace; God just had an old, ratty tabernacle; Solomon completed the project; built a house as a representative place of God's dwelling; Solomon understood that it was not technically God's house; **1 Kings 8** – you cannot be contained; Do you think you are actually going to build something in your external religion where you could actually confine and restrict and control me? That is absurd; seeking to render the infinite finite, the eternal temporal and the Creator a creature

How in the world can we then be pleasing to God; How can He possibly look on us with favor? Here is the one I will look on with favor; be pleased with; I will spell it out clearly; not in sacrifices or building me a house or trying to bribe me with things I have already given you; the poor in spirit; the one who knows he needs help and has nothing to offer God; God is not looking for people who can contribute to His cause; it is impossible; God doesn't need us; we have turned God into the needy one that we will now serve with our excellent service; must have real genuine bible humility; **Tim Keller:** not just thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less; must understand who they are in light of who God is; a person who is proud and self-righteous has one fundamental flaw: they don't know God from a garbage can; as soon as someone sees who God is there is an immediate response of self-abasing humility; **Job 42:1-6; I repent in dust and ashes**

Psalm 51:17 *a broken heart you will not despise*; we don't have our act all together; Is. 57:15 transcendent God is immanent = near to those with a broken heart;

They hear the word and they actually tremble at it; not just simply saying they are afraid of a word of divine judgment; they actually recognize that God's word is God's word; **Deut. 32:47** these words are your life; you love this word; they don't sit in judgment over the word – that doesn't sound right ...; their position is under the word not over the word; humbled by the revelation of God in his word; they fall before me; not the person who is indifferent or rejects God's Word; *Woe is Me, I am undone* = the response of Isaiah; that is the response he wants; or even the response of Nebuchadnezzar: **Dan. 4** – he bowed low; Noah trembled at the majesty of the divine word; a preacher of righteousness; cf. Sermon on the Mount – description by Jesus; these are blessed; don't take the word of God lightly; it is a weighty word; scour out our self-righteousness and legalism

Hypocrites and formalists who engage in sham religion have no affinity for the word tremblers; We have moved from temple building to other external acts of worship; Hebrew reads very abruptly and tersely; word “like” is not in the Hebrew text; 2 options:

1) leave the word “like” out – the people are doing 2 things simultaneously: an act they regard as worship towards God coupled with an act of pagan false worship

2) leave the word “like” in to make it a point of comparison (almost all of the English translations) -- their lawful acts of worship are no different than those acts of pagan worshipers because of their sinful heart

In both cases the issue is hypocrisy; sacrificing an ox – you took the most expensive animal you had; the Cadillac of the cattle; very valuable; expensive and significant offering; when it is done apart from genuine heart it is the same as killing a man (committing human sacrifice) which is consistently condemned as an abomination to God

The lamb was another appointed, legitimate sacrifice; dog was an unclean animal; you don't offer up unclean animals; not fit for sacrifice so its neck was broken

Offers grain offering – appointed and legitimate; first fruits; grain offering; swine is unclean; the most abominable thing of all in the Jewish economy; abomination of desolation;

Burns incense on the altar – also legitimate; pleasing aroma to God;

The condition of the heart is key

It is not the external act that is paramount to God

Cf. worship of Cain and Abel – one offering was acceptable to God and one was rejected – the issue was not blood sacrifice or not but the condition of the heart – was it brought by faith?

Right heart attitude towards God

Psalm 51 – David's confession and repentance – God desires a broken and contrite heart; David did bring a sacrifice but recognized that God wanted much more than a rote, external sacrifice;

the Bible doesn't jettison the externals; form without reality is abominable to God; **Hos. 6** – I delight in loyalty, hesed, faithfulness; **1 Sam. 15** – Saul doing his own stuff instead of listening to God's instructions; to obey is better than sacrifice; a consistent biblical principle

Mindset = we excuse our paganism because we do some right things too

“their soul delights in their abominations”

We use excuse: If it feels right it must be right

Insidious aspect of sin that causes us to delight in it;

One of the marks of maturity = loving the things that God loves and hating the things God hates;

Irony: you chose; now God will choose – you will get the judgment that you dreaded

God reached out to them and offered grace but they have no excuse because they refused to listen to God; God spoke through his word, his prophets, and through providence;

We are so in love with our abominations, we continue on in our ways;

The light that we have increases the culpability and guilt of our sin;

Blatant rebellious spirit that chooses the very things God hates despite their knowledge;

Vs. 5-6 call to hear the word of the Lord in contrast to those who refused to hear; contrast between hypocrites and word tremblers; **Calvin**: all the reverence that we owe to God must be paid to His Word; your brothers in name only (they just happen to be in the same church as you); giving him the benefit of the doubt because he is hanging out with the brothers; they hate your

authenticity and godliness and your trembling at God's word; talking about difference between warts (we all have seeds of these sins of pride and hypocrisy) and leprosy; genuineness vs phoniness; *all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*

John 15:21 they will do all these things to you "*for my name's sake*"

The wicked world of religious hypocrites will attack you; brotherly persecution

They are going to claim to be offering service to God

They mock the earnest as fanatical, unbalanced lunatics; let's see your joy now – ironic mockery;

We are viewed as the radicals that are a real danger to an ecumenical church

What makes us so dangerous as unbalanced lunatics? We believe the Book!

