



FAITH BIBLE COLLEGE

2 Timothy 2:15

*"Study to show thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needs not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth."*

BOOK OF ISAIAH



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Professor Ronnie Moodley*

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INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this section, the learner will be able to answer the following questions?

- What is a prophet?
- According to the Old Testament, how did a person get elected to this office?
- What character qualifications were necessary for the prophet to complete his function and role in the history of Israel?
- What role and function did he have to the people and the kings of the times in which he prophesied?

WHAT WAS A PROPHET IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

DEFINITION:

There are three words that are used to describe the prophets in the Old Testament:

- Roeh: 1 Samuel 9:9 "(In those days if people wanted a message from God, they would say, "Let's go and ask the seer," for prophets used to be called seers.) This word means a "seer".
- Hozeh: 2 Samuel 24:11 "The next morning the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, who was David's seer. This was the message:" This word means a seer.
- Nabi: The most generally used word for a prophet in the Hebrew language comes from the word "nabi" meaning "to bubble forth, as from a fountain, to utter". Psalm 45:1 "My heart overflows with a beautiful thought! I will recite a lovely poem to the king, for my tongue is like the pen of a skillful poet."

Note: The term "diviner", "kosem" (Hebrew word) was only used for false prophets.

The prophet therefore was a man who proclaimed the message given to him by God. As the seer, he would behold the vision of God and then speak to the people to whom he was sent concerning the vision or dream. Thus the prophet was a spokesman for God whereby he would speak in God's name and with God's authority.

Exodus 7:1 "Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pay close attention to this. I will make you seem like God to Pharaoh. Your brother, Aaron, will be your prophet; he will speak for you." He would be the mouth piece of God to men.

To Jeremiah, God said, ""See, I have put my words in your mouth!" (Jer 1:9).

To Isaiah, God said, "And I have put my words in your mouth and hidden you safely within my hand. I set all the stars in space and established the earth. I am the one who says to Israel, 'You are mine!'" (Is 51:16).

TITLES OF THE PROPHET:

Several titles provide insight into the role and responsibilities of the prophets.

- **Seer:** The prophet had spiritual insight which allowed the interpretation of present and future events. He saw things which were invisible to others.
- **Man of God:** This expression suggested an intimate spiritual relationship and identified the source of the prophet's power.
- **Servant of God:** The prophet, like any faithful representative was following orders and demonstrating obedience.
- **Watchman:** Like a lookout, the prophet was responsible for sounding the alarm and calling attention to the impending crisis (Ez. 33:69).

THE CALL AND COMMISSION OF THE PROPHET

The prophets of the Old Testament did not elect themselves to speak the oracles of God, but rather they were called and commissioned

- **THE CALL:**

The divine call and commission marked the beginning of the prophet's career. In all recorded cases, the details are striking and distinctive; no two prophetic situations being exactly the same, although all share important elements. Typically, the call was initiated by God and was often accompanied by one or more visions, along with some unusual or miraculous occurrence. Moses was called by God when the bush was burning (Ex 3). Isaiah was called when he received a vision of God (Isaiah 6). Elisha was called when he was ploughing a field. He was called by the prophet, Elijah (1 Kings 19).

- **THE COMMISSION:**

The call is always accompanied by a commission. The purpose is to enlist or draft the prophet to carry out a mission or duty—to do something in response to the call. Some prophets were reluctant to take on such responsibility, and therefore made excuses or otherwise tried to evade their calling (e.g., Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah). Other prophets were eager to carry out their task and hastened to do so (e.g., Isaiah, Ezekiel).

The basic commission that these prophets received was that they would obey God and speak the Words that He gave to them. Jeremiah 1:7 says, "... for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you." The prophet was to be God's ambassador or messenger and his sole duty was to deliver the message that God gave him.

THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHET

When looking at the prophets of the Old Testament, we note that the character that these prophets often portrayed was:

- Fearlessness: The prophets were fearless men. They denounced the sins of the times and called men away from idolatry back to God. They exposed the cold formalism of their religion and constantly reminded the people that the Only True God, was Jehovah. They were statesmen of the highest order. In spite of their opposition, they continued to speak the word of the Lord (for example Jeremiah).
- Faith full: They had faith in God and trusted in Him regardless of the circumstances that they had found themselves in (eg. Daniel and his three friends).
- Obedient: They were totally obedient to God and not man pleasers. They did the "work" of the Lord even though at times it brought them shame.

WHAT WAS THE FUNCTION OF THE PROPHETS?

1. THE WORK OF THE PROPHETS

To reveal the nature and attributes of God to man: Deut. 5:4-10 "The Lord spoke to you face to face from the heart of the fire on the mountain. I stood as an intermediary between you and the Lord, for you were afraid of the fire and did not climb the mountain. He spoke to me, and I passed his words on to you. This is what he said: " 'I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt. "Do not worship any other gods besides me. 'Do not make idols of any kind, whether in the shape of birds or animals or fish. You must never worship or bow down to them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not share your affection with any other god! I do not leave unpunished the sins of those who hate me, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations. But I lavish my love on those who love me and obey my commands, even for a thousand generations." Leviticus 19:1-4 "The Lord also said to Moses, "Say this to the entire community of Israel: You must be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. Each of you must show respect for your mother and father, and you must always observe my Sabbath days of rest, for I, the Lord, am your God. Do not put your trust in idols or make gods of metal for yourselves. I, the Lord, am your God."

To make known to men the laws of God: Exodus 20:1-5 "Then God instructed the people as follows: "I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt. "Do not worship any other gods besides me. "Do not make idols of any kind, whether in the shape of birds or animals or fish. You must never worship or bow down to them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not share your affection with any other god! I do not leave unpunished the sins of those who hate me, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations."

To call the people back to obedience to God's laws: 2 Chron. 24:19 "The Lord sent prophets to bring them back to him, but the people would not listen."

To exhort the people to sincerity in worship: Jeremiah 7:1-5 "The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, "Go to the entrance of the Lord's Temple, and give this message to the people: 'O Judah, listen to this message from the Lord! Listen to it, all of you who worship here! The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Even now, if you quit your evil ways, I will let you stay in your own land. But do not be fooled by those who repeatedly promise your safety because the Temple of the Lord is here. I will be merciful only if you stop your wicked thoughts and deeds and are fair to others;'"

To warn them of Divine judgment upon sin, both personal and national: Jeremiah 36:30-31 "Now this is what the Lord says about King Jehoiakim of Judah: He will have no heirs to sit on the throne of David. His dead body will be thrown out to lie unburied—exposed to hot days and frosty nights. I will punish him and his family and his officials because of their sins. I will pour out

on them and on all the people of Judah and Jerusalem all the disasters I have promised, for they would not listen to my warnings.' "

To foretell future events which God had willed: Jeremiah 30:1-3 "The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Write down for the record everything I have said to you, Jeremiah. For the time is coming when I will restore the fortunes of my people of Israel and Judah. I will bring them home to this land that I gave to their ancestors, and they will possess it and live here again. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

To foretell the coming of the Messiah, the Savior: Isaiah 9:6 "For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us. He shoulders responsibility and is called: Extraordinary Strategist, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

To record the history of God's dealings with men: Deuteronomy 31:9-13 "Then Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests, who carry the ark of the Lord's covenant, and to all Israel's elders. He commanded them: "At the end of seven years, at the appointed time of the cancellation of debts, at the Feast of Temporary Shelters, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place he chooses, you must read this law before them within their hearing. Gather the people—men, women, and children, as well as the resident foreigners in your villages—so they may hear and thus learn about and fear the Lord your God and carefully obey all the words of this law. Then their children, who have not known this law, will also hear about and learn to fear the Lord your God for as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

To record the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures: Exodus 17:14 "Then the Lord instructed Moses, "Write this down as a permanent record, and announce it to Joshua: I will blot out every trace of Amalek from under heaven." Deut. 31:22-26 "So that very day Moses wrote down the words of the song and taught it to the Israelites. Then the Lord commissioned Joshua son of Nun with these words: "Be strong and courageous! You must bring the people of Israel into the land I swore to give them. I will be with you." When Moses had finished writing down this entire body of law in a book, he gave these instructions to the Levites who carried the Ark of the Lord's covenant: "Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, so it may serve as a witness against the people of Israel." Jeremiah 36:1-2 "During the fourth year that Jehoiakim son of Josiah was king in Judah, the Lord gave this message to Jeremiah: "Get a scroll, and write down all my messages against Israel, Judah, and the other nations. Begin with the first message back in the days of Josiah, and write down every message you have given, right up to the present time."

To challenge a nation: 1 Kings 18:21 "Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How long are you going to waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" But the people were completely silent."

To rebuke the Israelite kings: 1 Kings 21:17-24 "But the Lord said to Elijah, who was from Tishbe, "Go down to meet King Ahab, who rules in Samaria. He will be at Naboth's vineyard in Jezreel, taking possession of it. Give him this message: 'This is what the Lord says: Isn't killing Naboth bad enough? Must you rob him, too? Because you have done this, dogs will lick your blood outside the city just as they licked the blood of Naboth!' " "So my enemy has found me!" Ahab exclaimed to Elijah. "Yes," Elijah answered, "I have come because you have sold yourself to what is evil in the Lord's sight. The Lord is going to bring disaster to you and sweep you away. He will not let a single one of your male descendants, slave or free alike, survive in Israel! He is going to destroy your family as he did the family of Jeroboam son of Nebat and the family of Baasha son of Ahijah, for you have made him very angry and have led all of Israel into sin. The Lord has also told me that the dogs of Jezreel will eat the body of your wife, Jezebel, at the city wall. The members of your family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by vultures." See also Daniel 5:17-28.

To reveal the power of God to perform miracles: Exodus 17:5-6 "And the Lord said to Moses, "Go over before the people; take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand your rod with which you struck the Nile and go. I will be standing before you there on the rock in Horeb, and you will strike the rock, and water will come out of it so that the people may drink." And Moses did so in plain view of the elders of Israel. In the nation of Israel, prophets were more important than kings, warriors or priests."

To reveal the enemy and his purposes: 2 Kings 6:8-12 When the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he would confer with his officers and say, "We will mobilize our forces at such and such a place." But immediately Elisha, the man of God, would warn the king of Israel, "Do not go near that place, for the Arameans are planning to mobilize their troops there." So the king of Israel would send word to the place indicated by the man of God, warning the people there to be on their guard. This happened several times. The king of Aram became very upset over this. He called in his officers and demanded, "Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?" "It's not us, my lord," one of the officers replied. "Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!"

To guide and strengthen the people: 2 Chron. 20:20 "Early the next morning the army of Judah went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. On the way Jehoshaphat stopped and said, "Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be able to stand firm. Believe in his prophets, and you will succeed."

PURPOSE OF THE PROPHETS

The purpose of the prophets during the Old Testament times was to:

- Proclaim the will of God to His people: God, throughout history has desired to have communion with His people. This can be seen in the account in the Garden of Eden and Ex 19:9 "Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a thick cloud so the people themselves can hear me as I speak to you. Then they will always have confidence in you." Moses told the Lord what the people had said."
- To predict that which God would bring about that they might know Him in His fullness: The prophets were raised up during the "dark age" of Israel's history. They were thus the evangelists of the day. 2 Kings 17:13 "Again and again the Lord had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah: "Turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and laws, which are contained in the whole law that I commanded your ancestors and which I gave you through my servants the prophets."

2. THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET

In most cases, the message was for the nation, its leaders, and the people generally. Often it contained warnings and threats, sometimes promises and encouragement. Inevitably there was a predictive element, as messages are mostly oriented to the future but rooted in the past. For the most part, predictions were morally conditioned, based upon the covenant between God and Israel, offering the choice between life and death, with success as the result of obedience and failure as the consequence of disobedience and defiance. Occasionally the oracles were pronounced absolutely, guaranteeing the future, whether of destruction or restoration.

The chief duty of the prophet was to deal with the moral and religious life of God's people during his time of ministry. This was usually during a time when the people were walking in disobedience to God. The message of the prophets, though prophesied by 16 different people, prophesied basically the same message. They prophesied concerning:

- Monotheism: There is only One God and He is to be worshipped.
- This God has a unique relationship with His people, who are to be His witnesses to the world. They are, therefore, required to live honourably and righteously. Social evils are passionately denounced by the prophets, and they make every effort to turn the nation from idolatry and wickedness.
- The worthlessness of religion without reality: Ritual means nothing to God. The fact that they are descendants of Abraham, members of the Hebrew Nation, and worshippers at the Temple does not impress God.

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- The remnant - a warning. Unless the nation repents they will be destroyed, and only a remnant would remain.
 - The promise of the Messiah: Out of this remnant will come the One Who will bring all nations to God.

THE THREE ELEMENTS IN THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS:

- It was a message that was directly to their generation (the current situation).
- It was a message which predicted their future. God allowed the prophets to predict three things: The failure of God's people to remain faithful to the covenant and the judgement which was to be the result of their disobedience. The coming of the Messiah and the Messianic kingdom which was to be established
- It is a message to every generation (including ours).

WHO WERE THE PROPHETS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

The Old Testament comprises of four distinct sections: the law, the history books, the poetry books and the prophetic books. There are 17 books which make up the prophetic section of the Old Testament. These 17 books are written by 16 prophets known as either a major or a minor prophet. (Jeremiah wrote two books, i.e. Jeremiah and Lamentations). Both groups consisted of equally great men with the Minor Prophets being classified as such only because of the length of their writings.

Major Prophets	Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Daniel
Minor Prophets	Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi

CHRONOLOGICAL GROUPING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

The 16 prophets who wrote the prophetic books found in the Old Testament can be classified in two ways:

- Firstly, they can be classified according to the people whom they were called to prophecy to. That is, the northern or the southern kingdoms. The Northern kingdom being the evil nation of Israel. The Southern kingdom being the more righteous nation of Judah.
- Secondly, they can be classified according to the time period in which they were written. For example: Before the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivity, during the Captivity in Babylon and after the Captivity when the remnant of God returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem. Depending on when they were written, depends on what message would be given.

PROPHESED TO...	PROPHETS	DATE
Northern kingdom (Israel)	Jonah Amos Hosea	862 BC 787 BC 785 - 725 BC
Southern Kingdom (Judah)	Obadiah Joel Isaiah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Jeremiah Lamentations	887 BC 800 BC 760-698 BC 750-710 BC 713 BC 626 BC 630 BC 629 -588 BC 587 BC
The remnant during and after the exile	Ezekiel Daniel Haggai Zechariah Malachi	595 -574 BC 607 - 534 BC 520 BC 520-518 BC 397 BC

PART ONE: PREVIEW TO ISAIAH

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this lesson is to be able to provide the learner with a basic understanding of the background history up till the time of the prophecies of Isaiah. The learner will therefore be able to answer the following questions:

- In what period did Isaiah prophecy?
- What was the religious condition of this nation at this time?
- Which other prophets spoke to the people of God during this time period?
- Who was Isaiah?

THE HISTORY AND RELIGION OF ISRAEL

1. THE UNITED MONARCHY (BC 1010-931):

- **The United Monarchy under David :**

The promise of an eternal kingdom (2 Samuel 7:16): The Old Testament is the story of God's dealings with the Hebrew nation - Israel - for the purpose of one day blessing all Nations. It is His story. Saul, the first king of Israel, had been rejected by the Lord and David was anointed and called to take his place. The Kingdom had split after the death of Saul into the North (Israel) and South (Judah) and only reunited once again during the leadership of David. God promised David that a Great King would descend from his line Who would live forever and establish a Kingdom of Endless Duration. "And your house and your kingdom shall be established for ever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16).

A turning point (2 Sam. 11): Unfortunately, David brought trouble to the Kingdom of Israel and, instead of impacting the Nations for God, "a sword" entered his house (2 Sam. 12:10). Seeds of disruption began to be sown by his sons which ultimately led to disunity once again and ushered in the ministry of the prophets.

- **The United Monarchy under Solomon:**

The Tabernacle had been God's "dwelling place" for around 400 years and Solomon was chosen by the Lord to build the Temple. Its brazen altar stood at the very place where Abraham had offered Isaac - on Mount Calvary itself. Its purpose was to unify Israel in their worship of God. The attitude of God's people towards the Temple played a major role in the message of the major prophets.

Solomon, the man blessed supernaturally with great wisdom (1 Kings 3:5-14) and who was promised the continued blessing of God if he walked before the Lord in integrity and obedience (1 Kings 9:2-5), failed to heed the warning of 1 Kings 9:6-9. His pride and ambition, vanity and compromise, coupled with

the misuse of his gift to build a great material empire (1 Kings, 4:22, 4:7-23, 5:13, 9:10-14) resulted in the collapse of the Kingdom within five years of his death. "And it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father" (1 Kings 11:4). The Kingdom had lasted 120 years - 40 under Saul (Acts 13:21), 40 under David (2 Sam. 5:4) and 40 under Solomon (1 Kings 11:42)

2. THE DIVIDED MONARCHY (BC 931-722):

It is from the death of Solomon to the reign of Jehu (BC 931-841) that we can see the following:

- **Disruption and ensuing hostility:** At the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam displayed a proud and arrogant spirit and the ten tribes to the North broke away and formed the Nation of Israel. Benjamin and Judah stayed with him and formed the Nation of Judah. God had promised that David's descendants would never depart from the throne and that these nations would reunite once more. Again, a major feature in the message of the major prophets.
- **A temporary alliance and the end of a dynasty:** The 19 kings that ruled Israel led the people of God into idolatry and Baal Worship. Eight of them died violently and there were nine changes of dynasty. Judah remained relatively stable with the one Davidic dynasty ruling from Rehoboam to Zedekiah. Most of her kings were also idol-worshippers, but some great reformations took place under men like Hezekiah and Josiah. The reign of Omri (Israel) ushered in a period of some eighty years of comparative peace between Israel and Judah and the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, fit into this period.
- **With the death of Jehu to end of Northern Kingdom (Israel) (BC 931-722):** After the death of Jehu, things began to improve politically and economically, particularly during the reigns of Jereboam II in the North and Uzziah in the South. At this time Israel entered into a period of great prosperity and relative peace, but also a time of great wickedness, social injustice, idolatry and moral degradation. It was during this period that the writing prophets, known as the 8th Century Prophets, made their appearance. These men warned Israel and Judah of coming judgment and it was not long before Assyria invaded Israel. Samaria, its capital, fell in 722 BC. Judah was invaded by Babylon in 586 BC, just over one hundred years later. The Kingdom (united and divided) had lasted just on 420 years.

BACKGROUND TO ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES

Isaiah prophesied in the days of the last four kings of Judah, the capital of which was Jerusalem, also called Zion. All were good kings except Ahaz. Note the mentions of Isaiah in 2 Kings 18-20 and 2 Chronicles 26:22, 32:20-32.

1. Uzziah (2 Chron 26, 2 Kings 15)

Uzziah became king at 16 when his father, King Amaziah, was assassinated following a military disaster. Uzziah was faithful to God for a long time, and during that time he and the nation of Judah prospered. Rising to power after a long period of decline, he restored to Judah much of the strength and influence that had been Israel's in the days of David and Solomon. He had a series of military successes against the Philistines, the Gurbal, the Meunims, and the Ammonites. He fortified Jerusalem, whose walls had been broken down just before he took office, and he built military outposts throughout the land as well. Being an inventor, he constructed turreted crossbows and catapults, mounting these in towers at his outposts. He was also active in agriculture, digging wells and planting vineyards throughout the land.

Unfortunately, later in his 52-year reign Uzziah presumed to alter the worship of God, placing himself in the spotlight by entering the temple and burning incense, a duty reserved by God for the priests only. A group of priests confronted the king, informing him of his violation. Uzziah became furious. While he raged at the priests he was afflicted with leprosy. Uzziah never recovered from leprosy. For the rest of his life he lived in seclusion, and his son Jotham acted as king during his absence.

2. Jotham (2 Kings 15:32-38, 1 Chron 27)

King Jotham ascended to become Judah's eleventh ruler while his father still lived. He reigned for 13 years while his father lived, then three more years after his death. Jotham's mother was Jerusha, who was the daughter of Zadok. Jotham followed the generally good example of his father. He built the upper gate of the Temple and did extensive rebuilding of the walls on the hill where the Temple was located. He also built cities in the hill country of Judah. He had a successful war against the Ammonites and received annual tribute from them for three years. King Jotham became powerful because he was careful to follow the path of the Lord (2 Chronicles 27:6). When he died, he was buried in Jerusalem, and his son, Ahaz, became the new king.

3. Ahaz (2 Kings 16, 2 Chron 28)

Ahaz, King of Judah, was 20 years old when he became king. He reigned 16 years. His father was King Jotham. Ahaz was one of the most evil kings of Judah. The history of this king can be summarized by the word "failure."

-
- His failure as a son: Ahaz's father had a desire to obey God (2 Chron 27:6). However, Ahaz had little regard for his father's devotion because he rejected God and is known as the first king of the Southern Kingdom who began making the images of pagan gods.
 - His failure as a king: He ascended the throne with a passion of idolatry. His evil passions were demonstrated in the corrupt changes he introduced to worship. Ahaz was very "religious." However he was religiously wrong! He rejected the true worship commanded by God. The Temple ceremonies were not acceptable to him. He adopted the worship of those opposed to God (2 Chron 28:2). Baal worship was typical of the Northern Kingdom. Ahaz encouraged it in Judah. He utilized the idolatrous sites and neglected the Temple (2 Chron 28:3, 4). Ahaz not only used the old sites but he created new ones (2 Chron 28:25). He introduced the horrible worship of Moloch (2 Chron 28:3). This was open defiance to God (Lev 18:21; Deut 18:10). He introduced the pagan worship of foreign nations (2 Chron 28:23; 2 Kings 16:10). He thought these foreign gods would give him victory. He subtly removed the brazen altar that was constructed after the design given by God for a new altar designed for use in a pagan Temple in Damascus.
 - His failure as a warrior: This evil king brought calamity upon his nation. God sent punishment in the form of foreign armies. Rezin, King of Syria defeated Ahaz and carried away captives to Damascus (2 Chron 28:5). Pekah, King of Israel slaughtered the army of Ahaz (2 Chron 28:6). The Edomites were victors and carried away spoil (2 Chron 28:17). These enemies had been defeated by Uzziah (2 Chron 26:2) but the weak leadership of Ahaz allowed them to regain strength. The Philistines invaded and took cities away from Ahaz (2 Chron 28:18). These had also been conquered by previous Kings (2 Chron 26:6). But they reasserted their strength and captured and occupied a number of cities.
 - His failure in death: The death of Ahaz was not significant to Judah. Ahaz was thought unworthy of the honor of being buried in the royal catacomb.