Voice starts out in general from the city then it becomes more specific as a voice of judgment from the temple

No greater danger than being a hypocrite; the hypocrite never escapes

It is the end that counts

TEXT: Isaiah 66:7-14

TITLE: JOY IN GOD'S KINGDOM ON EARTH – THE COMFORT ONLY A MOTHER CAN PROVIDE

BIG IDEA: REBORN JERUSALEM WILL PROVIDE AMPLE SUSTENANCE TO GOD'S PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION:

The final chapters of Isaiah have reflected the alternating emphasis of God's judgment upon His enemies and His ultimate comfort and blessing for the reborn nation of Israel in the last days. Our section for today is one of comfort and blessing – giving hope for the ultimate future of the nation. God takes such pains to emphasize that He will surely accomplish what seems so unlikely – it is sad to see how many believers have discarded any hope in God's future program for the nation of Israel. Yes, it is unheard of; Yes, it seems impossible; But God has pledged to come through on all of His promises for His elect nation.

When we look at the suffering and pressure in our present circumstances, we can become down in the mouth and forget God's glorious end game strategy for us. That is why Peter instructs believers to focus on their heavenly inheritance and live with eternity in view:

1 Peter 1:3-9

Constable: The mood now reverts back to hope (cf. 65:17-25). In contrast to all the bereavement and deprivation that Jerusalem had experienced and would yet experience (cf. 26:16-18; 37:3; 51:18-20), the ultimate future of the city and its inhabitants remained bright.

Mother Day's passage comes early this year:

Parunak: There are two things that a mother does for her children. This paragraph crowns the metaphor by describing Jerusalem as the mother of her people. It has two halves, corresponding to two facets of the maternal relation: giving birth (vv. 7-9), and sustaining her offspring (vv. 10-13). Each ends (vv. 9, 12-13) with a statement attributed to the Lord.

REBORN JERUSALEM WILL PROVIDE AMPLE SUSTENANCE TO GOD'S PEOPLE

I. (:7-9) THE MIRACULOUS REBIRTH OF ISRAEL -- THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER IN CHILDBIRTH -- THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY BY THE LORD

A. (:7-8a) Sudden, Painless Rebirth of the Nation = Miraculous Act of God

*“Before she travailed, she brought forth;
Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy.
Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?
Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once?”*

Parunak: like the riddle Samson gave; unprecedented; who has ever heard of such a thing? Then he gives the interpretation

Normally the process of birth is associated with the varying period of preceding suffering of the labor pains – varying in length and intensity – but always it seems long and excruciating –

especially when you don't have the benefit of modern medicine

Here you have a unique situation by contrast -- so it is unheard of
Picture of nation of Israel as the **wife of God** – **Isaiah 54:1-11** – again the promise of future fertility of the nation – God will not set Israel aside permanently – no matter how destitute she looks; **Is. 49:14-15**

You have here both the **birth of a boy and the birth of a nation** –

- Could be a reference both to the Incarnation of the long-awaited-for Messiah and then the rebirth of the nation
- **Rev. 12:1-2**

MacArthur: Being clothed with the sun speaks of the glory, dignity, and exalted status of Israel, the people of promise who will be saved and given a kingdom. The picture of the moon under her feet possibly describes God's covenant relationship with Israel, since new moons were associated with worship (1 Ch 23:31; 2Ch 2:4; 8:13; Ezr 3:5; Ps 81:3). The 12 stars represent the 12 tribes of Israel.

Martin: God does not start something and leave it unfinished.

It will happen quickly when it happens

Motyer: When the Lord brings glory to his people, it will be as sudden as the judgment on his enemies (4a) and as complete (6d). The questions are a pointed mockery of the sceptics of verse 5ef.

Oswalt: an allusion to **Gen. 3:16**. According to that passage, pain in childbirth is a concomitant of the Fall. Isaiah is looking to a world where the effects of the Fall have been done away with, and its dead hand can no more reach out to blight even the moment of new life's breaking into the world.

Beall: The nation would be reborn so quickly that the normal period of pregnancy would not be observed; instead, she would be born quickly and painlessly, in one day. Furthermore, this rebirth was certain: God would not bring the nation to the point of birth and then not follow through with the delivery (v 9).

B. (:8b-9) Certainty of the Rebirth of the Nation – Faithfulness and Sovereignty of God

“As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.

‘Shall I bring to the point of birth, and not give delivery?’ says the LORD.

‘Or shall I who gives delivery shut the womb?’ says your God.”