What was the reason for his failure? The answer is simple – "He did not do right in the sight of the Lord." By rejecting God's Laws and disobeying God's commands, Ahaz damned himself and his nation.

- The first step: He forsook the right way. He refused to follow David (2 Chron 28:1). He knew what the right way was but he chose to ignore it.
- The second step: He substituted God's commands. He licensed and encouraged idolatry. He did everything he could to promote the rejection of God. He walked in the "ways" that tried to improve upon God's order. He systematically rewrote God's Law and flagrantly broke the Covenant.

- The third step: He redefined fellowship limits. God had made it clear to Ahaz not to turn to Assyria, but the King chose to do so. Ahaz spurned God's counsel because the king wanted to go to Assyria. Ahaz demonstrated a trait common to all who follow his style – he trusted in man more than in God.
- The fourth step: He plundered the Temple of God (2 Ki 16:8,9,17,18). He had already dishonored God by rejecting the divine fellowship restrictions but he also desecrated the Holy Temple. The silver and gold that were set aside for God were used for himself.
- The fifth step: He set up a heathen altar in the place of God (2 Ki 16:10-17). Man will worship something – if not God then some god fashioned by human hands.

4. Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-20, 2 Chron 29-32, Isaiah 36-39):

King Hezekiah came to the throne in the wake of his father's disasters, and with the memory of the glory days of his grandfather King Jotham, who still reigned when Hezekiah was a child. Rightly concluding that these hardships had come upon Judah because they had abandoned God, Hezekiah instituted the most sweeping religious reforms of all the kings before or after him. As a result, during his 29-year reign he was successful in everything he did — no small accomplishment, given the very difficult times during which he reigned.

The consecration of the Temple: King Ahaz, bent on pagan worship, had closed the temple of God therefore making it Hezekiah's first act as king to reopen it. Repairs to the deteriorated structure were needed. Pagan artifacts were in storage there, and had to be removed and destroyed. The priests, once fired and now having changed careers, had to be recruited and retrained. But everyone took on the work with enthusiasm, under Hezekiah's skillful management, and the temple was ready to be used for worship in only 16 days. The temple was opened with a great celebration, sacrifices and music, the king presiding.

The reinstitution of Passover: When the Lord rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt centuries earlier, He had instructed the population to commemorate the rescue annually by celebrating the Passover in a national meeting at Jerusalem. However, Passover was only celebrated occasionally and half-heartedly. Hezekiah was determined to follow the Lord's instructions completely. He had come to office just two weeks before Passover, and since it took more than two weeks to prepare the temple, it was not possible to observe Passover on schedule. But Hezekiah didn't want to lose the momentum of the revival by waiting till the following year. There was an ancient law (Num 9:10-11) that someone who was unable to celebrate Passover at the usual time should celebrate it a month late. Hezekiah and his staff decided to invoke this law on behalf of the entire nation. Since Passover was to be celebrated by all Israelites, Hezekiah sent invitations to every town

in his own kingdom of Judah, and also in neighboring Israel. This forage into Israel was a crucial last-minute attempt by the Lord to secure their repentance, for Israel, long committed to evil, was destroyed three years later. Only a few people of Israel came. However, the people of Judah flocked to Jerusalem en masse, under the command of the charismatic Hezekiah. In preparation, the population cleared the entire city of its places of idol worship. The Passover lamb was sacrificed, the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread observed, and the public celebrated so intensely that they refused to quit, extending the festival for an extra week.

Removal of shrines: After the Passover, King Hezekiah sent the population home with instructions to comb the land, destroying all the pagan shrines, and also the local shrines built for the Lord, for the Lord had long ago forbidden worship in local shrines, requiring pilgrimages to Jerusalem instead. This showed Hezekiah's extreme commitment, for of many kings it is recorded that they eliminated pagan shrines but not the local shrines of the Lord. The shrines were eliminated, and the people returned home. Hezekiah even destroyed the bronze serpent which had been used as an idol.

CONTEMPORARIES OF ISAIAH:

Hosea and Micah were contemporary prophets of Isaiah.

Hosea was a prophet who lived and prophesied just before the destruction of Israel in 722 BC. He preached to the northern kingdom. Throughout the book of Hosea you will see that he refers to Israel and Ephraim. Ephraim was the largest tribe in Israel and sometimes the whole nation was referred to as Ephraim.

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, some having even speculated that he might have been a student of the prophet Isaiah. There are certainly several similarities in their two prophetic books (Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3) which are almost identical. He, like Isaiah, prophesied to the nation of Judah.

ISAIAH – THE MAN

Meaning of his name:

The name, Isaiah, means 'Jehovah saves,' or 'Jehovah is salvation', and through days of crisis and disaster greater than any before in the history of the people, his call was constantly to faith in the One Who alone could save the land. His role was ever that of inspiring and challenging the drooping spirits of the men of Judah at times when hope seemed dead.

His personal life:

His father's name was Amoz, and there is a Jewish tradition that he was a brother of King Amaziah; in which case Isaiah would be the cousin of King Uzziah. He was married and he himself called his wife 'the prophetess' (Isaiah 8:3). He had two children, one named Shear-jashub, which means 'a remnant shall return,' and the other Maher-shalhashbaz, which means 'haste ye to the spoil.' These names were given to them as portents of what was to come and also as a reinforcement of the prophet's predictive message.

His ministry:

- As a writer: He is the author of the book, Isaiah. His writing involved picturesque illustrations and figurative language giving vivid expressions to God's message.
- As a statesman in Israel: He spoke of the time when God would bring peace and denounces all foreign alliances (8:11-18).
- As a reformer: He denounced formalism (1:10-16), condemned sin and the false leaders.
- As a prophet: He foretold the future of Israel and the fall of the other nations (13-23). He prophesied concerning the Messiah. He described the coming kingdom and predicted the ministry of Christ (61).
- As a theologian: He dealt with the sovereignty and the holiness of God. He dealt with the need for cleansing from sin (1:18, 59:16). He dealt with God's exclusive power to save (55)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK – ISAIAH

THE PURPOSE OF ISAIAH:

- **To reveal God's feelings concerning their sin:** One of the purposes of Isaiah was to declare God's discontent with the sins of Judah, Israel and the neighboring nations. Almost all the Hebrew words that designate sin are utilized by the prophet.
- **To bring the nation to repentance:** Isaiah also prophesied to induce the people to abandon their disobedience in order to avoid the disaster that approached, an effort that only achieved limited success.
- **To provide future hope for the remnant:** His principal purpose may have been to establish the foundation for the hope and promise that would guide the faithful remnant of God's people in the future. Thus, the book is filled with promises of restoration and redemption, the assured coming of the Messiah, the salvation of all the nations and the triumph of God's plans in spite of the intervals of suffering

LITERARY FORM:

The book contains a multitude of individual literary types, often woven together in a highly artistic and rhetorically effective manner.

- **The judgment speech** where the prophet accuses the nation of wrongdoing and announces its coming doom,
- **The exhortation speech** where the people are exhorted to repentance,
- **The salvation announcement** which promises God's intervention for His suffering people
- **The disputation speech** where God responds to an accusation or complaint by His people and
- **The trial speech** where God argues His case with Israel or with the pagan nations.

The book contains prophetic messages, mostly in poetic form characterized by parallelism of thought and vivid imagery, and biographical material about Isaiah. Most of the judgment messages appear in chapters 1-39. The majority of the salvation speeches occur in chapters 40-66. However, it is overly simplistic to say that the theme of chapters 1-39 is judgment and that of chapter 40-66 salvation. In each of the major sections of chapters 1-39, the message moves from judgment to salvation.

THEOLOGICAL THEMES IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH:

The theological content of the Book of Isaiah is one of the high points of the Old Testament. The themes that can clearly be seen in this book are:

The Holiness of God

Paramount in the book is Isaiah's stress on the holiness of God. God is called "The Holy One of Israel." God's holiness is the foundation of all His dealings with the world. Because of this, Judah could rest secure; God would never do anything that was not just and fair. Isaiah tried to draw Judah's attention to the covenant (binding agreement) that God had made with His people. They were His. He might find it necessary to judge them for their sins, but He would never abandon them. If they got carried away into captivity, a remnant would return to pick up where their ancestors left off. In wrath, God would remember his mercy.

- **The holiness of God and sin:** His characteristic title for God is "The Holy One of Israel", used 26 times in chapters 1-35 and only 6 times in the rest of the book. Amos was known as the prophet of righteousness, Hosea the prophet of loving-kindness, but Isaiah is known as the prophet of holiness. That God was the Holy One was indelibly inscribed on his heart during his call (6:3) and remained a theme in his book. e.g. 1:4, 5:16,24, 8:14, 10:17,20, 12:6, 17:7, 29:23, 30:11, 31:1, 37:23. He is highly exalted above all creatures, as to be totally different from them, not only in His moral perfection (6:5), but also in His power, wrath, love, faithfulness and all His virtues (e.g. 29:16, 31:3). His holiness is the very essence of His divine Being and should cause people to be in great awe of Him as they worship.
- **The Majesty of God and judgment:** God has associated Himself in a special way with Israel (1:2, 5:1) and especially with the House of David (Judah - 8:13, 11:1). The Holy One of Israel requires His people to sanctify Him (8:13) by putting their trust in Him alone, keeping His commandments, and listening to His prophets. He is in covenant with them and their sin is, therefore, apostasy (1:2-4, 30:1-9) because sin is, first and foremost, against God. He denounced sinful worship (1:10ff, 29:13) and heathen worship (2:6-8, 17:7, 23:22, 31:7). He spoke out sternly against social injustice (1:15-57,21-23, 3:14,16, 5:7,8,11,14,22, 10:1, 28:7, 32:9). He preached against political sins and warned against coalitions with other nations, especially Egypt (14:28-32, chapters 18, 20. 30:1-7. 31:1-3).

A Holy God demanded a holy lifestyle of individuals and nations and judgment always followed sin. Isaiah warned that the long-awaited "Day of the Lord" will demonstrate to the whole world that God is in authority (2:10,11, 24:1-13).

The Coming Messiah

Perhaps the most prominent theme in Isaiah's message has to do with the coming Messiah, God's Servant. Four extended psalms, or poems, deal with the Suffering Servant of God. In them the ministry of Jesus is foretold (42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). The Servant is to suffer for the world, establish justice, provide salvation for the nations, be a light to the Gentiles, teach the truth to all who will listen, give sight to the blind, offer release to the prisoners, be a covenant to the world, treat the weak with compassion and care, dispense God's Spirit, bear the sins of the world, make intercession for sinners, provide the knowledge of God to those who seek it, and secure peace for all people. All of these dimensions have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

Isaiah's prophecies concerning the Messiah include:

- The history of Christ: His birth (7:14), family (11:1) and His anointing (11:2)
- The characteristics of Christ: Wisdom (11:2), spiritual discernment (11:3), justice (11:4), righteousness (11:5), gentleness (42:3), perseverance (42:4), radiance (42:6), compassion (53:4), meekness (53:7), sinlessness (53:9), greatness and saving power (53:11)
- The titles of Christ : Immanuel (7:14), Mighty God (9:6), Prince of Peace (9:6), Righteousness (32:1), Arm of the Lord (53:1), Anointed preacher (61:1) The mission of Christ : Illuminator (9:2), Judge (11:3), Reprover (11:4), Law giver (42:4), Liberator (42:7), Burden bearer (53:4), Intercessor (53:12)

Hundreds of years before the event, he prophesies that Cyrus will be a type of Messiah in that he will release God's people from Babylon and allow them to return to Israel (45:1, 48:14). This prefigures the great release of God's people from spiritual bondage. Messiah is called "The Servant of Jehovah" (Ch. 40-66) and is to accomplish total redemption through suffering and humiliation, Himself taking the burden of human sin (Isa. 52:13-53:12) and establishing Zion, the symbol of God's perfect Kingdom and Rule.

Salvation

Isaiah's name provides the theme of the book, "salvation is of Yahweh." This is most evident by the fact the term "salvation" occurs some twenty-six times in Isaiah but only seven times in all the other prophets combined. Because of this, Isaiah has been called "the evangelical prophet" because he says so much about the salvation and redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. In fact, more is said about the person and work of Messiah in His first and second advents than in any other Old Testament book.

In some respects, Isaiah is a miniature Bible. It has sixty-six chapters while the Bible has sixty-six books. The first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah correspond to the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament which largely anticipate the coming of Messiah. The last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah neatly parallel

the twenty-seven chapters of the New Testament because they speak a great deal about Messiah and His Kingdom as the Servant of the Lord. Chapters 1-39 speak of man's great need of salvation while chapters 40-66 reveal God's provision of Salvation in Messiah and His kingdom.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK:

The 66 chapters make up one of the longest books in the Bible. There are three major sections in Isaiah:

Chapters 1 through 35 deal with:

- The sins of both Judah and Israel that will bring down God's wrath;
- Object lessons for the Jews in how God deals with their neighbors;
- The instruments of judgment (Assyria, Babylon);
- Glimpses of the restored nations in a glorious future under the Messiah's reign.

Chapters 36 through 39 provide:

These chapters provide a historic interlude that shows God's patience toward Judah in not allowing them to be swept away by Assyria as had happened in the north. King Sennacherib is defeated by the Lord Himself.

Chapters 40 through 66 deals with:

- The nation of Babylon and how God will punish Judah by their hands,
- How God will restore His true servants (although just a remnant) to the land, and
- His plans for their marvelous future through the work of His Messiah.

KEY VERSES:

- Isaiah 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.
- 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."
- Isaiah 53:4-7 "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us

has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not
open His mouth; 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."

PRODUCT OF FAITH BIBLE COLLEGE

THE OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Part one: Prophecies of condemnation (1-35):

- Prophecies against Judah (1-12)
- Prophecies against the other nations (13-23)
- Prophecies concerning the Day of the Lord (24-27)
- Prophecies of judgment and blessing (28-35)

Part two: Historical material (36-39)

- Hezekiah's liberation from Assyria (36-37)
- Hezekiah's deliverance from sickness (38)
- Hezekiah's sin (39)

Part three: Prophecies of consolation (40-66)

- Prophecies of Israel's liberation (40-48)
- Prophecies of Israel's Deliverer (49-57)
- Prophecies of Israel's glorious future (58-99)

PART THREE: THE PROPHECIES OF CODEMNATION (1-35)

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this lesson will be to explain the reasons why God desires to bring judgement upon His people and the surrounding nations. Once this section has been completed, the learner will be able to answer the following question:

- What was the sin of Judah?
- What was the sin of Judah?
- What was the sin of the surrounding nations?
- What would be God's response to the sins of His people and the surrounding nations?
- What encouragement does the prophet Isaiah give to God's people?

The prophecies concerning the condemnation of the nation of Judah will be studied in five separate sections:

Section One	God's Accusations	Chapter 1 – 5
Section Two	God's Spokesman	Chapter 6
Section Three	Israel and Assyria's conspiracy	Chapter 7-12
Section Four	God's Judgements	Chapter 13-23
Section Five	Salvation, Word and Deliverance	Chapter 24-35

SECTION ONE: GOD'S ACCUSATIONS (Chapter 1-5)

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this session will be to answer the following questions concerning the first five chapters of Isaiah:

- Which people were the first five chapters of the book of Isaiah meant for?
- Why was this nation to receive these harsh prophecies?
- What was the condition of this nation at the time of the prophecies?
- What would be the outcome if the hearers did not heed the voice of God?
- Was there any hope left for this nation?

OUTLINE:

GOD'S ACCUSATIONS CHAPTER 1-5
The People of the Prophecy
Judah's Sin
Judah's Condition
God's Vengeance
A Call to Change
Future Hope for the Nation

1. WHO WAS JUDAH AND JERUSALEM?

Isaiah 1:1 "These visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem came to Isaiah son of Amoz during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—all kings of Judah."

The book of Isaiah begins with Isaiah identifying the people to whom the oracles of God were directed – Judah and Jerusalem. When we look at history, we are able to gain a clear understanding to whom, the prophecies of Isaiah were delivered:

- **Judah** was one of the two nations of the people of God. The first being the northern kingdom, otherwise known as Israel or Ephraim. The second, being Judah, the southern Kingdom. The nation of Judah was more righteous than the northern kingdom and were unlike their "brother" in that they encountered spiritual revival during the kings reigns. The kingdom of Judah was ruled by the house of David after the kingdom split into two nations.
- **Jerusalem** was one of the cities which had not been taken by Joshua in his conquest of the land of Canaan (Josh 15:63, Judges 1:21). It remained in Canaanite hands until it finally fell to David in the course of the victories which at last enabled Israel to enjoy that 'rest' from their enemies which had been entailed in the promise land (2 Sam. 5:6-10; cf. Deut. 12:10; 2 Sam. 7:1). David not only captured Jerusalem, but made it his capital. It

became a central place of worship as the Temple of Solomon was built in the city. It was here where the people of God would travel once a year to make the necessary sacrifices. It also was the capital of the southern kingdom.

God identifies them:

How did God identify the capital city and the nation of Judah? Isaiah 1:2, "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! This is what the Lord says: 'The children I raised and cared...'. To God the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Judah were not merely places, but they were people who had taken the identity of being:

- His children: He had become their Father. Exodus 19:4-6 "'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.'" Deuteronomy 26:18-19 "'And the Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; and that He shall set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken.'" Leviticus 26:12-13 "'I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that you should not be their slaves, and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect."
- Loved by Him: Deut 7:6-9 "'For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;" See also Deuteronomy 32:7-14. Psalm 78:68 "He chose instead the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loved."

2. JUDAH'S SIN:

Judah had been identified in the beginning of this book as being children of God, nourished by a loving Father. Yet if we just looked at these words, why would there be a need to bring prophecies of accusation against them? What had caused God to disapprove of those whom He loved and cherished? What caused the anger of God to burn to such an extent that He raised up a prophet to speak out against the nation of Judah – the more righteous of the two nations, Israel and Judah?

Isaiah 1:2 "...The children I raised and cared for have turned against me."

God's accusation against this nation and city was that they had sinned against God. In the next five chapters we notice the sins of this nation:

They had rebelled against God (1:2). Rebellion can be defined as being "The act of rebelling; open and avowed renunciation of the authority of the government to which one owes obedience, and resistances to its officers and laws, either by levying war, or by aiding others to do so; an organized uprising of subjects for the purpose of coercing or overthrowing their lawful ruler or government by force; revolt; insurrection. Open resistances to, or defiance of, lawful authority." (See: www.dictionary.net/rebellion).

Just as a child would rebel against the instruction of a father or a mother, so Judah had rebelled against the direction and the instructions of God and had decided to act according to their own way, their own understanding and their own wisdom. Countless times in his prophecies concerning the nation of Judah, Isaiah describes them as being rebellious:

- Isaiah 1:5, "Why do you continue to invite punishment? Must you rebel forever? Your head is injured, and your heart is sick."
- Isaiah 1:23, "Your leaders are rebels, the companions of thieves. All of them take bribes and refuse to defend the orphans and the widows."
- Isaiah 30:1, "'Destruction is certain for my rebellious children,' says the Lord. 'You make plans that are contrary to my will. You weave a web of plans that are not from my Spirit, thus piling up your sins.'"
- Isaiah 31:6, "Therefore, my people, though you are such wicked rebels, come and return to the Lord."
- Isaiah 63:10 "But they rebelled against him and grieved his Holy Spirit. That is why he became their enemy and fought against them."
- Isaiah 65:2 "'I opened my arms to my own people all day long, but they have rebelled. They follow their own evil paths and thoughts.'"

They did not know God: Isaiah 1:3 "Even the animals—the donkey and the ox—know their owner and appreciate his care, but not my people Israel. No matter what I do for them, they still do not understand."

Jeremiah said the same thing in chapter 8:7, "The stork knows the time of her migration, as do the turtledove, the swallow, and the crane. They all return at the proper time each year. But not my people! They do not know what the Lord requires of them."

They were full of sin and iniquity: Isaiah 1:4 "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward."

The Strong's concordance defines the term, "sinful" as being, from the word "chata" meaning "to miss; hence (figuratively and generally) to sin; by inference to forfeit, ... (causatively) lead astray, condemn: - bear the blame, ... loss, miss, (make) offend (-er), offer for sin, purge, purify (self)..." (Strong's Concordance no. 2398, Hebrew). The word, "iniquity" means a "grossly immoral act or sin".

The words, sin and iniquity, are found together in some form in about 70 verses in the Bible. Many times they are used parallel to one another, as in Psalm 38:18 - "For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin." Although we can be certain that they are synonyms and have the same basic meaning, there must also be something that distinguishes them. The word, sin, is the most general term for those actions which are wrong. One word picture looks at sin as missing the mark. If we think of this in the terms of an archer shooting for a bull's eye in a target, this may give us a good idea of the meaning of sin. He may overshoot the target. We do that when we go beyond God's allowed actions and commit what are commonly called sins of commission. That is, we do something we are not supposed to do. However, the arrow may also fall short of the mark. This would be a picture of sins of omission. This refers to the things we should have done but fail to do. The arrow might even go to the right or to the left of the target, but we are to follow God's word without turning from it to the right hand or the left hand (Joshua 1:7). Therefore, anything that comes short of the perfect glory of God (the center of the target) is sin (Romans 3:23). Sin covers all wrong doing of any sort.

In many places, iniquity also seems to be a word dealing with all kinds of sin. However, with iniquity, there is a difference. First of all, whereas sin deals with the action or lack of action that is wrong, iniquity deals more with the character or nature of the act. The word, iniquity, comes from in-equity and it refers to that which is unequal, unfair, or unjust. That explains why David in Psalm 32:5 refers to "the iniquity of my sin." His sinful actions had the character of iniquity; of being unequal. The Oxford English Dictionary says that it is used especially of "wrongful or injurious actions towards another, infliction of wrong, injury." To practice iniquity is to be unjust and unequal in our dealings

with others and God. We commit iniquity against God when we turn from Him to serve lesser gods. We do not treat Him right or justly when we fail to be obedient to Him.

They had forsaken God: Isaiah 1:4 "...They are evil and corrupt children who have turned away from the Lord. They have despised the Holy One of Israel, cutting themselves off from his help." Jeremiah 15:6 "You have forsaken me and turned your back on me," says the Lord. "Therefore, I will raise my clenched fists to destroy you. I am tired of always giving you another chance." 2 Chron. 29:6 "Our ancestors were unfaithful and did what was evil in the sight of the Lord our God. They abandoned the Lord and his Temple; they turned their backs on him."

How have they forsaken God?

- By their religious attitude in making sacrifices (1:13-14): The Festival of the New Moon was celebrated on the first day of the month with blowing of trumpets (Num 10:10, Ps 81:3-4). On this day people were required to bring their burnt sacrifices to God (Num 28:11-15). This was to be a day that was observed with great earnestness and seriousness (2 Chron 2:4). However, during the time of Isaiah, these festivals were merely observed because of outward appearance. Their hearts were far from God even when they were observing them. Isaiah 1:13-14 "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." Therefore though they were careful to observe the festivals that were part of the Law given to Moses, their hearts were far from God. It was mere formality.
- By playing the harlot: Isaiah 1:21 "See how Jerusalem, once so faithful, has become a prostitute. Once the home of justice and righteousness, she is now filled with murderers." Judah and Jerusalem had become a harlot - they had committed adultery (the Jewish people being regarded as the spouse of Jehovah). Idolatry can be defined as worship or reverence given to any created object or person. Isaiah 2:6-8 "The Lord has rejected the people of Israel because they have made alliances with foreigners from the East who practice magic and divination, just like the Philistines. Israel has vast treasures of silver and gold and many horses and chariots. The land is filled with idols. The people bow down and worship these things they have made." Isaiah 10:11 "So when we have defeated Samaria and her gods, we will destroy Jerusalem with hers." Isaiah 57:5 "You worship your idols with great passion beneath every green tree. You slaughter your children as human sacrifices down in the valleys, under overhanging rocks." Eze 6:8-9 "...How I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols. They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices."

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- They had explicitly gone against the command given to Moses, Ex 20:3-4 "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below." Moses again warned the people of God in Deut 29:18 "Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the Lord our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison"

They had been unfruitful: Chapter 5 begins with a parable (a story with a double meaning). In this chapter we see the love of a Gardener (God) for His Garden (His people). Isaiah 5:1-2 "Now I will sing a song for the one I love about his vineyard: My beloved has a vineyard on a rich and fertile hill. He plowed the land, cleared its stones, and planted it with choice vines. In the middle he built a watchtower and carved a winepress in the nearby rocks. Then he waited for a harvest of sweet grapes ..."

The story is about a vineyard that had many advantages:

- It belonged to a loving person (my Well-beloved).
- It was planted on a very fruitful hill.
- The ground was carefully prepared (dug it up and cleared out its stones).
- It was planted with good stock (planted it with the choicest vine).
- It was protected (a tower in its midst).
- Provision was made for the fruit to be processed (made a winepress in it).

However, there was a problem with this vineyard, "but the grapes that grew were wild and sour." (v2)

In spite of all the effort that had been given to this vineyard, all the love and the provision, it was disappointing to the Vinedresser. These wild grapes were not merely useless, unprofitable grapes, but grapes offensive to the smell, noxious, poisonous. Wild grapes means that the vineyard produced just what you would expect it to produce if nothing had been done to it. All the love, care, time, work, and investment resulted had no result.

Who was to blame for this harvest of wild grapes? Was it God or Judah? Isaiah 5:3 ""Now, you people of Jerusalem and Judah, you have heard the case; you be the judges." In the story, there was nothing left undone by the owner of the vineyard. He did all he could do. In the same way, God cannot be blamed at all for the wild grapes Israel brought forth. God did all He could do and therefore the fault lies with man, not God.

They are unjust: Isaiah 1:23 "Your leaders are rebels, the companions of thieves. All of them take bribes and refuse to defend the orphans and the widows." Jeremiah 22:17, "But you! You are full of selfish greed and dishonesty! You murder the innocent, oppress the poor, and reign ruthlessly." Isaiah 10:2 "They deprive the poor, the widows, and the orphans of justice. Yes, they rob widows and fatherless children!" Jeremiah 5:28 "They are well fed and well groomed, and there is no limit to their wicked deeds. They refuse justice to orphans and deny the rights of the poor." See also Ezekiel 22:7 and Zechariah 7:10.

3. JUDAH'S CONDITION:

As a result of their sin, Judah was no longer the prosperous nation that she had once been under the reign of Solomon. She was no longer spiritually and military strong as she had been under the reign of David. Now we notice her condition as being:

- **She has become desolate:** Isaiah 1:7 "Your country lies in ruins," The nation of Judah was lying in waste and was in ruins.
- **She is burnt:** "... and your cities are burned." (Is 1:7)
- **She has been plundered by her enemies:** "As you watch, foreigners plunder your fields and destroy everything they see." (Is 1:7). To plunder means to take goods by force, or without right; to pillage; to spoil; to sack; to strip; to rob; as, to plunder travelers. To appropriate forcibly; as, the enemy plundered all the goods they found.
- **She is besieged:** Isaiah 1:8 "Jerusalem stands abandoned like a watchman's shelter in a vineyard or field after the harvest is over. It is as helpless as a city under siege." To besiege a city, an armed force surrounds and isolates it, while usually continuing its attacks upon it. In general, siege warfare involves bombardment (anything from, in ancient times, arrows or flaming arrows, catapulted rocks, or even catapulted corpses of plague victims to cause epidemics among the defenders, to, in modern times, artillery and "smart bombs") and cut off of supply, which causes starvation and deprivation. It was usually only after the city surrendered, or was greatly weakened, that infantry entered. One of the curses that were a result of the disobedience of the people of God was that they would be besieged. Deut. 28:52 "They will lay siege to your cities until all the fortified walls in your land—the walls you trusted to protect you—are knocked down. They will attack all the towns in the land the Lord your God has given you." Who besieged the nation of Judah? Jeremiah 21:4 "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I will make your weapons useless against the king of Babylon and the Babylonians who are attacking you. Yes, I will bring your enemies right into the heart of this city." Jeremiah 21:9 "Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who go out and surrender to the Babylonians will live."

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- **She is poor:** Isaiah 1:22 "Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water."
 - **She is rejected by God:** Isaiah 2:6 "The Lord has rejected the people of Israel because they have made alliances with foreigners from the East who practice magic and divination, just like the Philistines."
 - **She is unprotected:** Isaiah 5:5 "Now this is what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will tear down its fences and let it be destroyed. I will break down its walls and let the animals trample it."
 - **She will not be cared for as before:** Isaiah 5:6 "I will make it a wild place. I will not prune the vines or hoe the ground. I will let it be overgrown with briars and thorns. I will command the clouds to drop no more rain on it. "The vineyard resisted and protested the "pruning" and "digging" and "watering" the owner did. So now, the owner says, "Fine. No more pruning or digging or watering. You will see for yourself if that is better."

4. GOD'S VENGEANCE:

Because of their sins and the current state of the nation of Judah and the city of Jerusalem, God's anger had burnt against them:

- Isaiah 1:4 "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward."
- Isaiah 5:25 "That is why the anger of the Lord burns against his people. That is why he has raised his fist to crush them. The hills tremble, and the rotting bodies of his people are thrown as garbage into the streets. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike!"
- 2 Kings 22:13 "Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."
- 2 Kings 22:17 "Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched."

WHO WILL BRING THIS VENGEANCE?

Isaiah 1:24 "Therefore, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, says, "I will pour out my fury on you, my enemies!" It is customary for Isaiah to string God's names together as he opens with judgment. The meaning of the names of God gives us a foundational knowledge of Him and studying them can give us a better understanding of the God we serve. Verse 24 contains a string of these descriptive names:

- The Lord: "Adon", translated Lord means lord or master. He is the Lord of Lords, meaning the greatest of all. In this passage "the Lord" serves to show that He is the absolute master of all things.
- God of Hosts: The "God of Hosts", literally "the Lord of Armies", refers to the Lord's great power in warfare. In times past His power was shown in protecting and delivering Israel, but He is now getting ready to show His power and strength in judgment against them.
- The Mighty One of Israel: In the designation "Mighty One of Israel", God declares His attachment to the nation He birthed and has raised up.

WHO WOULD HIS JUDGEMENT BE AGAINST?

God's anger had therefore been kindled against the people and therefore He was prophesying through Isaiah that judgement was about to come upon the people of Judah and Jerusalem if they refused to turn from their ways and if they continued in their sin and wickedness. In the first five chapters, this judgement of God is described as coming:

- Against those who are proud: Isaiah 2:11-17 "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Isaiah 5:15 "And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled:"

Why is pride so sinful? Pride is giving ourselves the credit for something that God has accomplished. Pride is taking the glory that belongs to God alone and giving it to ourselves. Pride is essentially self-worship. Anything we accomplish in this world would not have been possible were it not for God enabling and sustaining us. Satan fell and was cast out of heaven as a result of pride (Isaiah 14). The nation of Judah was falling into pride and

was forgetting the benefits and the care that God had given them (Isaiah 5).

The Psalmist said, Psalm 103:1-5 "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

- Against idols and idolatry: Isaiah 2:18 "Idols will be utterly abolished and destroyed." Isaiah 2:20-21 "They will abandon their gold and silver idols to the moles and bats. They will crawl into caverns and hide among the jagged rocks at the tops of cliffs. In this way, they will try to escape the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty as he rises to shake the earth."
- Against leaders: Isaiah 3:1-3 "The Lord, the Lord Almighty, will cut off the supplies of food and water from Jerusalem and Judah. He will destroy all the nation's leaders—the heroes, soldiers, judges, prophets, diviners, elders, army officers, honorable citizens, advisers, skilled magicians, and expert enchanters." Isaiah 3:14-15 "The leaders and the princes will be the first to feel the Lord's judgment. You have ruined Israel, which is my vineyard. You have taken advantage of the poor, filling your barns with grain extorted from helpless people. How dare you grind my people into the dust like that!" demands the Lord, the Lord Almighty."

God was going to judge those who were placed in leadership because these were the people who were to be responsible in teaching the people the ways of the Lord. These leaders however had not done this but rather they had instituted and encouraged false worship and idolatry.

2 Chron. 28:1-4 "Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. He did not do what was pleasing in the sight of the Lord, as his ancestor David had done. Instead, he followed the example of the kings of Israel and cast images for the worship of Baal. He offered sacrifices in the valley of the son of Hinnom, even sacrificing his own sons in the fire. He imitated the detestable practices of the pagan nations whom the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites. He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the pagan shrines and on the hills and under every green tree."

- Against drink and festivity: Isaiah 5:11 "Destruction is certain for you who get up early to begin long drinking bouts that last late into the night." Isaiah 5:22 "Destruction is certain for those who are heroes when it comes to drinking, who boast about all the liquor they can hold."

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- Against those who are unjust: Isaiah 5:20 "Destruction is certain for those who say that evil is good and good is evil; that dark is light and light is dark; that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter."

WHAT WOULD HIS JUDGEMENT BE?

They would be devoured by the sword: Isaiah 1:20 "But if you keep turning away and refusing to listen, you will be destroyed by your enemies. I, the Lord, have spoken!" This came to pass when the Chaldeans eventually took the nation of Judah captive. 2 Chron. 36:17 "So the Lord brought the king of Babylon against them. The Babylonians killed Judah's young men, even chasing after them into the Temple. They had no pity on the people, killing both young and old, men and women, healthy and sick. God handed them all over to Nebuchadnezzar."

The hand of God will be against them: Isaiah 1:25 "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: ..." The hand of the Lord is used in scripture to mean, something which is good, for example, the deliverance of God (Ezra 8:31, Deut 11:2, 9:26) and secondly, the judgement of God (1 Sam 5:11, Amos 1:8). Here in this scripture we note that the "hand" of God is related to the second use of the phrase, the judgement of God. Isaiah speaks of the hand of God purging the people of God, that is bringing them to a place of pureness and cleanness through a refining process as a goldsmith would do with gold that has just been mined. Here the hand of God is seen as cleaning:

- "Dross": Dross is the impurities of silver separated from silver or gold during the process of refining or melting. Proverbs 25:4 "Remove the dross from silver, and the sterling will be ready for the silversmith." Ezekiel 22:18-19 "'Son of man, the people of Israel are the worthless slag that remains after silver is smelted. They are the dross that is left over—a useless mixture of copper, tin, iron, and lead. So give them this message from the Sovereign Lord: Because you are all worthless slag, I will bring you to my crucible in Jerusalem.'"
- "Tin" or "alloy": Tin or alloy is any combination or compound of metals fused together. Therefore when God spoke of the purging of their tin, He was referring to that which had been mixed with their pure commitment and covenant with God. Every reference concerning the construction of the tabernacle and the Temple was related to "pure gold" (See Ex 37). That is gold that was not contaminated by any other metal. Purity is the state of being or process of becoming free of inferior elements or ritual uncleanness. It means to be "flawless" gold. In the Old Testament we note that the "purity" of a person would qualify one to participate in worship, an activity central to the life of ancient Israel. Breaking that purity was a serious matter.

They will be consumed: Isaiah 1:28-31 "But all sinners will be completely destroyed, for they refuse to come to the Lord. Shame will cover you when you think of the times you offered sacrifices to idols in your groves of sacred oaks. You will blush when you think of all the sins you committed in your sacred gardens. You will wither away like an oak or garden without water. The strongest among you will disappear like burning straw. Your evil deeds are the spark that will set the straw on fire, and no one will be able to put it out." Isaiah 5:5 "Now this is what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will tear down its fences and let it be destroyed. I will break down its walls and let the animals trample it." We see these words coming to pass when the Babylonians burnt the Temple and broke the walls of Jerusalem. 2 Chron. 36:19 "Then his army set fire to the Temple of God, broke down the walls of Jerusalem, burned all the palaces, and completely destroyed everything of value."

They will be shamed and will have a change in position: Isaiah 3:16-17 "Next the Lord will judge the women of Jerusalem, who walk around with their noses in the air, with tinkling ornaments on their ankles. Their eyes rove among the crowds, flirting with the men. The Lord will send a plague of scabs to ornament their heads. Yes, the Lord will make them bald for all to see!" Isaiah 3:24 "Instead of smelling of sweet perfume, they will stink. They will wear ropes for sashes, and their well-set hair will fall out. They will wear rough sackcloth instead of rich robes. Their beauty will be gone. Only shame will be left to them." Here we notice that there would be a change of position from those who are proud to those who are in mourning at the captivity of the nation. Micah 1:16 "Weep, you people of Judah! Shave your heads in sorrow, for the children you love will be snatched away, and you will never see them again. Make yourselves as bald as an eagle, for your little ones will be exiled to distant lands."

Their riches would be taken away: Isaiah 3:18-23 "The Lord will strip away their artful beauty—their ornaments, headbands, and crescent necklaces; their earrings, bracelets, and veils of shimmering gauze. Gone will be their scarves, ankle chains, sashes, perfumes, and charms; their rings, jewels, party clothes, gowns, capes, and purses; their mirrors, linen garments, head ornaments, and shawls."

5. CALL TO CHANGE THEIR WAYS:

Because of their sins and the coming judgement that would come to the nation and the city of Jerusalem, God called His people to repent and change their ways. In these verses we notice that God has always saved a remnant, those who are willing to hear what He says and obey. The nation of Judah would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah, a nation completely destroyed by God, however some were willing to repent and therefore a remnant was preserved. Isaiah 1:9, "If the Lord Almighty had not spared a few of us, we would have been wiped out as completely as Sodom and Gomorrah."

We also notice in these verses, that though God's anger had been kindled because of the sins of the people, He was still tender hearted towards Judah. He did not want anyone to perish because of their sin. 2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent."

WHAT WAS REQUIRED OF THIS REMNANT?

They needed to wash their hearts: Isaiah 1:16 "Wash yourselves and be clean! Let me no longer see your evil deeds. Give up your wicked ways." Just as a person would wash and cleanse himself from natural dirt and impurities, so now, the remnant, those who are willing to obey, are to wash their heart from unrighteousness. Jeremiah 4:14 "O Jerusalem, cleanse your hearts that you may be saved. How long will you harbor your evil thoughts?"

Because Isaiah wanted Judah to turn from their unrighteous ways, he not only diagnosed Judah's sinful condition, but he also gave the solution. If they were to engage in true service and worship they had to first and foremost genuinely repent. They had to stop sinning and seek to live by God's instructions. Once they repented, it would be God who would do the cleansing – Psalm 51:7 "Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us argue this out," says the Lord. "No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool."

- Isaiah exhorts them with the command to "learn to do good". It is as though they had to begin anew and be reminded of Moses' words to the nation: Deuteronomy 6:4-7 ""Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." They were now paying the price for not having passed God's teaching from one generation to the next and so they had to be reminded of God's basic instructions. These instructions were for each one individually. A nation cannot repent until the individuals who make up that nation repent.
- Judah was to pursue justice in every area of life. The three specific examples given were those of general oppression of others and ill treatment of orphans and the widowed. They were not to cause anyone mental or spiritual distress by way of abuse or reckless use of authority. And those who were helpless and weak, such as the orphan and widow, were to be treated fairly. Interestingly, James defines true religion in very similar terms: James 1:27 ""This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep

oneself unstained by the world." These were part of God's social justice, which could only be corrected with a heart change.

They needed to be willing to obey God: Isaiah 1:19 "If you will only obey me and let me help you, then you will have plenty to eat." The reference here refers back to the blessings and the curses that were given in Deuteronomy 28. In this chapter, God spoke to the nation of Israel concerning their obedience. If they were obedient to follow the statutes and the laws which God had given through Moses then part of their blessing would be:

- Deut. 28:4 "You will be blessed with many children and productive fields. You will be blessed with fertile herds and flocks."
- Deut. 28:5 "You will be blessed with baskets overflowing with fruit, and with kneading bowls filled with bread."
- Deut. 28:11 ""The Lord will give you an abundance of good things in the land he swore to give your ancestors—many children, numerous livestock, and abundant crops."

They were to go to the place of fellowship: Isaiah 2:3 "Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Israel. There he will teach us his ways, so that we may obey him." For in those days the Lord's teaching and his word will go out from Jerusalem." In this verse we notice that this is the second time that the prophet Isaiah has issued a gentle invitation to "come" (Is 1:18, 2:3) to the place of fellowship with God. How can a person come? Psalm 15:1-2 "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." Psalm 24:3-6 "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah."

They were to walk in the light: Isaiah 2:5 "Come, people of Israel, let us walk in the light of the Lord!" 1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Ephes. 5:8-12 "For though your hearts were once full of darkness, now you are full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, rebuke and expose them. It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret."

6. FUTURE HOPE

Isaiah 3:10 "But all will be well for those who are godly. Tell them, "You will receive a wonderful reward!"

As a result of a remnant remaining faithful to God, God, through Isaiah prophesied about the future hope of the people of God. In these five chapter we notice that:

They will be referred to as being a city of righteousness: Isaiah 1:26 "Afterward I will give you good judges and wise counselors like the ones you used to have. Then Jerusalem will again be called the Home of Justice and the Faithful City." Isaiah 33:5 "Though the Lord is very great and lives in heaven, he will make Jerusalem his home of justice and righteousness." Zech. 8:3 "And now the Lord says: I am returning to Mount Zion, and I will live in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City; the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain.

They will have peace: Isaiah 2:4 "The Lord will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end."

MESSIANIC PROPHECY:

Isaiah 4:2 "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel."

In other references in the Bible, Christ is seen as being the Branch:

- Which was thrown into the bitter waters to make them sweet enough to drink: Exodus 15:22-25 "Then Moses led the people of Israel away from the Red Sea, and they moved out into the Shur Desert. They traveled in this desert for three days without water. When they came to Marah, they finally found water. But the people couldn't drink it because it was bitter. (That is why the place was called Marah, which means "bitter.") Then the people turned against Moses. "What are we going to drink?" they demanded. So Moses cried out to the Lord for help, and the Lord showed him a branch. Moses took the branch and threw it into the water. This made the water good to drink. It was there at Marah that the Lord laid before them the following conditions to test their faithfulness to him:..." In this typical illustration we see that the cross of Christ has changed our bitter situation (death because of sin) into a sweet situation where we can receive His life.

- Which was illustrated in the candlesticks in the Tabernacle: Exodus 25:31-39 "Make a lampstand of pure, hammered gold. The entire lampstand and its decorations will be one piece—the base, center stem, lamp cups, buds, and blossoms. It will have six branches, three branches going out from each side of the center stem. Each of the six branches will hold a cup shaped like an almond blossom, complete with buds and petals. [34] The center stem of the lampstand will be decorated with four almond blossoms, complete with buds and petals. One blossom will be set beneath each pair of branches where they extend from the center stem. The decorations and branches must all be one piece with the stem, and they must be hammered from pure gold. Then make the seven lamps for the lampstand, and set them so they reflect their light forward. The lamp snuffers and trays must also be made of pure gold. You will need seventy-five pounds of pure gold for the lampstand and its accessories." Here Christ is portrayed as being perfect (the number 7) humanity (the number six) whose responsibility it is to bring light. John 9:5 "But while I am still here in the world, I am the light of the world." John 8:12 "Jesus said to the people, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'"
- Which was illustrated as being a vine, Isaiah 53:2 "My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him." In John 15, we read of Jesus being the Vine, bringing forth the right fruit unlike the wild grapes spoken of in chapter 5.

What is the purpose of the Branch of the Lord?

Isaiah 4:4-6 "The Lord will wash the moral filth from the women of Jerusalem. He will cleanse Jerusalem of its bloodstains by a spirit of judgment that burns like fire. Then the Lord will provide shade for Jerusalem and all who assemble there. There will be a canopy of smoke and cloud throughout the day and clouds of fire at night, covering the glorious land. It will be a shelter from daytime heat and a hiding place from storms and rain

- To wash the moral filth and to cleanse Jerusalem of its bloodstains: 1 John 1:7 "But if we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin."
- To burn like fire: Malachi 3:2-3 ""But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal or like a strong soap that whitens clothes. He will sit and judge like a refiner of silver, watching closely as the dross is burned away. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold or silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the Lord."