Wiersbe: Political Israel was born on May 14, 1948, but 'the new Israel' will be 'born in a day' when they believe on Jesus Christ.

Parunak: Pronoun built into the verb; if you include the pronoun in addition, it is for emphasis. Now the Lord explains this sudden restoration. It is a sign of his personal involvement and commitment. “I” is the separate pronoun in both cases, thus emphatic, though difficult to

translate directly. *“I myself, and no other, am the one bringing this child to the birth. How could it be otherwise than successful and glorious?”*

v. 8 is sometimes quoted of the events of May 1948 with the declaration of independence, the birth of the modern state of Israel. While the establishment of Israel was rapid, it was hardly the work of a day; after the war that broke out with the withdrawal of the British, the first armistice (with Egypt) took over 9 months, the last one (with Syria) over 14 months, and there was no formal peace agreement for decades. The history of the modern state is hardly without travail and without pain. Like all the events of history, the restoration of Israel is the work of the Lord. But it is not the restoration that Isaiah describes here. This restoration awaits the Lord’s return. (Zech. 14)

Motyer: The verse, then, expresses two truths. First, the illustration of a process well advanced but not brought to completion (9ab) shows that the Lord does not proceed so far with his purposes only to abandon them before they are fulfilled. Secondly, the illustration of something begun and frustrated before it can even move towards fulfilment (9cd) shows that the Lord does not begin what he does not propose to finish.

Oswalt: One of the principal objections to promises such as these is obviously that they are impossible. If Israel should ever go into captivity, it can never emerge again. If Judah is under the boot of foreign empires, then its religion is doomed to be swallowed up in syncretism. If the Messiah is an ordinary-looking man, the son of a human mother, there is no hope that his message can survive. If the faith is held hostage to a corrupt institutionalism, it can never break free from that stranglehold. And so on. But the prophet declares that the fulfillment of this promise, and all those others like it, does not depend on human power or “normal” circumstances.

II. (:10-13) THE MATERNAL SUSTAINING PROVIDED BY ISRAEL -- THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER IN NURSING AND NURTURING -- THE COMFORT OF THE LORD AS JERUSALEM PROSPERS IN PEACE AND JOY

A. (:10-11) God’s Goal for His People: Contented Satisfaction and Delight

1. (:10) Abundant Joy

*“Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her;
Be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her,”*

Parunak: This description can include Gentiles as well as Jews; the Jerusalem I love is not the capital of a rebellious state; mourn for her difficulties; love her; pray for her

Oswalt: The mourning was twofold: first because of the destroyed and ruinous condition that resulted from the nations being called in to trample God’s vineyard (cf. 5:5-6; 49:19), then because of Israel’s inability to do righteousness (57:18; 59:9-15a). But God has one who has promised to give joy in place of mourning (60:20; 61:2-3; 65:18-19). Not only will Jerusalem be restored as a great and glorious city, but even more importantly, God will come in the power of his Spirit and put his words in the mouth of his people (59:21) so that they will follow his leadership (63:11) and stop grieving him (63:10).

2. (:11) Abundant Sustenance

“That you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts,

That you may suck and be delighted with her bountiful bosom.”

Parunak: picture is of a child who is upset and mother takes the child to her breast and comforts the child

B. (:12-13) 3 Amazing Promises of God’s Care and Provision

“For thus says the LORD,”

1. Divine Blessing

*“Behold, I extend peace to her like a river,
And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream;”*

Constable: The Lord would extend peace (Heb. shalom) to Israel as a constantly flowing river. He would bring glory from the nations to her, glory that she had sought in the wrong ways in the past, and Israel would enjoy preferential treatment from Him.

Oswalt: Finally, all of Zion’s broken pieces will be put back together in the form that God envisioned from the first (cf. 32:15-18).

Parunak: 2 bodies of water here; 2 different Hebrew words; a river is continually flowing year-round and rather steadily; River Jordan fits this; the other term (*stream*) is closer to a flooding wadi = a riverbed that is dry most of the year; when a thunderstorm comes it turns into a flashflood; do not pitch your tent there; the wealth of the Gentiles comes like an overwhelming flood and then you shall suck – you will be nourished (there is the break in the Hebrew)

2. Intimate Nurturing

*“And you shall be nursed,
you shall be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees.”*

Ongoing nurturing and sustenance and care in the last half here

3. Maternal Comforting

*“As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you;
And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”*

Beall: “*Comfort*” has been a predominate theme of Isaiah since chapter 40 (40:1; 49:13; 51:3(2x), 11, 12, 19; 52:9; 54:11; 57:6; and 61:2), but it reaches its zenith here, being mentioned three times in a single verse. As **Oswalt** states, “the arm of the Lord has been revealed; sin and its attendant sorrow and shame have been defeated; death has been met and vanquished; mourning is ended forevermore. Comfort indeed!” (2:679).