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- To provide the nation with fruit (v2, v6): The Branch of the Lord will provide His people with salvation and redemption. He will be a tabernacle for those who desire shade and a place of refuge from the rain and the storm. Isaiah 32:1-2 "Look, a righteous king is coming! And honest princes will rule under him. He will shelter Israel from the storm and the wind. He will refresh her as a river in the desert and as the cool shadow of a large rock in a hot and weary land." Psalm 27:5 "For he will conceal me there when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock." Isaiah 25:4 "But to the poor, O Lord, you are a refuge from the storm. To the needy in distress, you are a shelter from the rain and the heat. For the oppressive acts of ruthless people are like a storm beating against a wall,"

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

TRUE OR FALSE QUESTIONS. (Record the Chapter and Verse where you find your answers.)

- God's own children rebelled against him.
- God willingly hears a person's prayers, even though his hands are full of blood.
- Being willing alone will enable one to eat the good of the land.
- The faithful city became an harlot.
- They that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.
- In the last days all nations shall flow unto the mountain of the Lord's house.
- God will teach us his ways, if we are willing to walk in his paths.
- There shall be a time when nations will learn war no more.
- The Lord alone should be exalted.
- Man's breath is in his nostrils.
- Jerusalem was mined, because her tongue and their doings provoked the eyes of the Lord.
- The reward of the wicked shall be given him.
- The daughters of Zion shall never be smitten.
- The blood of Jerusalem shall be purged by the spirit of judgment.
- The Lord's vineyard brought forth good grapes.
- In Chapter 5 Isaiah condemned strong drink.
- God will lift up an ensign to the nations.
- Isaiah 5:26-30 describes God's judgment upon his people by armies from foreign nations.

ANSWER THE COMPLETION QUESTIONS.

- Isaiah prophesied during the reign of what kings
- Toward what nation were Isaiah's prophecies first directed?
- What verse in Chapter I teaches most clearly the forgiveness of sins?
- To whom are the prophecies in Chapter 3 directed?
- What do you consider to be the greatest sin of the daughters of Zion?
- Give two words that describe the Branch of the Lord?

SECTION TWO: GOD'S SPOKESMAN (CHAPTER 6)

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this lesson is to learn more about the calling of the man who prophesied to the nation of Judah. In this session we will be answering the following questions:

- Who called Isaiah?
- Did he receive a divine calling or a calling by man?
- What changes needed to be made in his own life before he could fulfill the calling of God?
- What heart attitude did Isaiah have to the calling?

OUTLINE:

GOD'S SPOKESMAN (6)
Isaiah's conception of God
Isaiah's confession of guilt
Isaiah's cleaning
Isaiah's calling and commission

The people of Judah and Jerusalem were walking in sin, refusing to obey the commandments and the statutes of God. Therefore God raised up a prophet to speak to them the message of God for their time. Who did God call and commission for this task? - Isaiah. In the sixth chapter of the book of Isaiah, we are able to see the events that took place concerning his call and commission.

1. ISAIAH'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

Isaiah 6:1 "In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple."

When did these events take place? "In the year King Uzziah died"

King Uzziah of Judah had a long and distinguished reign, described in 2 Chronicles 26 and in 2 Kings 15:1-7. He began his reign when he was only 16 years old, and he reigned 52 years. Overall, he was a good king, and 2 Kings 15:3 says, "he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done." 2 Chronicles 28:5 says, "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 prosper." He was an energetic builder, planner, and general. 2 Chronicles 26:8 says, "His fame spread as far as the entrance of Egypt, for he strengthened himself exceedingly."

However, Uzziah's life ended tragically. 2 Chronicles 26:16 says, "But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn

incense on the altar of incense". In response, God struck Uzziah with leprosy, and he was an isolated leper until his death.

Isaiah was called in the year a great and wise king who had a tragic ending died. Isaiah had great reason to be discouraged and disillusioned at the death of King Uzziah, because a great king had passed away, and because his life ended tragically.

WHAT DID ISAIAH SEE? "I SAW THE LORD ..."

He is on a throne (6:1): Where was God in all these events? He was on the throne. In spite of the oppression, the sin and the consequences of the people's sin, in spite of King Uzziah's tragic ending and Isaiah's disappointment, God was still enthroned in heaven. Isaiah was not alone in seeing God's throne. Almost everyone in the Bible who had a vision of heaven, was taken to heaven, or wrote about heaven spoke of God's throne:

- The prophet Michaiah saw God's throne: 1 Kings 22:19 "Then Micaiah continued, "Listen to what the Lord says! I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the armies of heaven around him, on his right and on his left."
- Job saw God's throne: Job 26:9 "He shrouds his throne with his clouds."
- David saw God's throne: Psalm 9:4 "For you have judged in my favor; from your throne, you have judged with fairness." Psalm 9:7 "But the Lord reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne." Psalm 11:4 "But the Lord is in his holy Temple; the Lord still rules from heaven. He watches everything closely, examining everyone on earth."
- The Sons of Korah saw God's throne: Psalm 45:6 "Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever. Your royal power is expressed in justice." Psalm 47:8 "God reigns above the nations, sitting on his holy throne."
- Ethan the Ezrahite saw God's throne: Psalm 89:14 "Your throne is founded on two strong pillars—righteousness and justice. Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants."
- Jeremiah saw God's throne: Lament. 5:19 "But Lord, you remain the same forever! Your throne continues from generation to generation."
- Ezekiel saw God's throne: Ezekiel 1:26 "Above the surface over their heads was what looked like a throne made of blue sapphire. And high above this throne was a figure whose appearance was like that of a man." Ezekiel 10:1 "As I looked, I saw what appeared to be a throne of blue sapphire above the crystal surface over the heads of the cherubim."
- Daniel saw God's throne: Daniel 7:9 "I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white

as snow, his hair like whitest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire,”

- The Apostle John saw God's throne: Revelation 4:1-11

In seeing God upon the throne, Isaiah was being shown that no matter what circumstances affect the natural realm, God is still sovereign and He is in ultimate control. Nothing occurs that does not first have to be passed through Him. Isaiah may have been depressed or discouraged because a great leader of Judah was no longer on the throne. God in heaven now shows Isaiah, “Don’t worry about it, Isaiah. Uzziah may not be on his throne, but I am on My throne.”

The times were very serious for the nation that Isaiah loved. In those days, the death of a king would usually mean certain things. There would often be a revolution. There would be confusion and a lack of order too. Isaiah's people were afraid when they saw the empty throne. But Isaiah saw the throne of the great God. His throne would always be there. It would never be empty.

He is exalted high above (6:1): The throne was exalted and majestic. The throne set its Occupant in a superior position. He was unlike King Uzziah, He was “The Lord”. The name Lord” is used as a proper name of God only (Strong’s Concordance, H136). This name, “Adonia” was not used for any other god or idol, it was reserved for God only.

“The train of His robe filled the temple”: Kings of that time would wear robes with long trains, because they were difficult to maneuver and work in. Wearing a long train meant, “I am important enough that I don’t have to work. I am a person of honor and dignity.” God’s throne is the representation of His authority and power.

“He is high and lifted up”, this means; no one is equal to him. No one is comparable unto him. King Uzziah may have been dead but God was in full control. Isaiah had to learn a lesson, as it is written in Ps. 146:3 “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help”. Jer 17:5 “Cursed be the man that put his trust in man”, we are not called to trust in any man but God alone. Also, we read in Isa. 2:22 “Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he”?

He is present: “The house was filled with smoke”. We read in Kings and Chronicles, when Solomon dedicated the temple – the glory of the Lord came down from heaven and the presence of the Lord filled the temple. Isaiah had seen the same glory and presence of God. We read in Exodus 33:15 where Moses said to God, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here”. God’s presence with us means, all His goodness is with us. Moses knew the secret that if God’s presence was with him, Pharaoh could not harm him, the Red sea could not stand against him as a barrier and he could be a successful leader. God’s presence was necessary for Isaiah’s calling and commission. What God was calling Isaiah to, was not

going to be commended by the people of Judah, Israel and the foreign nations, he therefore needed to know that God had called him and that His Presence would go with him.

WHAT DID ISAIAH HEAR?

He is holy (6:3): Isaiah 6:3 "In a great chorus they sang, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is filled with his glory!"

What does it mean that God is holy, and holy in the highest possible sense? Holiness, at its root, has the idea of apartness. It describes someone, or something, which is set apart from other people or things. An object can be holy if it is set apart for sacred service. A person is holy if they are set apart for God's will and purpose. What is the Lord set apart from?

- He is set apart from creation, in that the Lord God is not a creature, and He exists outside of all creation. If all creation were to dissolve, the Lord would remain.
- He is set apart from humanity, in that His "nature" or "essence" is Divine, not human.

2. ISAIAH'S CONFESSION OF GUILT – WHAT ISAIAH FELT

Isaiah 6:5 "Then I said, "My destruction is sealed, for I am a sinful man and a member of a sinful race. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!"

What made Isaiah say, "Woe is me, for I am undone?"

Firstly, the sight and sound of the seraphim. When Isaiah saw the angels, in all their holy humility, obedience, and praise to God, he realized not only that he was unlike God he was also unlike the angels. They could cry out "Holy, holy, holy" and praise God so beautifully, but he could not because he was a man of unclean lips.

Secondly, the vision of the Lord: When Isaiah saw the Lord he knew what kind of man he was. As poorly as he compared to the seraphim, that was nothing in relation to how he compared to the Lord. Isaiah's deep sense of depravity is consistent with the experience of other godly men in the presence of God.

- Job: Job 42:5-6 ""I had heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."
- Daniel 10:15-17 "While he was speaking to me, I looked down at the ground, unable to say a word. Then the one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing in front of me, "I am terrified by the vision I have seen, my

lord, and I am very weak. How can someone like me, your servant, talk to you, my lord? My strength is gone, and I can hardly breathe."

- Peter: Luke 5:8 "When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you."
- John: Rev. 1:7 "Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him—even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the earth will weep because of him. Yes! Amen!

Thirdly, his view of himself. In seeing God in His holiness, Isaiah caught a glimpse of who he was, "I am undone", "I am a man of unclean lips" and "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips". Isaiah saw his sinfulness, and the sinfulness of his people, mainly in terms of the "lips". The Bible speaks of the mouth of a man bringing either life or death.

- By nature we stumble with the words of our mouth (James 3:2)
- By nature our lips are a "world of iniquity" (James 3:6) which can defile the whole body.
- By nature, our lips are full of flattery and false intent: "With flattering lips and a double heart they speak" (Psalm 12:2).
- By nature, our lips lie and are proud: "Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous" (Psalm 31:18).
- By nature, our lips deceive: "Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit" (Psalm 34:13).
- By nature, our lips are violent: "Swords are in their lips" (Psalm 59:7).
- By nature, our lips bring death to others: "The poison of asps is under their lips" (Psalm 140:3).
- By nature the mouth sets a trap: Proverbs 12:13 "The wicked are trapped by their own words, but the godly escape such trouble."
- By nature our lips cause destruction: Proverbs 16:27 "Scoundrels hunt for scandal; their words are a destructive blaze." Proverbs 18:7 "The mouths of fools are their ruin; their lips get them into trouble."
- By nature our lips stir up trouble: Proverbs 24:2 "For they spend their days plotting violence, and their words are always stirring up trouble."
- By nature our lips lie and corrupt: Isaiah 59:3 "Your hands are the hands of murderers, and your fingers are filthy with sin. Your mouth is full of lies, and

your lips are tainted with corruption."

- By nature our lips pretend to serve God when in reality our hearts are far from Him: Matthew 15:8 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away." Isaiah 29:13 "And so the Lord says, 'These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. And their worship of me amounts to nothing more than human laws learned by rote.'"

Matthew 12:33-37 "'A tree is identified by its fruit. Make a tree good, and its fruit will be good. Make a tree bad, and its fruit will be bad. You brood of snakes! How could evil men like you speak what is good and right? For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. A good person produces good words from a good heart, and an evil person produces evil words from an evil heart. And I tell you this, that you must give an account on judgment day of every idle word you speak. The words you say now reflect your fate then; either you will be justified by them or you will be condemned.'"

3. ISAIAH'S CLEANSING

Isaiah 6:6-7 "Then one of the seraphim flew over to the altar, and he picked up a burning coal with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with it and said, 'See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.'"

Even Isaiah had many things to boast till he experienced the holiness of God. After that experience he wrote, "... all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Is 64:6). The throne is for God; that is where He rules and reigns. The altar is for us; that is where we find cleansing and purging from sin. Isaiah's sin had to be burned away and therefore the fire of judgment was applied to the place of sin. This was obviously a spiritual transaction. In regard to Jesus' work on Calvary, our sin was placed upon Him, and therefore He was burned with the fire of God's judgment so that we could be free from our sin. Malachi 3:2 "'But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal or like a strong soap that whitens clothes.'"

As the coal touched Isaiah's lips, the angel spoke. 'Now you have no guilt. God forgives your sins.' These great words brought freedom to Isaiah.

- Isaiah 43:25 "I—yes, I alone—am the one who blots out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again."
- Isaiah 38:17 "Yes, it was good for me to suffer this anguish, for you have rescued me from death and have forgiven all my sins."
- Psalm 103:12 "He has removed our rebellious acts as far away from us as the east is from the west."

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- Micah 7:19 "Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!"

Only once sin had been dealt with was Isaiah ready to be called and commissioned to become the servant of the Lord. Psalm 51:10-13 "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach your ways to sinners, and they will return to you."

4. ISAIAH'S CALLING AND COMMISSION BY GOD

Isaiah 6:8-9 "Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to my people? Who will go for us?" And I said, "Lord, I'll go! Send me." And he said, "Yes, go. But tell my people this: 'You will hear my words, but you will not understand. You will see what I do, but you will not perceive its meaning.'"

THE REFERENCE TO THE TRINITY:

Throughout the book of Isaiah, there is proof and evidence of the Trinity of God, that is, of God being three Person in One. A three-fold personality existing in one divine being, the union in one God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three infinite, co-equal, co-eternal persons; one God in three persons. Just in this one chapter, there are two references to this fact:

- The first reference found in Chapter 6 of Isaiah is "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts". Many theologians believe that when the seraphims were repeating the word "holy" that they were in fact referring to the holiness of each of the Persons found in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is therefore with this in mind that they said, "Holy (is the Father), holy (is the Son), holy (is the Holy Spirit)"
- The second reference of this doctrine is found in verse 8 where God says, "Who will I send ... who will go for Us?" Initially in this verse we notice that the word "I" is used, speaking of the singleness and oneness of the Godhead. Later however in this same verse we see that the word "us" is used. The word "us" speaks of being in the plural proving that God is One (I) yet He is Triune (Us). There are three plural pronouns that are used in scripture to prove the Trinity of God – we, us and our. Genesis 1:26 "Then God said, "Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life—the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals."

GOD SAID, "WHOM SHALL I SEND, AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?"

God looked for someone to send. He wanted someone to go but in order for His plans to be made known to those in earth, He needed a willing person who would go for Him.

ISAIAH REPLIED, "HERE AM I! SEND ME"

Isaiah emphatically answered God's call. Free from guilt and shame, Isaiah did not hesitate to obey God and answer the call to go wherever God was going to send him.

What had created this kind of response in Isaiah, a willingness to be sent?

- First, he had a heart that had been in the presence of God.
- Secondly, he had a heart that knew its own sinfulness.
- Thirdly, he had a heart that knew the need among the people, the need for God's word.
- Fourthly, he had a heart that had been touched by God's cleansing fire.
- Lastly, he had a heart that heard God's heart to reach the nations.

Where was Isaiah being sent?

Isaiah 6:9-10 "And he said, 'Yes, go. But tell my people this: 'You will hear my words, but you will not understand. You will see what I do, but you will not perceive its meaning.' Harden the hearts of these people. Close their ears, and shut their eyes. That way, they will not see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn to me for healing.'"

Isaiah was to preach, but God knew their hearts would only harden. Jesus dealt with the same type of people when He came to preach to those who were lost: Matthew 13:13-15 "That is why I tell these stories, because people see what I do, but they don't really see. They hear what I say, but they don't really hear, and they don't understand. This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah, which says: 'You will hear my words, but you will not understand; you will see what I do, but you will not perceive its meaning. For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes— so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.'

What is the purpose of sending Isaiah if the result of preaching will only result in the nation hardening their hearts towards God? Firstly, so that when the Day of Judgment comes, they will know how hard their hearts have grown towards God. Secondly, because God has always kept a remnant who will accept the word from the Lord and make the change that He requires of them.

How long would he be on this mission trip?

- Preach until destruction comes: Isaiah 6:11-12 "Then I said, "Lord, how long must I do this?" And he replied, "Until their cities are destroyed, with no one left in them. Until their houses are deserted and the whole country is an utter wasteland. Do not stop until the Lord has sent everyone away to distant lands and the entire land of Israel lies deserted."
- Preach in hope of the restoration of a remnant: Isaiah 6:13 "Even if only a tenth—a remnant—survive, it will be invaded again and burned. Israel will remain a stump, like a tree that is cut down, but the stump will be a holy seed that will grow again." Romans 11:5 "It is the same today, for not all the Jews have turned away from God. A few are being saved as a result of God's kindness in choosing them."

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

Read Isaiah 6:1-7

- What was the location of the scene described by Isaiah and who did he see? (See also Exodus 33:20; John 1:18; John 6:46; John 12:37-41; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 6:15,16)
- What three-fold adjective did the seraphim use to describe God? (See also Revelation 4:8).

SECTION THREE: ISRAEL'S AND SYRIA'S CONSPIRACY AGAINST JUDAH (7-12)

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this section is to understand the events that would take place to Judah, Israel and Assyria during the reign of King Ahaz.

OUTLINE:

ISRAEL AND ASSYRIA (7-12)
The Message to Ahaz The Assyrian Invasion The Government of God The Destruction of Israel The Judgement on Assyria The Deliverance of the Remnant Judah's Hope in the Messiah

THE MESSAGE TO AHAZ (7)

THE MESSAGE OF AHAZ
War against Jerusalem The Lord's Sign

1. THE WAR AGAINST JERUSALEM (7:1-9)

The bad news:

Isaiah 7:1-2 "During the reign of Ahaz son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah, Jerusalem was attacked by King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel, the son of Remaliah. The city withstood the attack, however, and was not taken. The news had come to the royal court: "Aram is allied with Israel against us! ..."

During the reign of King Ahaz, Israel joined forces with Syria to come up against Judah as they were unable to make any impact as separate armies. They had said, "Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal:" (Is 7:6).

The tactic of this evil alliance was to:

- Vex the nation of Judah: To vex means to "clip off", to torment the people and to throw them into a panic and great fear.
- Make a breach with it: To "breach" means to rip open, to break and to divide.

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- Set up their own king in their midst: The king that they wanted to set in the midst of the nation was Tabeel, the name of a Syrian. This was contrary to what God had promised to Judah: 1 Kings 8:25 "And now, O Lord, God of Israel, carry out your further promise to your servant David, my father. For you said to him, 'If your descendants guard their behavior as you have done, they will always reign over Israel.'

The effects of this bad news:

"... So the hearts of the king and his people trembled with fear, just as trees shake in a storm." (Is 7:2)

The threat of these two armies coming together and fighting against the nation caused the king and the hearts of the people to tremble in fear of the consequences. Upon hearing this news, these people forgot where their comfort and security lay. Proverbs 29:25 "Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but to trust the Lord means safety." Isaiah 51:12 "'I, even I, am the one who comforts you. So why are you afraid of mere humans, who wither like the grass and disappear?"

God's counsel:

- Fear not: Isaiah 7:4 "Tell him to stop worrying. Tell him he doesn't need to fear the fierce anger of those two burned-out embers, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah."
- Ask God for the deliverance: Isaiah 7:10-11 "Not long after this, the Lord sent this message to King Ahaz: "Ask me for a sign, Ahaz, to prove that I will crush your enemies as I have promised. Ask for anything you like, and make it as difficult as you want."

Ahaz's reponse: Trust in Assyria

In stark contrast to Gideon, who repeatedly called for a sign from God, Ahaz was offered one, but chose not to take it. Isaiah 7:12 "But the king refused. "No," he said, "I wouldn't test the Lord like that."

The stubbornness of Ahaz reveals the weakness of his faith. For he would rather vacillate and compromise to meet the ends he felt was, rather than give allegiance to the Lord of hosts. Ahaz was given a chance to be a great and noble king. He started out with not doing right in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kings 16:1-2) however God was giving him an opportunity to make a change and turn to God in a situation that had become dire.

The record of 2 Kings 16 reveals to us how Ahaz responded to the threat of Syria and Israel. Isaiah had urged him, through the Word of the Lord, not to be afraid or concerned about Syria's power but rather to ask God for a sign of His great power. However, in response to their fear, King Ahaz asked the

King of Assyria to come and help him. This was a normal practice when a smaller kingdom was in danger – to buy a better army force so that the other nation backs down. 2 Kings 16:7-9 “King Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria with this message: “I am your servant and your vassal. Come up and rescue me from the attacking armies of Aram and Israel.” Then Ahaz took the silver and gold from the Temple of the Lord and the palace treasury and sent it as a gift to the Assyrian king. So the Assyrians attacked the Aramean capital of Damascus and led its population away as captives, resettling them in Kir. They also killed King Rezin.”

Instead of finding a solution in the power of God, he looked for solutions and ways that he was familiar with in his society. This is precisely the opposite of Gideon's approach to the battle (Judges 7). Ahaz looked to obtain the biggest army he could buy, while Gideon was happy to let God lead him to use a very small army. Gideon ultimately had a resounding victory, but Ahaz only bought a temporary respite. Ahaz was not concerned with putting the Lord to the test, for in his mind, he didn't need the Lord, for he had already taken care of the problem. He had arranged an alliance with Assyria who would help him with the threat of Israel and Aram (2 Kings 16:7-9).

What was the result of this evil alliance: 2 Kings 16:10-11 “King Ahaz then went to Damascus to meet with King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria. While he was there, he noticed an unusual altar. So he sent a model of the altar to Uriah the priest, along with its design in full detail. Uriah built an altar just like it by following the king's instructions, and it was ready for the king when he returned from Damascus.” Ultimately Ahaz's associations had further entrenched him in the Assyrian way of life, a way of life that was far removed from the covenant of God as it caused him to follow after false religions.

Instead of trusting in God, they trusted man to deliver them. Jeremiah 17:5 “This is what the Lord says: “Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans and turn their hearts away from the Lord.”