Motyer: The comfort offered is threefold: in its quality, which is maternal (13a); in its source and agent, the Lord (13b); and in its location, Jerusalem (13c).

III. (:14) THE MANIFEST PROSPERITY OF GOD’S PEOPLE

“Then you shall see this,”

Jerusalem restored and nurturing her children

Motyer: This verse matches 5-6. The mockery of those who dismissed the future glory as something they would never see is countered by the affirmative promise, “*and you will see*” with which this verse opens.

A. (:14a) Prosperity Experienced

1. Overwhelming Joy

“and your heart shall be glad,”

2. Abundant Health and Prosperity

“And your bones shall flourish like the new grass;”

Parunak: common Hebrew idiom; Examples of usage: **Prov. 17:22** *a broken spirit dries the bones*: used by Job and David as well; Ps. 32; Jeremiah lamenting over fall of Jerusalem in Lamentations; you will feel good all the way down to your bones

3. Power and Favor of God

“And the hand of the LORD shall be made known to His servants,”

Constable: The result would be that God's people would see His supernatural work, would rejoice in it, and would receive strength from observing it. His servants, the godly among His people, would appreciate that God Himself had revived Israel. But He would punish His enemies.

Beall: The response of the Lord's people will be rejoicing (v 14), as the hand of the Lord (Messianic reference similar to the “arm” of the Lord?) will be known to His true servants; but the Lord's zealous indignation to his enemies.

B. (:14b) Prosperity Contrasted

“But He shall be indignant toward His enemies.”

Alternating themes – God will not be overlooking the rebellion of His enemies;
Transition to this theme of judgment in the next section

Parunak: God will faithfully care for his servants, but he will bring fiery wrath upon those who oppose him. This warning is amplified in the next paragraph, which focuses on the false worshippers.

Oswalt: The day is coming when the distinction between the servants and the enemies of God will be unmistakable. God's hand of blessing and power will be evident in the blessed condition of his servants, and his outstretched hand of anger will fall on his enemies.

CONCLUSION:

Comfort is coming says the God of all comfort. Long for the rebirth of Israel and the sustenance that will provide to all of God's people in His kingdom of Peace and Joy on the earth.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How are the metaphors in this passage mixed? Who is the mother in view in the various verses?
- 2) Where else in Scripture is God portrayed as a nurturing mother?
- 3) How does this passage provide God's people with comfort and hope?
- 4) What problems would face interpreters of this passage who believe that the church has replaced the nation of Israel as the target of promises such as these?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: unprecedented suddenness of the nation's restoration . . . Childbirth is often used in Scripture as an image of prolonged labor and pain. Here, the prophet sets before us a mother whose child is born even before she enters labor. . . The closest parallel is the bereaved widow in **49:14-50:3**. There, when the Lord restores Zion's children, she is amazed:

Isa 49:21 *Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?*

Constable: The subject of this prophecy is Zion (v. 8). Isaiah pictured Zion as a pregnant woman giving birth to a baby, without any pain. She would give birth to a boy before she began experiencing labor pains. This is, of course, the opposite of what usually happens. This may be a prophecy of Messiah's appearing (the Rapture) before the Tribulation (the pain), the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7; cf. Gen. 3:16). It may also be a prediction of joy and delight coming to Zion in the future. However, in light of the next verse, it seems that the boy is the nation of Israel (cf. Rev. 12:1-2).

Parunak: There is a coming rule of God on earth and those who are subject to His rule will experience blessing and those who rebel against His rule will receive judgment. This is the gospel of the kingdom which Jesus proclaimed. This is what Israel would have expected from OT prophecies like those in the book of Isaiah.

TEXT: Isaiah 66:15-24

TITLE: *CULMINATION OF JUDGMENT AND SALVATION IN THE END TIMES*

BIG IDEA:

WHEN THINGS COME TO AN END THEY WILL CONTINUE ON FOREVER – EITHER IN A STATE OF RECREATION AND ETERNAL LIFE OR A STATE OF CORRUPTION AND ETERNAL SUFFERING

INTRODUCTION:

“The Road to the Final Four” has a nice ring of **finality** to it – the wrapping up of the college basketball season – the 68 team tournament that determines the ultimate champion. How is your NCAA bracket doing? Have you picked mostly winners? Quite a few surprises already – like always. When most things come to an end, they are actually **over**. That is why you see the coach of Michigan State, Tom Izzo, so emotional as his team gets upset and he deals with the reality that the existence of this team is over. It has been a special group of young men that he has loved coaching – but this team has no future going forward as a team. This is the end of the line.

As we come to our final sermon on the 66 chapters of Isaiah, the eloquent and gifted prophet is wrapping up many of the themes that we have been tracking through the book. The last chapter especially focuses on the alternating emphasis between *The Culmination of Judgment and Salvation In the End Times*. Each paragraph goes back and forth.

Oswalt: When one observes the book as a whole, the interchange between judgment and hope is unmistakable. . . Here this interchange occurs for the last time, with 15-17 (and v. 24) depicting the fate of those both within and beyond the Israelite community who persist in rebellion against God, and vv. 18-23 depicting the salvation of the nations that will occur as a result of the revelation of God’s glory in both judgment and redemption. Finally, as far as this book is concerned, judgment and hope are inseparable. It is out of judgment that hope emerges, but hope never removes the potential and the reality of judgment

But there is something very unique about this discussion of end times – of God bringing to ultimate fulfillment His purposes for this world and His program for His elect nation – as well as His program for outreach to the Gentile nations.

WHEN THINGS COME TO AN END THEY WILL CONTINUE ON FOREVER – EITHER IN A STATE OF RECREATION AND ETERNAL LIFE OR A STATE OF CORRUPTION AND ETERNAL SUFFERING

This end which Isaiah details in Chap. 66 is actually a beginning of the next phase of the kingdom of God – the glories of the Millennial Kingdom that then merge into the eternal state of a new heavens and a new earth that will endure forever. But sadly God’s painful judgment against those who have rebelled against His gracious provision of forgiveness for sins and salvation will continue on as well into eternity. There is no doctrine of annihilation (as many evangelicals are proposing today) – only the cries of the wicked who must endure eternal punishment – **Matt. 25:46**.

I. (:15-18a) THE ESCHATOLOGICAL JUDGMENT OF THE LORD IS DETERMINED, DEVASTATING AND DESERVED

A. (:15-16) The Judgment is Determined and Devastating

*“For behold, the LORD will come in fire And His chariots like the whirlwind,
To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire.
For the LORD will execute judgment by fire And by His sword on all flesh,
And those slain by the LORD will be many.”*

Don't ever entertain any doubts about future **accountability** before a powerful God who executes His anger and wrath against sinful rebellion. The words and imagery in these 2 verses could not be any stronger.

Awesome and overwhelming; leaves nothing in its path
His anger finds its target; Holiness and righteousness of God demand justice and judgment

Zech. 14

Oswalt: God's anger is compared to *fire* several times in this book (10:17; 29:6; 30:27, 30), but in a sense God's nature in itself is understood as *fire* (cf. 33:14)

Constable: The judgment in view in verses 15-17 seems to be the one that will take place when Messiah returns to the earth (cf. Zeph. 2:12-14; Matt. 24:22; Mark 13:19-20; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 19:11-21).

Motyer: Chariots, an earthly manifestation of destructive power, are symbolic of the irresistible power of the holy God acting in judgment. . . In verse 15 the emphasis falls on holiness (fire, flames of fire) and power (chariots); in verse 16 it falls on the justice (sword, execute judgment) of holiness (fire).

B. (:17-18a) The Judgment is Deserved Because of Worship Abominations

1. Abomination #1 – The Arrogance of Their Worship

“Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go to the gardens,”

Mockery by God here – as if these people are really so concerned about sanctification and purification – ceremonial, pagan, cultic sanctification

Gardens = place of pagan fertility cults = sexual immorality cloaked as religious activity

Motyer: In essence we meet here the people of **65:2-7, 11-12** and **66:3-4**: the compromiser and apostates among the Lord's professing people, those who did not tremble at his word. For when people cease to heed the word of revelation, it is not that they then believe nothing, but that they will believe anything – gardens, pigs, and rats included.

Parunak: Application: God loves gardens. He originally planted one as a place for him to enjoy fellowship with Adam. But we have been cast out of the garden, and for us to attempt to set up a garden of our own to replace it is blasphemy. The places that God has ordained for worship always center around sacrifice that acknowledges our sin and God's provision for it, not an attempt to regain Eden on our own.

2. Abomination #2 – The Focus of Their Worship

“Following one in the center,”

This is the sin which the Lord detests: substituting for His leadership, some charismatic human leader that is set up in your midst

Cf. **Ezek. 8:7-11** describing a secret cult of idolatrous worshipers with *“Jaazaniah standing in the midst of them”* – the same preposition used *“in the midst”* – somebody leading them into this apostate worship

Parunak: 2 possible interpretations:

1) In this case, the feminine (the *Qere*, to be said) probably refers to the Asherah pole at the center of the pagan sanctuary. Their worship is centered around an idol, not the Lord. Clearly such behavior is unacceptable.

2) The masculine (the *Kethiv*, to be written) also makes good sense. In this case, the reference would be to a person, a priest or other functionary. The people worship as they do because they are following a human leader. This error is somewhat more subtle.

Application: Clearly, putting some other god at the center is wrong. Just as importantly, putting a human other than Jesus of Nazareth at the center is also wrong. All the sanctification and purification in the world will do us no good if the focus of our worship is on the wrong god, or if it is motivated by the charisma of a human leader and not by the person of the Lord himself.