2. THE LORD'S SIGN (7:10-16) – MESSIANIC PROPHECY

Even though Ahaz rejected the sign, Isaiah told him of one anyhow. In Isaiah 7:13-14 “Then Isaiah said, “Listen well, you royal family of David! You aren't satisfied to exhaust my patience. You exhaust the patience of God as well! All right then, the Lord himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel—“God is with us.”

The sign given to His people would reveal His divine intervention that would bring salvation to those whom He had chosen to be His very own people. The Savior would be His own begotten Son: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Joseph heard the fulfillment of this promise in Mary, “she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Joshua (Jesus); for he shall save his people from their sins. ...Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1:21-23).

What does it mean that the Emmanuel has been born?

- First, it means salvation. Ahaz and Judah were full of fear and trembling because of the attack of an enemy. The Emmanuel is a sign of God's saving presence. The Emmanuel is a sign that God will deliver His people. Remember what the angel said to Joseph, the husband of Mary? He said, "give Him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). The birth of the Emmanuel means salvation from sin for everyone who believes (Rom 1:16), for everyone who opens their heart to Jesus.
- Second, the birth of the Emmanuel means that God will not leave, forsake, or fail His people. The name "Emmanuel" is a watchword among God's people; it is a word of hope. No matter how desperate conditions become we know that God is with us. Rom 8:38-39 says, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- Third, the birth of the Emmanuel means we have no reason for fear. "If God is for us and with us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31). Just before Israel fought the inhabitants of Canaan to take possession of the land, the Lord gave the people a comforting word of assurance: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them ..." Why not? "For the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deut 31:6).

The sign of Immanuel will come when "...the two kings you fear so much—the kings of Israel and Aram—will both be dead." (7:16 because the "... mighty king of Assyria will come with his great army!" (v17).

THE ASSYRIAN INVASION (8)

THE ASSYRIAN INVASIONS
Who did Assyria invade?
Could they escape their fate?
The Characteristics of the Invasion
What was Judah to do through this invasion?

1. WHO WOULD ASSYRIA INVADE?

Firstly, the nation of Assyria will bring judgment upon the evil alliance of both Syria and Israel. Isaiah 8:4 "This name prophesies that within a couple of years, before this child is old enough to say 'Papa' or 'Mama,' the king of Assyria will invade both Damascus and Samaria and carry away their riches."

This prophecy continues from Isaiah 7, where God assured Ahaz, king of Judah, that he would not be overthrown by the combined forces of Syria and Israel. God announced judgment against Syria and Israel, saying of their attack against Judah: Isaiah 7:7-9 "But this is what the Sovereign Lord says: This invasion will never happen, because Aram is no stronger than its capital, Damascus. And Damascus is no stronger than its king, Rezin. As for Israel, within sixty-five years it will be crushed and completely destroyed. Israel is no stronger than its capital, Samaria. And Samaria is no stronger than its king, Pekah son of Remaliah. You do not believe me? If you want me to protect you, learn to believe what I say."

Secondly, the nation of Assyria will afflict the nation of Judah: Isaiah 8:7-8 "Therefore, the Lord will overwhelm them with a mighty flood from the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria and all his mighty armies. This flood will overflow all its channels and sweep into Judah. It will submerge Immanuel's land from one end to the other."

Assyria would completely conquer the northern nation of Israel. The ten northern tribes would cease to be a nation after the Assyrians conquered them. But the Assyrians would not conquer the southern nation of Judah. They would "flood" them ("fill the breadth of Your land"), and "reach up to the neck", but not over their heads. Judah would survive the Assyrian invasion, but suffer much destruction from the Assyrians.

2 Kings 18:13 describes the extent of the Assyrian invasion against Judah: "And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. Yet, Hezekiah was able to keep the king of Assyria away from Jerusalem, and barely able to survive, by buying his favor with riches from the temple - even stripping gold from the temple doors to appease the pagan king!"

2. COULD THEY ESCAPE THIS FATE?

Isaiah 8:9-10 ""The Assyrians will cry, 'Do your best to defend yourselves, but you will be shattered! Listen all you nations. Prepare for battle—and die! Yes, die! Call your councils of war, develop your strategies, prepare your plans of attack—and then die! For God is with us!' ""

The victims of this Assyrian invasion, Syria, Israel, and Judah, could prepare for the invasion all they wanted. They could “gird themselves”, a term that was used to mean that a person was preparing himself for war by tucking his robe in his belt (see 1 Sam 25:13). However, all their preparation would not protect them but it would be broken in pieces. They could take counsel together, but it will come to nothing. All their plans and words and ideas would not stand for God is with “us”. God’s will was going to be done, despite all the plans and preparations Syria, Israel, and Judah might make against it.

Who is the “us” in this statement? Firstly, it refers to the nation of Assyria. The Assyrian army was God’s instrument of judgment against Syria, Israel and Judah. Secondly, it refers to the prophet, Isaiah, because the words that he was recording and sealing, will come to pass.

3. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS INVASION?

God’s judgment will be swift (8:1-4): Maher-shalal-hash-baz, a son of the prophet, was to be a sign to the nations. This name meant, “speed the spoil, hasten the booty” and speaks of the swiftness in which the invasion will take place.

God’s judgment will be irresistible (8:5-8): Here in these verses Isaiah prophesies concerning two rivers, Shiloah and Euphrates. Shiloah was the flowing stream or canal in the city of Jerusalem. The prophet was using it as a figure of speech for the legitimate Davidic empire, the theocratic administration of Israel. The people had rejected that and had turned to rejoice in Rezin and the northern coalition. So because they rebelled against the house of David, God would bring in the judgment, the River Euphrates. This river represents the king of Assyria and his armies, who will “flood” the land including Judah. The capital of the Assyrian Empire was Nineveh, and the city of Nineveh was founded on a great river: the Tigris. The Assyrian Empire was also centered across another mighty river: the Euphrates. The whole land of Israel simply did not have a river like the Euphrates or the Tigris. God is using the difference between the small, humble, yet adequate waters of Israel and the mighty, yet uncontrolled rivers of Assyria to make a point. It is as if God is saying, “You don’t like what I have given you? You persist in rejecting what I give you? Then I will give you something different, but you won’t like it either.”

4. WHAT WAS JUDAH TO DO?

Fear God and not Assyria: Isaiah 8:12-13 "Do not be afraid that some plan conceived behind closed doors will be the end of you. Do not fear anything except the Lord Almighty. He alone is the Holy One. If you fear him, you need fear nothing else."

At the time of this prophecy, Syria and Israel had destroyed much of Judah (7:6). Now Isaiah was prophesying to Judah that the armies of Syria and Israel would not succeed in conquering Judah, but the Assyrians (who they trusted to help them) would attack them and do much damage. In the midst of all this, it would be easy to let your heart or mind settle on conspiracies and threats. But God tells them not to. Instead of fearing conspiracies and threats, fear God. Matthew 10:28 "'Don't be afraid of those who want to kill you. They can only kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.'"

Why were they to fear God?

Isaiah 8:14-15 "He will keep you safe. But to Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap that entangles them. Many of them will stumble and fall, never to rise again. Many will be captured."

- Because He would be as a sanctuary to them: To those who would heed the voice of God through the prophet Isaiah, to fear God, God would be a refuge for this remnant. Deut. 33:27 "The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you. He thrusts out the enemy before you; it is he who cries, 'Destroy them!'" Psalm 27:5 "For he will conceal me there when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock." Psalm 31:20 "You hide them in the shelter of your presence, safe from those who conspire against them. You shelter them in your presence, far from accusing tongues." See also Psalm 46:1, 71:3, Proverbs 14:26, 18:10, Is 25:4.
- Because He would be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense: To those who do not heed the warning of Isaiah and fail to fear God and trust in Him, God will become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to them. They will "trip" over Him and fall to destruction. Psalm 2:12 "Submit to God's royal son, or he will become angry, and you will be destroyed in the midst of your pursuits— for his anger can flare up in an instant. But what joy for all who find protection in him!" 1 Peter 2:6-8 "As the Scriptures express it, 'I am placing a stone in Jerusalem, a chosen cornerstone, and anyone who believes in him will never be disappointed.' Yes, he is very precious to you who believe. But for those who reject him, 'The stone that was rejected by the builders has now become the cornerstone.' And the Scriptures also say, 'He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that will make them fall.' They stumble because they do not listen to God's word or obey it, and so they meet the fate that has been planned for them."

Wait on the Lord: Isaiah 8:17 "I will wait for the Lord to help us, though he has turned away from the people of Israel. My only hope is in him." Waiting on the Lord is not a passive inactivity, it is active. It involves waiting on the Lord as a waiter would wait on a table. It means to be totally attentive, focused on His every move, and responsive to His every desire. It is waiting and watching for His next move. At the time Isaiah spoke, the leaders and the people of Judah were waiting on the armies of Israel and Syria, because they were under attack. As they heard of the danger from the Assyrians, they would be tempted to put their focus on them. But their focus was on these armies, not on the Lord and therefore they needed to reconsider this position, and refocus on God.

Seek God's Word and His light: Isaiah 8:19-22 "So why are you trying to find out the future by consulting mediums and psychics? Do not listen to their whisperings and mutterings. Can the living find out the future from the dead? Why not ask your God? "Check their predictions against my testimony," says the Lord. "If their predictions are different from mine, it is because there is no light or truth in them. My people will be led away as captives, weary and hungry. And because they are hungry, they will rage and shake their fists at heaven and curse their king and their God. Wherever they look, there will be trouble and anguish and dark despair. They will be thrown out into the darkness."

In the present and future predicament of Judah, Judah might be tempted to seek out guidance and comfort from the mediums and the wizards, but God through Isaiah, encouraged the people to seek "the law and the testimonies" (v20). The Law of God refers to His holy commands and His testimony refers to His dealings with His people as it has been recorded in the Word. There was ample proof as they looked at His testimony of how He had loved, cared and protected the nation of Israel from the time of the great Exodus till that day.

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD – THE MESSIANIC PROPHECY (9:1-7)

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD
A change would come to their present situation
The change will come through a King

1. A CHANGE WILL COME TO THEIR CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES (1-5):

In this chapter, Isaiah declares that in contrast to his present age of war, gloom, and despair, there is coming an age where the people of God will experience light, joy, freedom and peace. Through this prophecy, Isaiah shows that the judgments of God are not forever, there is coming a time when their current circumstance will be altered. Psalm 30:5 "His anger lasts for a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime! Weeping may go on all night, but joy comes with the morning."

Malachi 4:2 ""But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture."

Light:

Isaiah 9:2 "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light—a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow."

The people of God had been walking in spiritual darkness because of their sin and their idolatry:

- Isaiah 59:10 "No wonder we grope like blind people and stumble along. Even at brightest noontime, we fall down as though it were dark. No wonder we are like corpses when compared to vigorous young men!"
- 2 Cor. 4:4 "Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them. They don't understand the message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God."
- Ephes. 4:18 "Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him."

JESUS WILL BRING LIGHT TO THE DARKNESS
John 3:19 "Their judgment is based on this fact: The light from heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil."
Matthew 4:16 "the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined."

Luke 1:79 "to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace."

John 1:4 "Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone."

John 8:12 Jesus said to the people, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

John 12:35 Jesus replied, "My light will shine out for you just a little while longer. Walk in it while you can, so you will not stumble when the darkness falls. If you walk in the darkness, you cannot see where you are going.

Ephes 5:14 And where your light shines, it will expose their evil deeds. This is why it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

Rev 21:23 "And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light

Joy:

Isaiah 9:3 "Israel will again be great, and its people will rejoice as people rejoice at harvesttime. They will shout with joy like warriors dividing the plunder."

In the present condition of the people of God, under the pressure of judgment from God and the enemies encamped around them, there was no great joy in the city. However, God was going to change this situation through the Messiah to come. Through Christ, the joy of salvation will be found with His people. The joy described here is extravagant. It is the kind of joy that comes at the harvest, or at the dividing of the plunder. Harvest was a regular time of joy in Israel; after a long time of labor in the fields the people would gather to eat and drink and celebrate. The Bible often uses the analogy of the harvest to describe the coming of the Lord (see Matt 3:12 for the harvest and winnowing imagery). It is a thanksgiving celebration for the completion of the harvest.

JESUS WILL BRINGS JOY INSTEAD OF TEARS

Romans 5:8-11 "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment. For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God—all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God."

Acts 2:28 "You have shown me the way of life, and you will give me wonderful joy in your presence."

Isaiah 12:2-4 "See, God has come to save me. I will trust in him and not be afraid. The Lord God is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." With joy you will drink deeply from the fountain of salvation! In that wonderful day you will sing: "Thank the Lord! Praise his name! Tell the world what he has done. Oh, how mighty he is!"

Psalms 51:12 "Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you."

Freedom:

Isaiah 9:4 "For God will break the chains that bind his people and the whip that scourges them, just as he did when he destroyed the army of Midian with Gideon's little band."

Oppression and slavery were to be the results of the judgment that would come upon Israel. The nation of Israel would be taken in captivity by the nation of Assyria and eventually the nation of Judah would be taken into captivity by the Babylonians for a period of seventy years. However, these bonds would be loosened. Captivity and bondage would not be the final results of the remnant, God through Christ would bring freedom, not only from the oppression of a natural enemy but from the devil.

JESUS WILL BRING FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE

Luke 4:18 "'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors,"

John 8:32 "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Romans 8:2 "For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death."

2 Cor. 3:17 "Now, the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, he gives freedom."

Peace:

Isaiah 9:5 "In that day of peace, battle gear will no longer be issued. Never again will uniforms be bloodstained by war. All such equipment will be burned."

JESUS WILL BRING PEACE

John 14:27 "'I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid."

John 16:33 "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

2. THE CHANGE WILL COME THROUGH A KING (9:6-7)

Isaiah 9:6-7 "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end. He will rule forever with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David. The passionate commitment of the Lord Almighty will guarantee this!"

WHO WILL THIS KING BE?

- A child will be born into the family of David (see Matthew 1, the genealogy of Jesus).
- The Messiah will also be a Son that is given: Galatians 4:4 "But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law." John 11:42 "You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so they will believe you sent me."

TITLES OF THIS KING:

The various title names that are listed in this verse provide for us character descriptions on the Person of Christ.

Wonderful Counselor: "Wonderful" is a word that primarily describes Christ as being "extraordinary and marvelous". The second word, "counselor" means "one who plans". It means that He has the wisdom to rule. Isaiah 11:2 "And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."

Jesus' teachings and judgments showed that He was a great counsellor. His insight was supernatural—He knew what was in people. In John 1:48-51, He rightly analyzed Nathanael; He said, "I saw you while you were under the fig tree before Philip called you." To which Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel." He recognized the Wonderful Counselor when He appeared. So too did the woman at the well in John 4. She said, "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Is not this the Christ?" Or again, when the Jews sent men to bring Jesus bound hand and foot to them, they returned empty-handed. Their reason? "No man ever spoke like this man" (John 7:26).

Mighty God: Not only was Messiah to be wonderful in counsel, He was to be the image of God as no other was. According to John 8:58, Jesus identified Himself as the great "I am" of the Old Testament, the sovereign Lord God of Israel. In Matthew 24:30, He announced, "All power is given to me." In John 1:1-3, the Apostle John declared, "In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. He was in the beginning with God. He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn't make."

The Everlasting Father: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). Jesus is the expressed image of the Father.

The Prince of Peace: This last title means that the Messiah will be one who ensures for His people the blessings of peace. He will be a prince who brings peace. The Hebrew concept of “peace” is more than the absence of war. Jesus said, “Come unto me all you who labor ... and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28) and “Peace I give you” (John 14:27). The peace that Jesus brings is a peace that passes all understanding.

THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL: (9: 8-10:4)

THE DESTURCTION OF ISRAEL
Why was Israel judged?
Who would be the instrument of the judgment?
What punishment would be experienced?

1. WHY WAS ISRAEL BEING JUDGED?

Israel will be judged because she:

Is proud and stubborn (9:9): Proverbs 16:18 "Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall." 2 Kings 17:13-14 "Again and again the Lord had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah: 'Turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and laws, which are contained in the whole law that I commanded your ancestors and which I gave you through my servants the prophets.' But the Israelites would not listen. They were as stubborn as their ancestors and refused to believe in the Lord their God."

Is impenitent (9:13): Amos 4:9 "I struck your farms and vineyards with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured all your fig and olive trees. But still you wouldn't return to me," says the Lord. Jeremiah 5:3 "Lord, you are searching for honesty. You struck your people, but they paid no attention. You crushed them, but they refused to turn from sin. They are determined, with faces set like stone; they have refused to repent." 2 Chron. 24:19 "The Lord sent prophets to bring them back to him, but the people would not listen."

Has false prophets (9:15): Jeremiah 2:8 "The priests did not ask, 'Where is the Lord?' The judges ignored me, the rulers turned against me, and the prophets spoke in the name of Baal, wasting their time on nonsense." Ezekiel 13:2 "'Son of man, speak against the false prophets of Israel who are inventing their own prophecies. Tell them to listen to the word of the Lord.'" Micah 3:5 "This is what the Lord says to you false prophets: 'You are leading my people astray! You promise peace for those who give you food, but you declare war on anyone who refuses to pay you.'"

Has false shepherds and teachers (9:16): Jeremiah 23:2 "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: 'Instead of leading my flock to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them.'" Jeremiah 50:6 "My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray and turned them loose in the mountains. They have lost their way and cannot remember how to get back to the fold." Ezekiel 34:2-3 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds, the leaders of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign Lord: Destruction is certain for you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn't shepherds feed their sheep? You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve."

Is wicked and an evildoer (9:17): 2 Kings 15:9 "Zechariah did what was evil in the Lord's sight, as his ancestors had done. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit." 2 Kings 15:28 "But Pekah did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit." 2 Kings 17:2 "He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, but not as much as the kings of Israel who ruled before him."

Is unjust: Isaiah 10:1-2 "Destruction is certain for the unjust judges, for those who issue unfair laws. They deprive the poor, the widows, and the orphans of justice. Yes, they rob widows and fatherless children!"

2. WHO WOULD BE THE INSTRUMENT OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT?

The Syrians and Philistines: Despite the arrogance of Israel (Ephraim and Samaria) in their attempts to rebuild, the Syrians and the Philistines will come and devour Israel (9:11-12).

The Assyrians: Isaiah 10:5-6 ""Destruction is certain for Assyria, the whip of my anger. Its military power is a club in my hand. Assyria will enslave my people, who are a godless nation. It will plunder them, trampling them like dirt beneath its feet."

God was going to use Assyria as a "rod" and a "staff" to His people Israel. The rod and the staff were sticks used by shepherds to guide and correct their sheep. Therefore, God is saying that Assyria was like a stick in His hand, used to correct Syria, Israel, and Judah.

3. WHAT PUNISHMENT WOULD ISRAEL EXPERIENCE?

Brother will turn against brother, Manasseh against Ephraim (Is 9:19, 21): 2 Chron. 15:6 "Nation fought against nation, and city against city, for God was troubling you with every kind of problem."

They will become captives and prisoners (10:4): 2 Kings 17:6 "Finally, in the ninth year of King Hoshea's reign, Samaria fell, and the people of Israel were exiled to Assyria. They were settled in colonies in Halah, along the banks of the Habor River in Gozan, and among the cities of the Medes." 2 Kings 17:20 "So the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel. He punished them by handing them over to their attackers until they were destroyed."

THE JUDGMENT OF ASSYRIA (10)

In the previous section (Isaiah 7:1 through 10:4), the Lord revealed that He would use Assyria as an instrument of judgment against Syria, Israel, and Judah. But what about Assyria? Weren't they even more wicked than Syria, Israel, or Judah? Yes, the Assyrians were wicked and because of this, Isaiah prophesied concerning the judgment that God would bring upon them.

Isaiah 10:12-14 "After the Lord has used the king of Assyria to accomplish his purposes in Jerusalem, he will turn against the king of Assyria and punish him—for he is proud and arrogant. He boasts, "By my own power and wisdom I have won these wars. By my own strength I have captured many lands, destroyed their kings, and carried off their treasures. By my greatness I have robbed their nests of riches and gathered up kingdoms as a farmer gathers eggs. No one can even flap a wing against me or utter a peep of protest."

The Bible describes God's opinion of those who are proud and haughty:

- "A haughty look, a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked are sin. (Proverbs 21:4)
- "The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure. (Psalm 101:5)
- "For You will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks." (Psalm 18:27)
- Malachi 4:1 "The Lord Almighty says, "The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. The arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw on that day. They will be consumed like a tree—roots and all."

Isaiah in prophesying concerning this nation used the pictures of an ax, a saw, a rod, and a staff to make the point that the instrument should never take credit for what the worker does with the instrument. The scalpel can't take credit for what the surgeon does; the strength and the skill are in the user, not in the instrument. However, Assyria had become proud believing that the destruction that they brought upon Israel and Judah was their own doing – because they were powerful and mighty. Because of this prideful attitude God was going to:

"Send leanness among his fat ones" (10:16): Assyria sat "fat and sassy" at the time, but God would send leanness to them. His judgment will be like the burning of a fire among them, and it will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field. The Lord will leave Assyria just a shadow of its former self.

"Smite thee with a rod" (10:24): Exodus 14:16 describes how God used the rod of Moses to divide the Red Sea. In the same way, He would do something totally miraculous against Assyria. Judges 7:25 describes Gideon's victory over the Midianites "at the rock of Oreb". As miraculous and complete as

Gideon's victory was, that is how miraculous and complete God's judgment on Assyria would be. As it happened, this was exactly the case. 2 Kings 19:35 describes how God simply sent the angel of the Lord and killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night. When the people woke up, there were 185,000 dead Assyrian soldiers. God even took care of the king of the Assyrians according to His justice. 2 Kings 19:36-37 describes how when the king of the Assyrians returned home after attacking Judah, that he was murdered by his own sons as he worshipped in the temple of Nisroch his god.