3. Abomination #3 – The Disconnect in Their Worship = No Heart Obedience

“Who eat swine’s flesh, detestable things, and mice,”

Parunak: The word *“abomination”* appears 18x in the OT, 11 of these in **Lev 11** in describing unclean animals. So he names the general category of unclean foods along with two specifics. For all their worship, when they sit down to eat they neglect God’s dietary laws, and eat the things that God forbids.

4. Their Deserved Destiny

“Shall come to an end altogether,’ declares the LORD.”

For [I know] their works and their thoughts;”

Borgman: They won’t escape the sword of the Lord; common denominator in judgment passages: always according to works; harshest judgment reserved for hypocrites; e.g. the Pharisees themselves; hypocrite boasts in his own knowledge and in his own progress in religion; form of godliness but denying the power; empty; we must guard our hearts against all forms of hypocrisy; Do you really hate your sin? We are better confessors than we are repenters; the hypocrite is never painfully aware of his need for grace

Oswalt: God’s pronouncement on all human religion and those who practice it is that they and it will all come to a sudden end together. Deep in the human heart is a need to justify ourselves to ourselves. Thus we can take even the gracious gifts of God and make them a means of saving ourselves. The thought of absolute dependence on God, of abandoning our ways for his, is deeply abhorrent to us. If we can feel that we can remake ourselves into his holy image, even by using the methods he has indicated, we can feel a measure of pride and accomplishment. But

God's word on all of that is one of unreserved judgment. We cannot justify ourselves, and all our attempts to do so must fail. Far from commending such behavior, God labels it as only one more form of rebellion, the more pernicious because it is so effectively masked.

Motyer: Hebrew is incomplete here [no verb]: "*So much for me, their works and their thoughts: it has come.*"

I take this as the conclusion to the above section

II. (:18b-23) THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SALVATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE IS DETERMINED, GLORIOUS AND GRACIOUS

A1. (:18) Establishment of Kingdom Believers for the Recognition of God's Glory

*"The time is coming to gather all nations and tongues.
And they shall come and see My glory."*

Demonstration of God's great grace

Worldwide emphasis – not just a focus on Israel – **2:2-4**

Parunak: only two other places use these two terms together:

Psa 92:5 *O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.*

Pro 16:3 *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

The Psalmist uses the words of the Lord's thoughts and works, which he adores. Solomon is talking, not about the sinful works and rebellious thoughts of the wicked, but about the mind and actions of someone who is following the Lord. If Isaiah has this verse in mind when he mentions "*their works and their thoughts,*" then he has moved from the wicked to the righteous. Just as God knows the wickedness of those who follow their own desires, he also watches over those who are committed to him, and the following verses describe the favor he shows them.

B1. (:19) Function of Missionary Outreach in the End Times

Isaiah is a great missionary book; missions is about the glory of God

Parunak: vv. 19-21 outline a series of four events around the theme of the true worship that the Lord desires. The first two of these have already happened. The other two are yet to come.

1. (:19a) Inspired by a Miraculous Sign
"And I will set a sign among them"

Ex. 10:2 *"that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the Lord"*

Ps. 78:43 – *When He performed His signs in Egypt and His marvels in the field of Zion."*

refers to a special miracle; some interpret this to be the coming of Christ; others point to some special end time miracle

Oswalt: it seems best to leave the answer to the question as broad as possible = at the end of the age God would make his power clear in certain miraculous ways, and in so doing call to himself all who are willing to hear

2. (:19b) Commissioned to Declare God's Glory

*“and will send survivors from them to the nations:
Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Rosh, Tubal, and Javan,
to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory.
And they will declare My glory among the nations.”*

Survivors = **the Jews** who believe in the end times and survive God's cleansing judgment against Israel

“Send out” = new missionary focus – not trying to attract Gentiles to Israel but outreach to the nations – started with the church but will be intensified with the **144,000 witnesses** in the end times – **Rev. 7:4**

Martin: The remnant of believing Israelites will travel as missionaries to other parts of the world, to tell Gentiles about God's glory. Those places and peoples will include Tarshish, probably in southwestern Spain, Libyans in northern Africa, Lydians in western Asia Minor, Tubal in northeastern Asia Minor, Greece, and distant islands.

Borgman: 3 categories of God's glory in book of Isaiah – they overlap:

1) God's perfections, attributes, manifest presences – 6:3 “the whole earth is full of His glory” = the outshining of His perfections and excellencies; like the rays of the sun beaming out and communicating the warmth of the sun

2) God's redeeming activity of His people – reaching out and redeeming a wayward people; this is a more narrow demonstration of His perfections and excellencies

3) Manifestation of His own Son – 40:1ff -- speaking of the coming of Messiah – “*then the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh will see together*” -- **vs. 5; 49:3; 60:1ff**
“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory”

Apostle Paul (**Rom. 15**) was the forerunner of the ultimate fulfillment of this missionary movement to the outlying Gentile nations – desiring to go where Christ had not yet been preached – desiring to go to Spain – God's glory had not yet been declared there; **Piper**, quoted by **Borgman**: “Missions exist because worship doesn't” – the glory of God must be the ultimate motivation for missions

B2. (:20-21) Fruit of Missionary Outreach in the End Times

1. (:20) People in the Role of an Offering to the Lord

“Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules, and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.”