Other prophecies concerning Assyria:

- Zeph. 2:13-15 "And the Lord will strike the lands of the north with his fist. He will destroy Assyria and make its great capital, Nineveh, a desolate wasteland, parched like a desert. The city that once was so proud will become a pasture for sheep and cattle. All sorts of wild animals will settle there. Owls of many kinds will live among the ruins of its palaces, hooting from the gaping windows. Rubble will block all the doorways, and the cedar paneling will lie open to the wind and weather. This is the fate of that boisterous city, once so secure. "In all the world there is no city as great as I," it boasted. But now, look how it has become an utter ruin, a place where animals live! Everyone passing that way will laugh in derision or shake a defiant fist."
- Nahum 3:18-19 "O Assyrian king, your princes lie dead in the dust. Your people are scattered across the mountains. There is no longer a shepherd to gather them together. There is no healing for your wound; your injury is fatal. All who hear of your destruction will clap their hands for joy. Where can anyone be found who has not suffered from your cruelty?"

THE DELIVERANCE OF A REMNANT (10:20-34)

Despite the coming attack of the Assyrians, God promised that He would preserve a remnant of Israel. Isaiah 10:21-23 "A remnant of them will return to the Mighty God. But though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand on the seashore, only a few of them will return at that time. The Lord has rightly decided to destroy his people. Yes, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, has already decided to consume them."

The last verses in chapter 10 of Isaiah encourages the remnant:

To not be afraid: Isaiah 10:24 "So this is what the Lord, the Lord Almighty, says: "My people in Jerusalem, do not be afraid of the Assyrians when they oppress you just as the Egyptians did long ago."

To remember that God is ultimately in control: Isaiah 10:25 "It will not last very long. In a little while my anger against you will end, and then my anger will rise up to destroy them." Even though judgment would come upon the nation of Judah, Isaiah reminded them that He was still in charge of their final outcome and therefore He could be trusted. The nation of Judah could be comforted by the fact that God would never leave His people to the mercy of the enemies.

To have hope: "... Yet a remnant of them will return"(Is 10:21). The suffering of God's people at the hands of the Assyrians and others would make them feel as if they would certainly be destroyed. God assures them that this is not the case. He will always preserve His remnant. Assyria would indeed trouble and oppress Judah, but not forever. Instead, the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil. Because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit among Judah (represented by the anointing oil), the yoke of bondage would be destroyed. Here is a reference to the Messiah (Read Isaiah 61).

JUDAH'S HOPE IN THE MESSIAH (11:1-12:6)

In this chapter, God provides further details concerning the Messiah. In these prophecies the following questions are answered?

JUDAH'S HOPE IN THE MESSIAH
Where will the Messiah come from?
How will the people of God be able to identify Him?
What will be the outcome of His rule and government?

1. WHERE WILL THE MESSIAH COME FROM?

Isaiah 11:1 "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:"

Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be a descendant of Jesse. Jesse lived at least eight generations after Judah during the days of the prophet Samuel. He and his family had lived in the town of Bethlehem in the territory of Judah for several generations—at least since the time of Boaz (Ruth 2:4). Matthew 1 and Luke 3 both mention Jesse in the genealogy of Christ.

In Romans 15:12, Paul connects Jesus descending from Jesse to the hope of the Gentiles: "And again, Isaiah says: 'There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope.'" Jesse's female ancestors include three Gentiles—Tamar (Genesis 38), Rahab (Joshua 2), and Ruth (Ruth 4:13-22)—who are also Jesus the Messiah's ancestors.

2. HOW WILL THE PEOPLE OF GOD BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY HIM?

Isaiah 11:2-5 "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."

He will be baptized by the Spirit: Isaiah 42:1 ""Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, and I am pleased with him. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will reveal justice to the nations." Matthew 3:16 "After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. Acts 10:38 "And no doubt you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, for God was with him."

He will be wise: Matthew 13:54 "He returned to Nazareth, his hometown. When he taught there in the synagogue, everyone was astonished and said, "Where does he get his wisdom and his miracles?" Luke 2:40 "There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom beyond his years, and God placed his special favor upon him." 1 Cor. 1:24 "But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the mighty power of God and the wonderful wisdom of God."

He will have divine counsel: Isaiah 28:29 "The Lord Almighty is a wonderful teacher, and he gives the farmer great wisdom."

He will have power: Matthew 9:6 "I will prove that I, the Son of Man, have the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Stand up, take your mat, and go on home, because you are healed!" Luke 8:25 "Then he asked them, "Where is your faith?" And they were filled with awe and amazement. They said to one another, "Who is this man, that even the winds and waves obey him?" John 17:2 "For you have given him authority over everyone in all the earth. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. Romans 1:4 "And Jesus Christ our Lord was shown to be the Son of God when God powerfully raised him from the dead by means of the Holy Spirit."

He will have knowledge: Matthew 11:27 "'My Father has given me authority over everything. No one really knows the Son except the Father, and no one really knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." John 7:29 "I know him because I have come from him, and he sent me to you." John 8:55 "but you do not even know him. I know him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you! But it is true—I know him and obey him." John 10:15 "just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep."

He will be just: Zeph. 3:5 "But the Lord is still there in the city, and he does no wrong. Day by day his justice is more evident, but no one takes notice—the wicked know no shame." John 5:30 "But I do nothing without consulting the Father. I judge as I am told. And my judgment is absolutely just, because it is according to the will of God who sent me; it is not merely my own."

He will be righteous: Jeremiah 23:6 "And this is his name: 'The Lord Is Our Righteousness.' In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety." Jeremiah 23:5 "For the time is coming," says the Lord, "when I will place a righteous Branch on King David's throne. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land." Rev. 19:11 "Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. And the one sitting on the horse was named Faithful and True. For he judges fairly and then goes to war."

He will be faithful: 2 Thes. 3:3 "But the Lord is faithful; he will make you strong and guard you from the evil one." Rev. 1:5 "and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the commander of all the rulers of the world. All praise to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us."

3. WHAT WILL BE THE OUTCOME OF HIS RULE AND GOVERNMENT?

Isaiah continues in this chapter to describe the outcome of the Messiah's rule and reign.

The Messiah will bring peace: Isaiah 11:6-8 "In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard and the goat will be at peace. Calves and yearlings will be safe among lions, and a little child will lead them all. The cattle will graze among bears. Cubs and calves will lie down together. And lions will eat grass as the livestock do. Babies will crawl safely among poisonous snakes. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes and pull it out unharmed."

Zechariah, Hosea and Micah spoke of this same peace: Hosea 2:18 "At that time I will make a covenant with all the wild animals and the birds and the animals that scurry along the ground so that they will not harm you. I will remove all weapons of war from the land, all swords and bows, so you can live unafraid in peace and safety." Micah 4:4 "Everyone will live quietly in their own homes in peace and prosperity, for there will be nothing to fear. The Lord Almighty has promised this!" Zech. 9:10 "I will remove the battle chariots from Israel and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and I will destroy all the weapons used in battle. Your king will bring peace to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth."

The Messiah will gather together His people into a righteous kingdom which will be characterized by peace - the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the goat, the calf and young lion will graze together. This peaceful fellowship is complimented by the picture of a child leading them. The disorder and the cruelty that the people of God were experiencing would not be found in the kingdom of God. Out of the present corruption The Messiah would bring righteousness; out of the present disorder He would bring order. Once again we can make reference of what Christ said,

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). "These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus promises His disciples strength and victory in a world of sin and hopelessness.

The Messiah will remove the pain: Isaiah 11:9 "Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. And as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord." The life that Jesus came to bring us is life that is in abundance (John 10:10), life that "all is well with you and that your body is as healthy as I know your soul is." (3 John 1:2)

The Messiah will bring salvation to the Jews and the Gentiles: Isaiah 11:10 "In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, for the land where he lives will be a glorious place." The Messiah did not only provide for the salvation of the nation of Israel and Judah, but He was provided for the Gentile nation too. When Abraham received the prophetic word concerning the Messiah, it was told that "through your descendants, all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me." (Gen 22:18). Jesus said, Matthew 24:14 "And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then, finally, the end will come." Matthew 28:19 "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Messiah will bring restoration to His people: Isaiah 11:11-13 "In that day the Lord will bring back a remnant of his people for the second time, returning them to the land of Israel from Assyria, Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt, Ethiopia, Elam, Babylonia, Hamath, and all the distant coastlands. He will raise a flag among the nations for Israel to rally around. He will gather the scattered people of Judah from the ends of the earth...." This word was confirmed by two other prophets, Zechariah and Zephaniah: Zech. 10:10 "I will bring them back from Egypt and Assyria and resettle them in Gilead and Lebanon. There won't be enough room for them all!" Zeph. 3:10 "My scattered people who live beyond the rivers of Ethiopia will come to present their offerings."

The Messiah will bring unity to His people: Isaiah 11:13 "Then at last the jealousy between Israel and Judah will end. They will not fight against each other anymore." Jeremiah 50:4 "'Then the people of Israel and Judah will join together," says the Lord, "weeping and seeking the Lord their God." Ephes. 2:14 "For Christ himself has made peace between us Jews and you Gentiles by making us all one people. He has broken down the wall of hostility that used to separate us."

The Messiah will provide a way: Isaiah 11:16 "He will make a highway from Assyria for the remnant there, just as he did for Israel long ago when they returned from Egypt." Romans 5:1-2 "Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory." Ephes. 2:18 "Now all of us, both Jews and Gentiles, may come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us." Ephes. 3:12 "Because of Christ and

our faith in him, we can now come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of his glad welcome."

4. WHAT WILL BE THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE TO HIS GOVERNMENT?

In the midst of the chaos, the affliction by the enemy and the impending doom, Isaiah writes a chapter which stands out amongst the previous chapters that we have read (1-10). In the chapters 1-10, the theme of the prophecies, were of judgment and therefore the tone was one of doom, sadness and despair. However, after Isaiah prophecies concerning the Messiah and the effect of His rule, the tone in the following chapter (12) is light hearted and free. This is typical of the sinner who has exchanged his heavy yoke for the light yoke of Christ (Matt 11:28). The sinner before laying his burdens at the feet of Jesus would be filled with guilt, shame and despair, however once those burdens are repented of and washed by the blood of Jesus, freedom and liberty results. Malachi 4:2 But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture."

With this in mind we therefore now look at the response of the people of God concerning the kingdom and rule of the Messiah:

They will be filled with praise: Three times in this chapter we find the response to the Messiah as being one of praise: Isaiah 12:1 "In that day you will sing: "Praise the Lord! He was angry with me, but now he comforts me." Isaiah 12:4 "In that wonderful day you will sing: "Thank the Lord! Praise his name! ..." Isaiah 12:5 "Sing to the Lord, ... Make known his praise around the world."

Praise becomes a natural response when a person who is bound and in captivity becomes free. When the lame man was healed he praised God (Acts 3:6-8). Praise is a spiritual offering (Heb 13:15) which we give to God because of all His many gifts that He has bestowed upon us. Psalm 103:2 says, "Yes, I will bless the Lord and not forget the glorious things He does for me."

They will be filled with trust and confidence in God: Isaiah 12:2 "See, God has come to save me. I will trust in him and not be afraid. The Lord God is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." Trust is a confident assurance that the Person whom you are trusting will keep you secure and safe from all harm. Here we notice that the people's response will be one of fearlessness of their enemy because of their reliance on the Lord. In the previously chapters concerning the history of Israel we notice that this fearlessness was not a trait that they had previously displayed towards their enemy. In fact they had made evil alliances because of their fear, an alliance that would eventually turn on them (Assyria). But now confidence and trust results because they have gone back to placing their trust in God instead of the arm of the flesh. The Psalmist wrote: Psalm 3:6 "I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies who surround me on every side." Psalm 27:3 "Though a mighty army surrounds me, my heart will know no fear. Even if they

attack me, I remain confident." Psalm 91:5 "Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor fear the dangers of the day,"

They will be filled with joy: Isaiah 12:3 "With joy you will drink deeply from the fountain of salvation!" Here once again we see the contrast in the present situation of the people of God – at the moment they are in despair, afraid for their lives, but in the future they will have joy. What will cause this change? The change will come because they have come to the fountain of salvation, the fountain which brings complete satisfaction of their needs. Rev. 7:17 "For the Lamb who stands in front of the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe away all their tears." John 4:14 "But the water I give them takes away thirst altogether. It becomes a perpetual spring within them, giving them eternal life."

They will become a living testimony of the goodness of God: Isaiah 12:5-6 "Sing to the Lord, for he has done wonderful things. Make known his praise around the world. Let all the people of Jerusalem shout his praise with joy! For great is the Holy One of Israel who lives among you." The testimony of the person who has received the salvation that the Messiah brings will burn within like a fire and cause them to speak of God's goodness. Acts 4:20 "We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard." 2 Cor. 4:13 "But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, 'I believed in God, and so I speak.'" When the Samaritan woman met the Messiah her first reaction after speaking with Him was to go and tell all in her city (See John 4:29, 39).

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

Read Isaiah 7:10-8:22

- What sign did the Lord give Ahaz even though he wouldn't ask for it?
- What does "Immanuel" mean in Hebrew? (See Matthew 1:23)
- Who will be the Lord's instruments of judgment? Give the verse.
- According to Isaiah 8:9-22, who will be kept secure? Give words and phrases to support your answer. (See also Luke 2:34; Hebrews 2:11-13)

Read Isaiah 9:1-7 (with John 1:4, 8:12; Ephesians 5:8; Matthew 4:12-23; Isaiah 42:6-7)

- What three descriptive nouns in Isaiah 8:22 are repeated in Isaiah 9:1-2?
- According to Isaiah 9:2-3, what will God's people enjoy?
- According to verses 4-7, how can this hope be explained?
- Give the different attributes of the "child" of verse 6.

Read Isaiah 11:1-12:6

- Has the prophecy of 11:1-5 been fulfilled? What is the evidence? (See also 1 Samuel 17:12; Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 3:16; John 1:32; John 7:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30)
- Has the prophecy of 11:6-16 been fulfilled? What is the evidence? (See also Matthew 24:31; Romans 8:18-22)
- Isaiah's Song of Praise (12:1-6) was written in anticipation of "that day." Does it describe what you would sing today? How?

SECTION FOUR: THE JUDGEMENTS OF GOD (13-23)

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this section is to learn the outcome of the various nations which have appeared throughout the Old Testament as being part of the history of Israel. Would they receive God's judgment? What would be the reasons for their judgment?

OUTLINE:

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD
Prophecies concerning the nations
Judgments upon the nations
Six Woes
Judgment against all nations

1. PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE NATIONS (13-23)

From the prophetic messages concerning Israel and Judah, Isaiah in chapters 13-23 expands his horizons to include messages concerning various Gentile nations. Each of the messages are called a "burden", a word which shows the nature of the prophecy. It is a message of weighty import, something heavy, in the sense that it produces sorrow or grief. These are prophecies of judgment.

In pronouncing God's judgments on the nations, Isaiah reveals the Lord not only as the God of Israel, but the God who rules in all the nations of men.

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON (13:1-14:23)

WHO WERE THE BABYLONIANS?

The city of Babylon was the capital of the ancient land of Babylonia in southern Mesopotamia. It was situated on the Euphrates River about 50 miles south of modern Baghdad, just north of what is now the modern Iraqi town of al-Hillah. The word "Babylon" means "the Gate of God(s)" and it became the capital of the land of Babylonia. The etymology of the name Babel in the Bible means "confused" (Gen 11:9) and throughout the Bible, Babylon was a symbol of the confusion caused by godlessness. The name Babylon is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Babel.

What was their significance in biblical history? Just as Assyria would be used by God to bring judgment upon the nation of Israel, so Babylon was raised up as an instrument of God in judging the nation of Judah by taking them captive for a period of 70 years (Jer 25:11-12). However, just as Assyria did not get away for their evil practices and godlessness, so Babylon too would experience the judgment of God after being His instrument.

WHO WOULD BE THE INSTRUMENT OF JUDGEMENT?

The actual instrument of God's judgment is identified as the Medes (13:17), who together with the Persians did in fact conquer Babylon (See Dan 5:28-31). In Jeremiah 25:11-12, the prophet said that the Jews would suffer 70 years of Babylonian domination however he continued his prophecy by saying that they would be punished after the 70 years. Both parts of this prophecy were fulfilled. The domination of the Babylonian kingdom ended in 539 BC, when Cyrus, a leader of Persians and Medes, conquered Babylon and brought an end to its empire. Isaiah also prophesied concerning Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1 "This is what the Lord says to Cyrus, his anointed one, whose right hand he will empower. Before him, mighty kings will be paralyzed with fear. Their fortress gates will be opened, never again to shut against him."

In Isaiah 14:23, the prophet said that Babylon, which had been a world power at two different times in history, would be brought to a humble and final end. It would be reduced to swampland. After Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC, the kingdom never again rose to power. The buildings of Babylon fell into a gradual state of ruin during the next several centuries. Archaeologists excavated Babylon during the 1800s. Some parts of the city could not be dug up because they were under a water table that had risen over the years.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE REMNANT AFTER THIS JUDGEMENT?

Isaiah 14:1-3 "But the Lord will have mercy on the descendants of Jacob. Israel will be his special people once again. He will bring them back to settle once again in their own land. And people from many different nations will come and join them there and become a part of the people of Israel. The nations of the world will help the Lord's people to return, and those who come to live in their land will serve them. Those who captured Israel will be captured, and Israel will rule over its enemies. In that wonderful day when the Lord gives his people rest from sorrow and fear, from slavery and chains, ..."

The fall of Babylon will result in Israel's restoration and return to the city of Jerusalem. In Ezra we read how Cyrus, the king of Persia released the captives from bondage and allowed them to return to their land and rebuild the temple of God (See Ezra 1).

WHOSE FALL IS PARALLELED TO THEIR JUDGEMENT?

Isaiah 14:12 "How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world."

Isaiah parallels the fall of the Babylonian kingdom with that of Lucifer. In his prophecy we note that Lucifer's sin and his banishment from heaven are described in 5 "I Wills..." (Is 14:13-15)

- "I will ascend into heaven".

- "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God."
- "I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north."
- "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds."
- "I will be like the Most High"

Looking back to the Tower of Babel, we notice the same "self-will" of the people:

Genesis 11:1-4 "At one time the whole world spoke a single language and used the same words. As the people migrated eastward, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia and settled there. They began to talk about construction projects. "Come," they said, "let's make great piles of burnt brick and collect natural asphalt to use as mortar. Let's build a great city with a tower that reaches to the skies—a monument to our greatness! This will bring us together and keep us from scattering all over the world."

Therefore the extent of the fall of Babylon will be like that of Lucifer: Isaiah 14:15 "But instead, you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths."

ASSIGNMENT

In an essay discuss the judgment that has and will be brought upon the devil because of the judgment of God through Christ.

THE BURDEN OF ASSYRIA (14:24-27)

Here again Isaiah pronounces judgment upon Assyria, the dominant empire in the days of Isaiah about which much has already been said (10:5-19). We notice that this judgment cannot be annulled (v27) and nothing would be able to stay it (v24). We see the fulfillment of this judgment later being mentioned in Isaiah 37:36-38 "That night the angel of the Lord went out to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian troops. When the surviving Assyrians woke up the next morning, they found corpses everywhere. Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there. One day while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with their swords. They then escaped to the land of Ararat, and another son, Esarhaddon, became the next king of Assyria."

THE BURDEN OF PHILISTIA (14:28-32)

In the year that King Ahaz died, Isaiah received a burden against Philistia, which Jeremiah (47:1-7), Ezekiel (25:15-17), Joel (3:4-5), Amos (1:6-8), Obadiah (Obadiah 19), Zephaniah (2:4-7) and Zechariah (9:5-8) also make concerning the destruction of this nation. Why were they to be judged?

Because they mistreated the people of God: Ezekiel 25:15-17: "Thus says the Lord God: "Because the Philistines dealt vengefully and took vengeance with a spiteful heart, to destroy because of the old hatred," therefore thus says the Lord God: "I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the remnant of the seacoast. I will execute great vengeance on them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I lay My vengeance upon them."

Because they took the Ark of the Covenant: "Because you have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My prized possessions" (Joel 3:5). 1 Samuel 4:10-11 "So the Philistines fought desperately, and Israel was defeated again. The slaughter was great; thirty thousand Israelite men died that day. The survivors turned and fled to their tents. The Ark of God was captured, and Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were killed."

THE BURDEN OF MOAB (15:1-16:14)

The founder of the people of Moab was the son born of the incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters, when his daughters made Lot drunk, after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:30-38).

At times, the Moabites were great enemies of Israel. It was Balak, king of Moab, who hired Balaam the prophet, hoping that he could curse Israel (Numbers 22-25). It was Eglon, king of Moab, who oppressed Israel in the days of the Judges (Judges 3:12-30). During the time of Saul and David, Israel established a firm control over Moab, but later kings of Israel were not always able to keep them under Israeli dominance. At the same time, there was a Moabite connection with Israel. First, they were related to Israel because Lot was Abraham's nephew. Because of this, God told Israel in Deuteronomy 2:9 that they were not to destroy Moab and take their land. As well, David, Israel's greatest king, was one-quarter Moabite. His paternal grandmother Ruth was from Moab, and David entrusted his father and mother to the protection of the king of Moab when he was a fugitive from Saul (1 Samuel 22:3-4). For these reasons, there is a great deal of sadness and empathy on Isaiah's part as he describes the coming judgment on Moab.

What was their sin?

Like, that of Assyria, the judgment of Moab is related to her pride. Isaiah 16:6-7 "Is this Moab, the proud land we have heard so much about? Its pride and insolence are all gone now! The entire land of Moab weeps. Yes, you people of Moab, mourn for the delicacies of Kir-hareseth."

Moab was financially secure (Isa.15:7; Jer.48:7, 36) and had never suffered adversity as had other nations (Jer.48:11). They were accustomed to plentiful harvests of "summer fruits" and an abundance of wine (Isa.16:9-10; Jer.48:32-33). As a result of their prosperity and their skill in satisfying the lusts of the flesh, Moab became exceedingly proud. "We have heard of the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud) his loftiness, and his arrogance, and his pride,

and the haughtiness of his heart", said both Jeremiah (48:29) and (over a century earlier) Isaiah (16:6). Pride was an enduring quality of the Moabites.

Where pride is, anger also is (Prov.13:10; 21:24), and Moab was no exception. His proud wrath was held in contempt by the Almighty (Isa.16:6; Jer.48:30). Moab boasted, "We are mighty and strong men for the war!" (Jer.48:14), and he even "magnified himself against the Lord" (Jer.48:26).

Both Moab and Ammon refused to acknowledge the unique relationship between Israel and God, arrogantly deriding Israel (Jer.48:26-27; Zeph.2:8-11) and saying that Judah was just like any other nation (Ezek.25:8-11). Moab even rejoiced at the Fall of Judah. Jeremiah said that Moab literally "skipped for joy" to see Judah's anguish (48:27). Ezekiel said, "Thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel" (Ezek.25:4-7).

THE BURDEN OF SYRIA (DAMASCUS) AND ISRAEL (17:1-14)

WHO WAS THIS PROPHECY FOR?

- Damascus: This was one of the great cities of the ancient world and was the capital of Syria.
- Israel: Israel was often referred to as being Ephraim as it was one of the dominate tribes of Israel.

Both of these nations had gone into an evil alliance against the nation of Judah.

WHAT WAS TO BE THEIR JUDGMENT?

Their cities will be taken: Isaiah prophesied the following: Isaiah 17:1-3 "The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken: they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the Lord of hosts.

We see the fulfillment of this in:

- 2 Kings 15:29 "In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria."
- 2 Kings 16:9 "And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

The work of their hands will come to nothing: Isaiah 17:10-11 “Why? Because you have turned from the God who can save you—the Rock who can hide you. You may plant the finest imported grapevines, and they may grow so well that they blossom on the very morning you plant them, but you will never pick any grapes from them. Your only harvest will be a load of grief and incurable pain.” See Haggai 1:6

WHY WERE THEY JUDGED?

“Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation...” (17:10).

WHAT WILL BE THE RESPONSE OF THE REMNANT?

Isaiah 17:7-8 “At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images.”

In the midst of severe judgment a remnant will respond with humble respect for God where they no longer worship their idols and the works of their own hands, but where they focus once again upon God.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE NATION WHO BRINGS JUDGMENT ON SYRIA AND ISRAEL?

They too will come under the judgment of God. Isaiah 17:12-14 “Look! The armies rush forward like waves thundering toward the shore. But though they roar like breakers on a beach, God will silence them. They will flee like chaff scattered by the wind or like dust whirling before a storm. In the evening Israel waits in terror, but by dawn its enemies are dead. This is the just reward of those who plunder and destroy the people of God.”

THE BURDEN OF ETHIOPIA (18)

In the days of Isaiah, Ethiopia was a major world power ruling Egypt and a chief rival to Assyria. Since Judah was caught in the middle between this conflict it might make sense why Ethiopia may have sent ambassadors to Judah to invite her to rebel against Assyria by aligning themselves with her (v2).

God however rejects this alliance with them because He is more than able to deal with the Assyrians Himself. In verse 4, He says, “I will make My rest” and prune the Assyrians (v5), meaning that God alone will do what needs to be done to the Assyrians without the help of the Ethiopians.

A day when Ethiopians will know God:

Isaiah 18:7 "But the time will come when the Lord Almighty will receive gifts from this land divided by rivers, from this tall, smooth-skinned people, who are feared far and wide for their conquests and destruction. They will bring the gifts to the Lord Almighty in Jerusalem, the place where his name dwells".

This may have been fulfilled in some way close to Isaiah's time. But we know it was fulfilled in Acts 8:26-40, when an Ethiopian came to worship the God at Jerusalem, and then trusted in Jesus at the preaching of Philip. The Psalmist wrote: Psalm 68:31 "Let Egypt come with gifts of precious metals; let Ethiopia bow in submission to God.

THE BURDEN AGAINST EGYPT (19-20)

Isaiah then turns to Egypt and discusses their judgment. Egypt was one of the great powers of the ancient world and was one which the nation of Israel constantly had to reckon with. At times Egypt had been the enemy of Israel, at times Egypt had been a refuge for Israel and sometimes they even offered an ungodly alliance to Israel.

Why will Egypt be judged?

Isaiah 19:1 "The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it."

Egypt was known for its worship of many different gods. Through the hand of God's judgment, God was going to knock over these gods.

How will the judgment come?

Through civil war: Isaiah 19:2 "And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom." Isaiah prophesied a coming civil war in Egypt that would be indirectly the hand of God's judgment against the nation of Egypt.

Through removing their leaders: Isaiah 19:3 "And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards." The wisdom of Egypt had been renowned in the Bible times. 1 Kings 4:30 "And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt." However, God was going to remove their wisdom and their counsel. See also Isaiah 19:11-13

Through captivity: Isaiah 19:4 "And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 20:4 "For the king of Assyria will take away the Egyptians and

Ethiopians as prisoners. He will make them walk naked and barefoot, both young and old, their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt." What significance did their nakedness have? It spoke of sin's shame and humiliation.

Through failure to their economy: Isaiah 19:5-10 "And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up. And they shall turn the rivers far away; and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more. The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. Moreover they that work in fine flax, and they that weave networks, shall be confounded. And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish." The Nile river was the key to Egypt's agriculture and economy. Therefore if this river was to become dried up, it would destroy their economy.

GOD'S REMNANT IN EGYPT:

Isaiah 19:19-23 "In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the heart of Egypt, and there will be a monument to the Lord at its border. [20] It will be a sign and a witness to the Lord Almighty in the land of Egypt. When the people cry to the Lord for help against those who oppress them, he will send them a savior who will rescue them. In that day the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians. Yes, they will know the Lord and will give their sacrifices and offerings to him. They will make promises to the Lord and keep them. The Lord will strike Egypt in a way that will bring healing. For the Egyptians will turn to the Lord, and he will listen to their pleas and heal them. In that day Egypt and Assyria will be connected by a highway. The Egyptians and Assyrians will move freely between their lands, and they will worship the same God."

There will be a remnant in Egypt who will seek God and will know the Lord because He will send them a Saviour. Here once again we have mention of the Gentiles also having the opportunity to experience the salvation that the Jews would experience as prophesied here in Isaiah.

- Psalm 22:27 "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."
- Psalm 86:9 "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name."
- Ephes. 3:6 "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:"

THE BURDEN AGAINST BABYLON, EDOM AND ARABIA (21)

THE BURDEN AGAINST BABYLON:

Isaiah 21:1-2 "The burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through; so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land. A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease."

Here we notice that Isaiah now turns towards Babylon (the wilderness of the sea) and pronounces the judgment that will come upon her. Babylon was called the wilderness of the Sea because the great plain of Babylon was divided by lakes and marshes which were referred to as being the "sea" as well as the multitude of the waters.

Who would bring her judgment?

Isaiah prophesies that "Elam" and "Media", ancient names given to Persia and Medes, would come up and conquer the Babylonian empire.

Isaiah 21:9 "Now at last—look! Here come the chariots and warriors!" Then the watchman said, "Babylon is fallen! All the idols of Babylon lie broken on the ground!" This dramatic scene was fulfilled when the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon but it also refers to a scene which will still come.

Rev. 18:2 "He gave a mighty shout, "Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen! She has become the hideout of demons and evil spirits, a nest for filthy buzzards, and a den for dreadful beasts." The same panic and terror the people of Babylon felt when that great city was conquered by the Medes and Persians will be seen again. When God comes and destroys Babylon, the world will be terrified and mourn the same way (Revelation 18:9-19), but God's people rejoice over the fall of Babylon (Revelation 18:20).

BURDENS AGAINST EDOM:

The Edomites descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob (Israel). They settled in the land to the south-east of Israel, and were the sometimes enemies of Israel.

Here we notice that Isaiah prophesies of a spiritual dawn and a spiritual night. Isaiah 21:12 "The watchman replies, "Morning is coming, but night will soon follow. If you wish to ask again, then come back and ask."

Dumah is told: If you want to seek more information about this brief warning then return and come back. Both these verbs are imperatives. The former is also the word for "repent." Dumah was in the portion allotted to Judah and therefore must have come under the influence of the worship of Jehovah with a Jewish presence in the city and the temple worship well known. There

is therefore the admonition to repent and to come back to the God they know.

The repetition of the phrase, "watchman what of the night?" (v11) speaks of the dread that will come when Edom is being judged.

BURDEN AGAINST ARABIA:

Kedar was the second son of Ishmael and the tribes of the Kedarites (Gen 25:13). The tribe of Kedar was a nomadic tribe (v13) who lived in a place called Meshech (Ps 120:5). Here we see that Isaiah prescribed a date where they will receive their judgment - Isaiah 21:16 ""But within a year," says the Lord, "all the glory of Kedar will come to an end."

THE BURDEN OF THE VALLEY OF VISION (22:1-25)

The burden of the "Valley of Vision" was prophesied concerning the city of Jerusalem, a city situated on a hill surrounded by higher hills and in the midst of three valleys. 2 Kings 23:27 "For the Lord had said, "I will destroy Judah just as I have destroyed Israel. I will banish the people from my presence and reject my chosen city of Jerusalem and the Temple where my name was to be honored."

WHAT WOULD BE THE OUTCOME OF THEIR JUDGMENT?

- The people will die not necessarily by the sword nor in battle (v2). Many of the people of Jerusalem died as a result of hunger in the siege of the city or as they fled in cowardly retreat. Jeremiah 14:18 "If I go out into the fields, I see the bodies of people slaughtered by the enemy. If I walk the city streets, there I see people who have died of starvation. The prophets and priests continue with their work, but they do not know what they are doing." Jeremiah 38:2 ""This is what the Lord says: Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who surrender to the Babylonians will live."
- The rulers will be captured by the enemy (v3, 5-7) and taken away: See 2 Kings 23:31-25:30 for more details on their captivity.
- The walls of the city will be broken down (v5): 2 Kings 25:9-10 "He burned down the Temple of the Lord, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. He destroyed all the important buildings in the city. Then the captain of the guard supervised the entire Babylonian army as they tore down the walls of Jerusalem."
- There will be great sadness and mourning (v12): Lament. 1:1-2 "Jerusalem's streets, once bustling with people, are now silent. Like a widow broken with grief, she sits alone in her mourning. Once the queen of nations, she is now a slave. She sobs through the night; tears stream down her cheeks. Among all her lovers, there is no one left to help her. All

her friends have betrayed her; they are now her enemies."

HOW DID THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY REACT TO THEIR COMING JUDGMENT?

Jerusalem had made all the wrong preparations for the coming judgment and battle. When faced with the subsequent attacks, they prepared a city for battle and for siege, strengthening the city walls and making sure that they would have enough water during the siege. They had not understood that God had removed His protection from them (v8). They tried to stay the enemy for themselves (v10-11) but they did not look to God for help. Instead of preparing Jerusalem for an attack, they should have turned their hearts in humble repentance to God. Instead of humbly seeking the LORD, the people of Jerusalem had both a confidence in their own preparation (joy and gladness), and a fatalistic outlook toward the future ("Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"). For this neglect in turning to God there could be no atonement – because they neglected the very One who could bring them salvation (v14).

ISAIAH DENOUNCES SHEBNA:

Shebna was a servant of King Hezekiah who had a high and honorable office. He was both a steward and a scribe (1 Kings 18:18, Is 37:2).

Why was he judged? Isaiah 22:16 ""Who do you think you are, building a beautiful tomb for yourself in the rock?"

What did Shebna do with his position of honor and authority? He made himself a fancy and prestigious tomb! In that day, this was a display of significant power and wealth. In this, Shebna personifies all of Jerusalem with his obsessive self-interest. Isaiah had prophesied that the people of Judah and Jerusalem would be carried away into exile, but Shebna didn't believe it. He built this elaborate tomb for himself in Jerusalem, as if to say, "I will never be carried away in exile. I am so certain that I will die here that I will build my tomb here." Shebna sought honor and glory, but would never find it. Instead, the LORD would make certain that he was never even buried in his prestigious, expensive tomb, but would die in exile instead (v18). Shebna is the same kind of man Jesus spoke about in Luke 12:16-21, in the parable of the rich fool. The man spent his time planning and his money building great things, but in the end he died without God and it all meant nothing.

ISAIAH PRAISES ELIAKIM:

Eliakim the son of Hilkiah is mentioned in passages like 1 Kings 18:18 and Isaiah 36:3 as another assistant to King Hezekiah. Here in Isaiah's prophecies he is said to be "My servant" (Isaiah 22:20). Both Shebna and Eliakim were servants of Hezekiah, but Shebna's heart was directed towards selfish ambition and glory, and Eliakim's heart was turned towards God. Because Eliakim is God's servant, He will give him great authority ("the key of the house of David..." (v22). In that day, the chief royal steward would have the

large master key of the palace fastened to the shoulder of his tunic. The key was a picture and demonstration of the authority of the chief steward.

Here we note a prophecy concerning Messiah, because Jesus told us this passage spoke of Himself: These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens." (Revelation 3:7) Jesus is the one with the keys of Hades and of Death (Revelation 1:8), who has all authority both in heaven and on earth. Jesus delegates this authority as it pleases Him (Matthew 16:19).

THE BURDEN OF TYRE (23:1-18)

The last burden concerns Tyre. Tyre was the leading city of Phoenecia, the great maritime power of the ancient world. Because it was such an important harbor and center for shipping, Tyre was synonymous with commerce and materialism. Tyre was the "Babylon of the Sea." Because of their excellent harbor and seamanship, they established a commercial empire far greater than one would expect given their size and military power.

Tyre was a city where money ruled. The merchants are princes, and the traders are the honorable of the earth. To be a leader or honorable, one didn't need to be of royal heritage, a good or an honest man. The only thing needed was success in business! Because of its great success, Tyre had become proud and full of self-glory. But God was about to humble her, Isaiah 23:1 "This message came to me concerning Tyre: Weep, O ships of Tarshish, returning home from distant lands! Weep for your harbor at Tyre because it is gone! The rumors you heard in Cyprus are all true."

Who would bring judgment on Tyre?

Isaiah 23:13 "Look at the land of Babylonia—the people of that land are gone! The Assyrians have handed Babylon over to the wild beasts. They have built siege ramps against its walls, torn down its palaces, and turned it into a heap of rubble." The mainland city of Tyre was defeated by both the Assyrians and the Babylonians. They were used by God to bring the city to ruin.

What was God's promise to this city?

Isaiah 23:15-16 "For seventy years, the length of a king's life, Tyre will be forgotten. But then the city will come back to life and sing sweet songs like a prostitute. Long absent from her lovers, she will take a harp, walk the streets, and sing her songs, so that she will again be remembered." God will bring restoration to the city of Tyre. Why? She will go back to being a wealthy nation but her wealth will be used for the Lord and His servants (23:17-18).

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

Read Isaiah 13:1-14:23

- Who will be the Lord's "consecrated ones," and His "instruments of indignation"(13:5) against Babylon? Give the verse.
- What does "consecrated" mean?
- What do these have in common: Isaiah 14:12-14 and Isaiah 10:13-14? Isaiah 14:12-14, Isaiah 10:13-14 and Genesis 3:1-5?
- Is it wrong to want to be "like God?" (See also Galatians 5:1, 22-23; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 John 3:2-3)

Read Isaiah 13-23

- What recurring themes do you see in these eleven chapters?

2. JUDGMENTS UPON THE NATIONS (24-27)

GOD'S JUDGMENT (24)

From Isaiah 13 to Isaiah 23, the prophecy of Isaiah proclaims burdens, each of which is connected to a specific place. Here in chapter 24, Isaiah speaks more generally concerning the judgment of God:

Firstly, in dealing with the scope of the judgment (v1-3) he says,

Isaiah 24:1-3 "Look! The Lord is about to destroy the earth and make it a vast wasteland. See how he is scattering the people over the face of the earth. Priests and laypeople, servants and masters, maids and mistresses, buyers and sellers, lenders and borrowers, bankers and debtors—none will be spared. The earth will be completely emptied and looted. The Lord has spoken!"

Here Isaiah prophesies concerning the universal judgment that would come, the ultimate fulfillment being seen in the Great Tribulation (Matt 24).

Secondly in providing the reason for the judgment (v4-6) he says,

The judgment of God will come ...

- Because of the proud (v4)
- Because of the transgressions of the people (v5)
- Because of their disregard of the ordinance of God (v5)
- Because of their broken covenant with God (v5):

Lastly in discussing the character of God's judgment he says (17-23)

God's judgment:

- Will be complete (v17-18) and cannot be escaped.
- Will affect everyone (v21-23): No one will escape the judgment of God, it will affect the rich and the kings as well as ordinary people. It was the leaders and the kings, those who were of noble descent who were first taken into captivity by Babylon (See 1 Kings 24-25).

A SONG OF PRAISE AND SALVATION (25-27)

In the midst of this judgment and coming despair, we notice once again how Isaiah brings hope in a seeming hopeless situation. Here in this chapter, we see how he focuses his attention off the impending doom and placing his attention on Who God is:

He is a personal God: Isaiah 25:1 "O Lord, I will honor and praise your name, for you are my God..." He was not only the God of Israel, but He was also known as being the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He personally identified Himself with these men.

He is a wonderworker: Isaiah 25:1 "... You do such wonderful things! You planned them long ago, and now you have accomplished them." Joshua 3:5 "Then Joshua told the people, "Purify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do great wonders among you." Psalm 77:14 "You are the God of miracles and wonders! You demonstrate your awesome power among the nations."

He is a faithful and true God (Is 25:1): Deut. 7:9 "Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and constantly loves those who love him and obey his commands." Psalm 36:5 "Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds."

He is a righteous judge: Isaiah 25:2 "You turn mighty cities into heaps of ruins. Cities with strong walls are turned to rubble. Beautiful palaces in distant lands disappear and will never be rebuilt." We can worship God for His judgment, because we have confidence in His fairness. As was the case with Sodom and Gomorrah, God will never make a city a ruin unless the judgment is deserved, and God has made provision for the righteous. Isaiah 26:7 "But for those who are righteous, the path is not steep and rough. You are a God of justice, and you smooth out the road ahead of them."

He is a refuge and a shelter in times of poverty and need: Isaiah 25:4 "But to the poor, O Lord, you are a refuge from the storm. To the needy in distress, you are a shelter from the rain and the heat. For the oppressive acts of ruthless people are like a storm beating against a wall," God will protect those who are His remnant and will shield them when the storms come. He will be their refuge, a shelter from the rains and winds. Psalm 12:5 "The Lord replies, "I have seen violence done to the helpless, and I have heard the groans of the poor. Now I will rise up to rescue them, as they have longed for me to do." Psalm 27:5 "For he will conceal me there when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock." Psalm 33:20 "We depend on the Lord alone to save us. Only he can help us, protecting us like a shield."

He is a God who provides us with spiritual food: Isaiah 25:6 "In Jerusalem, the Lord Almighty will spread a wonderful feast for everyone around the world. It will be a delicious feast of good food, with clear, well-aged wine and choice beef." John 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; this bread is my flesh, offered so the world may live." Matthew 22:4 "So he sent other servants to tell them, 'The feast has been prepared, and choice meats have been cooked. Everything is ready. Hurry!'" Rev. 19:9 "And the angel said, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.'" And he added, "These are true words that come from God."

He is a God who brings complete victory: Isaiah 25:7-8 "In that day he will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth. He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears. He will remove forever all insults and mockery against his land and people. The Lord has spoken!" 1 Cor. 15:54 "When this happens—when our perishable earthly bodies have been transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die—then at last the Scriptures will come true: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

He is a God who will bring His people salvation: Isaiah 25:9 "In that day the people will proclaim, 'This is our God. We trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, in whom we trusted. Let us rejoice in the salvation he brings!'" Isaiah 26:1 "In that day, everyone in the land of Judah will sing this song: Our city is now strong! We are surrounded by the walls of God's salvation." Psalm 27:1 "The Lord is my light and my salvation— so why should I be afraid? The Lord protects me from danger— so why should I tremble?" Psalm 37:39 "The Lord saves the godly; he is their fortress in times of trouble." Isaiah 12:2 "See, God has come to save me. I will trust in him and not be afraid. The Lord God is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." Zeph. 3:17 "For the Lord your God has arrived to live among you. He is a mighty savior. He will rejoice over you with great gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will exult over you by singing a happy song."

He is a God who will bring peace: Isaiah 26:3 "You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you!" Isaiah 26:12 "Lord, you will grant us peace, for all we have accomplished is really from you." Even when the people are in captivity, God grants them peace (26:13). Psalm 29:11 "The Lord gives his people strength. The Lord blesses them with peace." Psalm 119:165 "Those who love your law have great peace and do not stumble." Philip. 4:7 "If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

He is a God who brings restoration: Isaiah 26:15 "We praise you, Lord! You have made our nation great; you have extended our borders!" Isaiah 26:19 "Yet we have this assurance: Those who belong to God will live; their bodies will rise again! Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy! For God's light of life will fall like dew on his people in the place of the dead!"

Ezekiel 37:10 "So I spoke as he commanded me, and the wind entered the bodies, and they began to breathe. They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army of them." Luke 15:24 "for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began." Romans 8:11 "The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you." Ephes. 2:1 "Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins."

In chapter 27, Isaiah prophesies concerning the restoration of God's people:

- **They shall be fruitful again:** Isaiah 27:6 "The time is coming when my people will take root. Israel will bud and blossom and fill the whole earth with her fruit!" Hosea 14:5-6 "I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. It will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon. Its branches will spread out like those of beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedar forests of Lebanon."
- **They will be established (v6):** "take root". Psalm 40:2 "He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along." Col. 2:7 "Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done."
- **They will grow and "fill the face of the earth"** (v6): Isaiah 54:3 "For you will soon be bursting at the seams. Your descendants will take over other nations and live in their cities." Isaiah 60:22 "The smallest family will multiply into a large clan. The tiniest group will become a mighty nation. I, the Lord, will bring it all to pass at the right time." Mark 4:31-32 "It is like a tiny mustard seed. Though this is one of the smallest of seeds, it grows to become one of the largest of plants, with long branches where birds can come and find shelter."
- **They will come out of captivity** to once again worship God in Jerusalem: Isaiah 27:13 "In that day the great trumpet will sound. Many who were dying in exile in Assyria and Egypt will return to Jerusalem to worship the Lord on his holy mountain." See this fulfillment in the book of Ezra.

He is a God who will care for His people: Isaiah 27:2-3 ""In that day we will sing of the pleasant vineyard. I, the Lord, will watch over it and tend its fruitful vines. Each day I will water them; day and night I will watch to keep enemies away." Genesis 28:15 "What's more, I will be with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. I will someday bring you safely back to this land. I will be with you constantly until I have finished giving you everything I have promised." Psalm 121:4 "Indeed, he who watches over Israel never tires and never sleeps."