Oswalt: This final ingathering of the Jews from around the world will be brought by the Gentiles as a precious offering to God. It is hard to imagine what more precious offering could be given

to him. The remnant of his own chosen people, now having come to their true fulfillment, will certainly be a priceless gift to him.

2. (:21) People in the Role of Priests Serving the Lord and Administering Worship
“*I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites, ’ says the LORD.*”

These are some out of the returning Jews, not the Gentiles

Motyer: In New Testament perspective, this final section [vv. 18- 24] spans the first and second comings of the Lord Jesus Christ: his purpose for the world (18), his means of carrying it out (19-21), the *sign* set among the nations, the remnant sent to evangelize them (19) and the gathering of his people to 'Jerusalem' (20) with Gentiles in full membership (21).

A2. (:22-23) Establishment of Kingdom Believers for the Recognition of God’s Glory

1. (:22) Enduring People of God

“*For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me, ’ declares the LORD, ‘So your offspring and your name will endure.’*”

Motyer: Guarantee of perpetuity – The blessings of salvation cannot be forfeited, because the Lord has promised that their “*name*” is as durable as the new creation itself.

Again, as we have mentioned before, there is a mingling of the references to the millennial kingdom period and the eternal state characterized by *the new heavens and the new earth*

2. (:23) Worldwide Worship

“*And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath, All mankind will come to bow down before Me, ’ says the LORD.*”

Motyer: Isaiah ends with the perfect keeping of the two feasts whose corruption distressed him in 1:13. They are feasts, not fasts: the days of mourning are over (65:17-19). Also, the emphasis throughout chapters 56-66 on the Sabbath arose from the fact that this is the commandment which more than any other necessitates the submission of the practical planning of life to the Lord’s timetable, a searching test of practical holiness (58:13-14).

Constable: Just as surely as God would create new heavens and a new earth (cf. 65:17), so He would preserve the Israelites (cf. 1:2; Gen. 12:1-3).

Parunak: In the opening summary of this passage (v. 18b), the Lord looked forward to the turning of the Gentiles. Now he promises that Israel’s position as his chosen people will persist into the New Heavens and the New Earth that he will establish after the present order is destroyed. This verse guards against any notion that the work of physical Israel ends with Paul’s mission to the Gentiles. Though the Gentiles lead the return and even participate in the temple ministry, Israel’s seed will continue before the Lord.

III. (:24) THE ESCHATOLOGICAL JUDGMENT OF THE LORD IS DETERMINED, DEVASTATING AND DESERVED – AND UNENDING AND REPULSIVE

A. The Judgment is Determined and Devastating and Deserved

“Then they shall go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me.”

Picking up the theme from vs. **15-18a** and then extending that theme with a couple of additional considerations

God will win out in the end; this is a passage about **accountability** before Almighty God and **ultimate destiny**

B. The Judgment is Unending and Repulsive

*“For their worm shall not die,
And their fire shall not be quenched;
And they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind.”*

This is God’s final answer to those who want to dismiss the concept of an eternal hell where suffering goes on forever and ever

Beall: **Two fates:** worship of the Lord in the new heavens and new earth or eternal judgment for the wicked (66:22-24). That these promises are certain is emphasized in vv. 22-23, as the new heavens and new earth serve as a demonstration of the faithfulness of the Lord: they will endure. All flesh will ultimately worship the Lord (v 23). But the text does not end there. Those who are worshipping the Lord (v 23) will then look at those who are now dead, but while alive sinned against the Lord. Their punishment is eternal judgment. Jesus uses this passage three times in explaining that hell is a real place, where there will be eternal judgment and pain (Mark 9:44, 46, 48). To deny such teaching is to deny both the OT and NT clear revelation on this subject: hell is real, and the judgment is eternal, for those who reject the Savior.

Martin: This awesome way in which the majestic Book of Isaiah concludes points to the need for unrepentant people to turn to the Lord, the only God, the Holy One of Israel.

CONCLUSION:

Motyer: Remarkably, there is a cemetery beside the city. Always as they come to worship, the redeemed deliberately make themselves face (*go out and look*), vividly, horribly, the fate from which they have been spared. Such grimness is not out of place in these final chapters of Isaiah. On the one hand, they have been alight with the glory of the new creation, the new city and its new people. But equally, on the other, they have been solemnized by the note of vengeance (59:17; 61:2; 63:4), the winepress of the wrath of God (63:3), the fiery sword of judgment (66:16). It is consonant with this that the worshippers constantly compel themselves to face the consequences of the last battle as they *look upon the dead bodies*. It is frivolous and wanton to think of the pilgrims “gloating.” In the truest sense of the word, the scene is too awful in its ceaseless corruption (*their worm will not die*) and unending holy wrath (*nor will their fire be quenched*). The cause of it all is that they rebelled against me. . .

For certain, the purpose of visiting the cemetery is not to gloat, not even to pity but to be repelled. To see and constantly refresh the memory that these are the consequences of rebellion,

and so to turn in revulsion from such a thing and to be newly motivated to obedience by seeing that the wages of sin are indeed death. There is a grandeur about Isaiah not found elsewhere even in the most majestic of the rest of Scripture, a majesty full of gory and of solemnity, plain alike in the revelation vouchsafed to him and the language in which he was inspired to express it. But with the grandeur went a stern resoluteness, that if the glory does not win us to the life of obedience, if visions of the coming King, the sin-bearing Servant

and the liberating Anointed Conqueror will not suffice, then maybe the unmistakably horrible rewards of disobedience will drive our wayward hearts to tremble at the word of the Lord.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Track the imagery of fire and whirlwind and sword of God's fury throughout Scripture. How are these appropriate symbols for the outpouring of God's wrath in the end times?
- 2) What are the possible interpretations of the "sign" that the Lord says He will establish in the last times?
- 3) Why is it so important to God that all mankind come to bow the knee in submission to His lordship and dominion?
- 4) If hell is a place of eternal punishment, why are there so many biblical passages and imagery that seem to depict destruction of the wicked?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Constable: This pericope concludes the sections on the culmination of Israel's future (65:17—66:24), Israel's future transformation (chs. 56—66), Israel's hope (chs. 40—66), and the whole book—Yahweh's salvation. Like 56:1-8, it clarifies the difference between being a true servant of the Lord and one of His enemies, i.e., a rebel.

Oswalt: God does not deliver his servants so that they can revel in the experience of sharing his glory (cf. chs. 60—62). Rather, he delivers them so that they can be witnesses of that glory to the world (cf. 6:1-10). . . . This book is not about the vindication of Zion, but about the mission of Zion to declare the God whose glory fills the earth (6:3; 66:18) to all the inhabitants of that earth (12:4; 51:5; 60:9; 66:19). . .

Vv. 18-24 have a close affinity with **Zech. 12—14**, so much so that one could consider the Zechariah passage to be an expansion on these verses in Isaiah.

Dr. Richard Christen: When God Wins

Everybody likes a winner; Lord Jesus will reign as king of kings and lord of lords forever and ever; we like our sports teams to win; God is the consummate winner; look at vs. 22; a remnant of Jews will forever fulfil the promises of being in the land; God's program of redemption being

enacted right now; we are on the winning team; we are the overcomers by the grace of God; when it comes to pass you are going to feel real good all over; obey God and it will be health to your naval and strength to your bones; Deut. 28 – blessings and cursings set forth;

v. 14 – God wins with **final hope**

vv. 15-16 – God wins with **final wrath**;

vv 17-18 – God wins with **final victory** in battle over the false religionists; they pride themselves in their religious observances and holy days and rituals; but they will end up seeing God’s glory

vv. 19-20 -- God wins with **final kingdom rule**; God will have His missionaries out there throughout the world; the Jews regather; Jerusalem prominent; Jesus ruling and reigning; everything will come pouring into Jerusalem; Jewish worship restored in the Millennial; they will bring the sacrifices commemoratively like our communion (Ezek. 43:18ff; Jer. 33:15-18; Is. 58: 6-8; Zech. 14:16; Ezek. 20:40-41; 40:1ff)

John MacArthur: One view of hell that seems to be making a strong resurgence today among evangelicals is Annihilationism. There are slight variations, but it essentially teaches God will eventually snuff every unbeliever out of existence. Some Annihilationists make room for divine wrath, but they don’t allow it to extend beyond the lake of fire. In other words, they won’t allow God the full force of His judgment, which is eternal, conscious torment. For them, the lake of fire is what completely consumes and finally destroys sinners. Whether they see death as the end, or whether they see hell’s torments as limited in duration, the result is the same—a denial of the *endlessness* of hell.

“Wait a minute,” you protest, “what about all the biblical references to *eternal* flames and *everlasting* punishment? Doesn’t Matthew 25:46 say the wicked will go away into *eternal* punishment, but the righteous into *eternal* life?” Good question. For no good exegetical reason, some Annihilationists have understood the word “eternal” to refer, not to a duration of time, but to the quality of God’s judgment. It’s eternal in quality, even though it has an end. Other Annihilationists say “eternal” refers to the effect of divine judgment. That is to say, God’s judgment results in death—as in extinction, annihilation—which is a state of non-being that lasts eternally.

If you’re having a hard time bending your mind around that, you’re not alone. It’s hard to conceive of a sinner experiencing an eternal *quality* of judgment without it lasting forever. Matthew 25:46 clearly teaches that the duration of punishment and life are alike, both eternal.

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