He is a God of purging: Isaiah 27:9 "The Lord did this to purge away Israel's sin. When he has finished, all the pagan altars will be crushed to dust. There won't be an Asherah pole or incense altar left standing." Micah 7:18 "Where is another God like you, who pardons the sins of the survivors among his people? You cannot stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing mercy."

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS?

The righteous judgment of God has two effects. Isaiah 25:3 "Therefore, strong nations will declare your glory; ruthless nations will revere you."

- **First, "the strong people will glorify You..."** The people of God will see His work and glorify Him. Later on in chapter 26, we notice that Isaiah says, the people of God will keep His commandments (26:2). The people of God will trust in Him (26:3) and wait upon Him (26:8). The people of God will seek and desire God (26:8-9). The people of God will hide in Him whilst the judgment of God comes (26:20-21)
- **Second, the city of the terrible nations will fear You.** The unrighteous fear God when they see His righteous judgment.

3. THE SIX WOES (28-33)

The messages in this section relate mostly to the approaching calamities involving the Assyrian invasion. During the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, Shalmaneser king of Assyria came against Israel to the north and took them away captive (2 Kings 17:1-18:12). In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria sought to do the same thing with Judah (18:13-17).

What was Judah to do? Surrender to the Assyrians? Put their trust in an alliance with Egypt to the south? Isaiah's message was simple: The source of true deliverance was in the Lord!

In this section, Isaiah renews his message of judgment on Israel and Judah. It is split by six 'woes' in 28.1; 29.1, 15; 30.1; 31.1 and 33.1.

- The first woe is against the drunken pride of the northern kingdom, Israel.
- The second is against the spiritual blindness of Judah.
- The third woe is against those who seek to hide what they are doing from God.
- The fourth is against those who look elsewhere for help to other than God.
- The fifth is specifically against those who pursue the Egyptian dream, depending for their future on the assistance of Egypt.
- And the final woe is against those who are treacherous to His people. So as is so common in Isaiah he begins with rebuking God's people and ends with rebuking their enemies and with a promise of restoration.

WOE TO THOSE WHO ARE PROUD: (CHAPTER 28)

A woe is called on Samaria because of its 'crown of pride'. Israel is like a crowned 'king of the festival', slumped on his throne, and yet drunkenly proud, who in his drunken state wears, with inordinate pride, a crown which was once beautiful but was now a faded and wilted garland of dying flowers, and is unaware of his true condition. They have been too proud to even cry to God for help (See 9:8-12).

In contrast to these proud and drunken fools is the sovereign Lord's 'mighty and strong one'. Previously they had been chastised by the invasions of Syria and Philistia (9.12), now they will have to face a greater. There can be little doubt that Assyria is in mind here, but Isaiah keeps it deliberately anonymous. He is concerned that all should recognize that this is the hand of the Sovereign Lord. God could have used whoever He wanted to. It is a further

reminder that Assyria is His, to do with as He will, and that it is at His determination that they are 'the rod of His anger' (10.5).

In their drunken state the leaders reply by deriding Isaiah (9-10). They see themselves as wiser and superior in thought than he is. They think that he clearly does not understand politics. They ask, to whom then should he convey his knowledge, to whom should he give his message? Who is there who can possibly be expected to listen to what he wants to tell them? Their answer is that it can only be those who are so young that they have just been weaned from their milk, or even recently withdrawn from the breast. For what he says is like rote teaching, constant repetition, a message that never changes, elementary repetitive words unfit for grown men, with a bit here and a bit there added as words are seen to be remembered, but constantly repeated over and over again. "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little." That is he teaches in an elementary fashion and by rote. Isaiah addresses them as 'you scornful men'. This description is regularly found in Proverbs of those who are self-satisfied, beyond correction, arrogant and scornful of spiritual truth (Proverbs 1.22; 13.1; 14.9; 21.24; see also Psalm 1.1), as these have proved themselves to be.

Isaiah 28:16 "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem. It is firm, a tested and precious cornerstone that is safe to build on. Whoever believes need never run away again."

God's reply is to set certainty against uncertainty. He declares that there is only one tried and tested thing to trust in. And that is the tested stone, the cornerstone of great value which gives a sure foundation and guarantees the stability of the building. This is the corner stone on which the whole building would depend. It is the everlasting rock (26.4) on which the strong city is founded. But what is this tested stone, this sure foundation? Primarily in mind is a looking forward to the rock of the coming Son of David, 'God's anointed', Immanuel, especially as described in 9.6, for when He comes all that is false will be swept away (verse 17), and He is mentioned again in 32.1; 33.17. This would tie in with the fact that as the coming Servant of God He would be a covenant of the people, in contrast to their false covenant. (See 42.6; 49.8; 55.3).

Having laid His foundation stone God now declares that He will use justice and righteousness as tools with which to measure the population of his strong city. There can be no deceit there. All must be above board and morally true. It is a city of righteousness, the faithful city (1.26). Thus each who would enter its gates must be measured to determine their worthiness to be there. Meanwhile on this basis their refuge of lies will be swept away by hail, and the hiding place of falsehood will be overflowed by floodwater, both regular symbols of the judgment of God. This possibly refers to the defeat of Pharaoh's army by the Assyrians. Compare how the activities of the Assyrians are described in these terms in verse 2.

The Parable of the Farmer and his Crops (28.23-29): The point behind this parable is that the wise farmer thinks carefully about what he is doing and does not get bogged down in one activity. He looks at things as a whole, and does each thing in its proper course, ready to change as the occasion demands. He is fully flexible. In the same way these men of Jerusalem should consider that now is the time for a change. They should cease to look to other nations and should look instead to God, as the farmer does. For now is God's day, and God has great purposes for Israel if only they will take note of what He is saying. We must remember that the purpose behind all Isaiah's words is not to 'foretell the future'. It is to speak of the future in order that it might stir to action. Every revelation should cause his hearers to think again of what God would do through them if only they would respond rightly to Him.

WOES TO THOSE WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY BLIND (CHAPTER 29:1-15)

In this chapter, Isaiah stresses that although they boast of their city as the city of David, God will soon cause her to be besieged by an army which He will bring against her. Having declared His woe on Israel (28.1) God now declares His woe on Jerusalem under the name of Ariel. It is to be distressed with mourning and lamentation because it has become superficial in its response to God. It is to be besieged.

God (initially through the king of Assyria) intends to lay siege to Jerusalem, this false mountain of God, raising siege works against it and humbling it. It will be brought so low that its voice will, as it were, seem to come out of the ground, from the very dust. They will be utterly humbled. And they will be in such a state that their prayers will be like the whispered words of a medium, like the chirp of an enchanter who seeks to the dead. However the siege will be lifted because in some way the attackers will, as it were, be blown away as if they were dust, the huge army of terrible ones ('terrible' is a regular description of those to do with large empires, see 25.4, 5; compare 13.11; 25.3; 29.20; 49.25; Jeremiah 15.21; Ezekiel 28.7 etc.) will be wafted away like chaff. And it will happen suddenly and unexpectedly. A fulfilment of this took place when the Assyrian army withdrew to face the Egyptian army at Eltekeh, and a further fulfilment is found in Isaiah 37:36.

How did they respond? Isaiah 29:13 "And so the Lord says, "These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. And their worship of me amounts to nothing more than human laws learned by rote."

How will God respond? Isaiah 29:14 "Because of this, I will do wonders among these hypocrites. I will show that human wisdom is foolish and even the most brilliant people lack understanding."

When men harden their hearts against God's revelation, given in one way or another, it often results in continuing hardening. It is as though having hardened themselves they have made it almost impossible for them to do

anything else, and so they go on more and more firmly closing their eyes. This is what God saw would be the result here.

WOE TO THOSE WHO SEEK TO HIDE WHAT THEY DO FROM GOD (CHAPTER 29:15-24)

The picture that Isaiah gives here is of men digging themselves a hideout where they can hide what they are thinking and doing from God. They then go into their hideout and assert their independence of God. It refers to all who think that they can carry on their activities without God knowing, who think that they can hide their ways from God. It is the example of ultimate folly, for 'all things are open to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do' (Hebrew 4:13).

So here woe is declared on these people. These people who are ignoring God should consider. They have got things the wrong way round. They are treating Him as though He is but the clay. But it is He Who is the Potter, and it is they who are the clay. It is He Who made them and fashioned their frame. They would therefore be wise to recognize that they are responsible to Him as their Creator, and to recognize that as such He has more understanding than they.

The hope:

Verses 18-19 can be compared to verses 9-12: In contrast with the present those in the future, 'in a very little while' when God acts to humble the mighty, will receive what is in the book of vision, for it will be read out for the deaf to hear. The idea here is primarily of the spiritually deaf and blind. 'In that day', which in itself is very general, looks forward to the time of the humbling of the mighty, and the blessing of the deaf and blind, and the poor and meek. Matthew 5:3-5 "God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are gentle and lowly, for the whole earth will belong to them." Luke 1:52-53 "He has taken princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands." The Gospels make clear Jesus opened the ears and eyes of the literally deaf and blind, and examples of such healings were used by Him as symbolic of spiritual deafness and blindness.

WOE TO THOSE WHO TRUST IN EGYPT (30:1-7)

Having broken with Assyria and withheld tribute, as a result of the death of Sargon II of Assyria and the troubles that the new king Sennacherib was experiencing in cementing his kingship, Hezekiah and Judah now had to choose what they would do. Assyria's rebellion had failed and she had been crushed by Sennacherib. She could no longer be counted on. Would they look to and depend on Egypt, who were making representations to them and to other allies, with all the compromises that that would involve, or would they look to and depend solely on God?

Isaiah's stress was on total dependence on God but Hezekiah and his advisers favored Egypt. It was ironic that the people who had been delivered from Egypt's bondage could not shake off their connections with Egypt. They had only to look at their history to realize which choice would be better for them. But they had a mistaken view of Egypt's power and preferred the help that they could see. They overlooked the fact that in the end Egypt, if successful, might make even greater demands on them than Assyria.

God now declares a woe on His people. The act of seeking to Egypt for help against Assyria rather than to God is here seen as rebellion against God. They had been given a choice – either Egypt or God – and they had chosen Egypt. Therefore they had rebelled against God. They were like rebellious children, looking to anyone but their Father for advice (v2).

Isaiah 30:15 "The Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says, "Only in returning to me and waiting for me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength. But you would have none of it." The only real solution to a satisfying and inwardly secure life is quiet confidence in and trust in God, with its resulting obedience to His word. Then a man can be strong whatever comes because he knows that God is with him to act for him and with him.

However, Judah preferred what they could see to what they could not see unlike Paul when he said, 2 Cor. 4:18 "So we don't look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever."

What will be the outcome? They will regret the choice that they made in rejecting God's help and seeking the help of Egypt (v2—5). When they have made their choice they will find the strength of Pharaoh insufficient, it will leave them exposed. They will find the shadow of Egypt brings defeat and disaster.

In Isaiah 30:7-11, Isaiah is told to write down his prophecies so that future generations would know what God had said to His people. For the people were in a state where they did not want to hear God's Law and wanted seers and prophets who would say what they wanted to hear, while God wanted His own acts to be judged in the light of the truth and of what He had

promised (See Isaiah 8:1). They preferred, and demanded, smooth preaching which would not ruffle their consciences and to be told illusions that would make them happy (such as how good it was to trust in safe, reliable Egypt). They did not want to be told the truth. Amos 2:12 ""But you caused the Nazirites to sin by making them drink your wine, and you said to my prophets, 'Shut up!'" Micah 2:6 ""Don't say such things," the people say. "Don't prophesy like that. Such disasters will never come our way!"

Therefore: Isaiah 30:16-17 "You said, 'No, we will get our help from Egypt. They will give us swift horses for riding into battle.' But the only swiftness you are going to see is the swiftness of your enemies chasing you! One of them will chase a thousand of you. Five of them will make all of you flee. You will be left like a lonely flagpole on a distant mountaintop." The enemies will be so mighty that all that they will need to defeat a regiment will be one man, and five will defeat the whole army. The "lonely flagpole" probably refers to a last stand made by a defeated force, when they have rallied on a convenient mountain or hill and raised their banner or sent out their distress signals (compare Judges 20.47).

God will wait to be gracious: Isaiah 30:18 "But the Lord still waits for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion. For the Lord is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for him to help them."

When God had asked them to return to Him (v15) they had refused. Though they have rejected Him, He will patiently wait for them to return to Him. He commences with two 'therefores'. In verse 16 they had learned that because of their trust in their own abilities 'therefore' they would flee and 'therefore' those who pursued them would be swift. Now He stresses that 'therefore' also He will wait, allowing what is to happen to happen, so that they might learn their insufficiency, and then, when they finally do seek Him, He can be gracious to them, revealing His undeserved love, and 'therefore' He will finally act on their behalf, He will rise (or 'be exalted') in order to reveal to them His mercy and compassion. Why will He do this, "For the Lord is a faithful God..." (v18).

The remnant (30:19-33):

While the future holds adversity for them, His final purpose is to bless those who are His true people. In the case of those who will hear His voice, He will be there to guide them. And once they have learned their lesson through their sufferings then they will enjoy great prosperity. In typical fashion Isaiah now promises hope, because it is finally God's purpose to bless those of His people whom He preserves. His words are addressed to those in Zion, at Jerusalem. It is true that they must first face the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, that is, that adversity and affliction will for a time be their staple diet in days to come, but there will come a day when weeping is no more. The present is bleak because of their sin, but the future is bright because of God's sovereign mercy (but only for those who survive).

What will God do for them?

- God will hear those who call to Him (v19)
- God will guide them in His ways (v21): The picture is of a Guide, who when the caravan He is leading takes the wrong road because He has gone ahead to scout, calls after them, 'this is the way, walk in it'.
- God will be their Teacher: (v20): They will be able to recognize Him (See John 1:14).
- God will bring restoration and joy to them (v23-26). Notice the implication of the Messiah here concerning "bread" and "water" (John 6:35, 51, 4:14, 7:37-38). To an agricultural community the greatest blessings conceivable were plentiful rain, fruitful harvests, and large pasturage, and that is why their future was pictured in these terms.

What will the remnant do?

Isaiah 30:22 "Then you will destroy all your silver idols and gold images. You will throw them out like filthy rags. "Ugh!" you will say to them. "Begone!"

One sign of their reformation will be that they will rid themselves of their idols made of wood, and covered with precious metals. They will first denude them of their silver and gold, and then throw them away, declaring their intention to be rid of them, and that they want no more of them, demanding that they go on their way and leave them.

The Burden of the Beasts of the South (30.6-7):

A prophetic burden usually indicates judgment on the subject of the burden. Here the judgment is on the beasts who carry the bribes to Egypt. For they carry them to no purpose, for Egypt is a powerless monster.

Isaiah declares himself to be burdened over the asses and camels that have to carry the heavy burden of the gifts sent by Hezekiah to Egypt, foreseeing judgment on them because of the task they carry out (v6). The judgment will really be on their owners. They are being taken through the Negeb, a place full of wild and dangerous beasts, possibly in order to avoid the easy route along the coast in case news of their journey gets out. The caravan is doing exactly the same in the opposite direction as Israel did when they came out of Egypt at the Exodus, avoiding the trade route, presumably for the sake of secrecy. This is probably intended to be seen as significant. Israel was retracing their steps towards their previous tormentors instead of trusting in God.

The Destruction of Assyria (30.27-33).

Although there will be no help for them in Egypt, they will be delivered, for God Himself will act to deliver them. For the remnant who come through the fire, those who have sought refuge on God's mountain, the true believers, there will be mercy, because God will act for them and sweep away the enemy.

WOE TO THOSE WHO PURSUE EGYPT (31:1-32:20)

Trust in God and not in the horses of Egypt (31:1-3): The Assyrians had powerful chariots and horsemen, and in order to combat them many felt that their only hope was in Egypt, famous for its horses. But God here points out that the Egyptians are but men, and their horses are but flesh. Where they should be looking is to the One Who can act by His voice and by His Spirit.

God will deliver His people (31:4-9): Isaiah points out that God is not afraid of the ranting of Assyria. Rather He will come to act on behalf of His people as He did at the Exodus when the angel of death slew the Egyptian firstborn. Like a giant bird He is hovering over His people to protect them, and they will therefore be delivered, but not by a human agency.

Hope in the Coming King (Chapter 32): The banner at which Assyria will be dismayed points towards the coming king, the hope of Israel (11.10). The king of Assyria will perish, burned up in God's furnace, but Israel's hope is to be in God's King Who will come in righteousness and be to His people all that they require, the king already expanded on in Isaiah 9.5-6; 11.1-9, when the prince of Peace will bring peace and harmony to His people.

Israel/Judah laid great stress on the house of David and saw all their future hopes as tied up in that house. The King was to them the representative of God and acted on their behalf and in their name with God. It was in him that the everlasting promises were tied up (2 Samuel 7.12-16; Psalm 2; 45; 89.19-37; Ezekiel 37.24-28). These promises were central to the everlasting covenant. They were seen as 'the sure mercies of David' (Isaiah 55.3). Thus their king was the very source of their life (Lamentations 4.20). We can imagine with what hopes they therefore looked forward for the greater David who would establish the everlasting kingdom, and towards the good days that were coming. That is why the writers of the book of Kings laid such great stress on whether the king did good or evil in the sight of Lord. He was seen as acting for the nation and in its name, and his failure was their failure. So Israel looked forward in accordance with God's promises to the fact that one day would come a King Who would be all powerful and all triumphant, Who would establish righteousness and justice, and Who would introduce the everlasting kingdom (9.6-7; 11.1-10; Psalm 2; 45; 89.19-37; Ezekiel 37.24-28).

Beyond God's judgments as expressed in His treatment of Assyria lies the coming of a King who will rule in righteousness, and Whose reign will epitomize true justice, (9.7; 11.1-5) so that all who serve under Him will be just

and fair (see Matthew 19.28; Luke 22.30). Some kings would partially fulfil the dream, kings such as Josiah, but none would make it a full actuality until the coming of Jesus. He alone could represent the future king in all His aspects. He did so when He offered men entrance under the Kingly Rule of God, and was there for them to meet their deepest needs, and especially so when, having sacrificed Himself on their behalf (see chapter 53) He was raised and seated on the throne at the right hand of God to watch over them permanently. So whatever wind blows, whatever tempest arises, whatever great heat makes weary His people, He is their shelter, their Protector, their hiding place, and the provider of the water of life (compare 55.1; John 4.10, 13-14; 7.37-38).

Response of the people to their King: In response to the righteous king will be a responsive people (32:3-4). They will see clearly and will hear the words of righteousness. The sad state of the people as in Isaiah 6:10 will have been reversed. For when this king reigns those who see will understand, their eyes will not be dim, those who hear will listen. This is in direct contrast to 6:10 where the people were described as heavy of ear, closed of eye and fat in heart and thus unwilling to respond to God.

The pouring out of the Spirit (32:15-20): As ever Isaiah sees beyond the gloom. God will finally work on behalf of His remnant (6:12). After the destruction and the coming exile will also come the time when God acts again on behalf of His true people.

God will act on behalf of His people through His Spirit. The verb 'poured out' demonstrates that rain is in mind in the description, thus the Spirit is seen as active in producing rain on the land resulting in fruitful fields where there was wilderness, and the land which was once fruitful field becoming so luxurious that they will appear like a forest (compare 29:17). The working of the Spirit is seen as producing righteousness in men's hearts through faith, resulting in right judgments and righteous living (compare 44.1-5). And the result of that righteousness will be peace, and its continual effect everlasting quietness and confidence.

WOE ON THOSE WHO ARE TREACHEROUS (CHAPTER 33)

The sixth woe seems in context to be directed against Assyria for some treacherous act. The treacherous act may be seen as occurring in 2 Kings 18.13-18 when Sennacherib accepted peace terms and tribute from Hezekiah but then later advanced and besieged Jerusalem. Behind his change of heart may have been news of the gathering of the Egyptian army, possibly supplemented by auxiliaries from Judah. No doubt he persuaded himself that he was justified because of this, but Jerusalem and Isaiah saw it as treachery, for they had had no part in the rebellion since the surrender.

Assyria is condemned (1): The point behind this woe is that Assyria had gone beyond their remit. God had summoned them to chastise His people, but they are now bent on going further. They have despoiled the temple treasury and desire to take captive God's people (36:17). They have no excuse for this. No one has done it to them. But they are greedy and treacherous. Thus their greed and treachery will rebound on their own heads. They in turn will be despoiled by others and they will experience treachery at first hand, just as they have been treacherous. What a man sows he will reap. This is a principle that God has built into creation.

God's people cry for help: Isaiah 33:2 "But Lord, be merciful to us, for we have waited for you. Be our strength each day and our salvation in times of trouble."

Here we note that God's people seek His compassion and undeserved love. They point out that they are trusting Him at last, they have at last 'waited for Him'. So Isaiah prays that God will indeed be their arm every morning, their strength and uplifter. Then he includes himself and prays for deliverance for them all in the trouble that they now face, which may well have been the sight of the siege army of Sennacherib surrounding Jerusalem, and the words of the army commander calling on them to surrender (36-37).

Bewailing the treachery of the enemy (33.7-12): Meanwhile the Assyrian advance continued. God had promised action, but had not yet acted. He was waiting for the right time to arrive. Humanly speaking great hopes had been placed in the surrender treaty made with Sennacherib, but those great hopes had come to nought, and here we see those who had sought to establish the treaty in tears. The further interference of Egypt had probably devastated them, and had demonstrated yet again that it is never wise to trust in man. Thus the commanders and mighty men (the valiant ones) in the field are 'crying outside', and the ambassadors who had achieved the treaty wept bitterly. Both thought that they had succeeded, the one in holding off Sennacherib long enough for the treaty to be signed, the other in actually formulating a treaty which at least seemed to give some hope, even if it was at great cost. But it had all been in vain. For Sennacherib's advance now continued, men were shut up for protection in their cities, the roads and highways were wasted, no one travelled on them in peace, for Sennacherib

had rejected the treaty and torn it up, and his warlike attentions were again turned on the cities of Judah. He had no regard for men nor for what they thought. His aim was destruction and despoliation.

God Is So Holy, Who Can Know Him? (33.13-16): What God had done in defeating Assyria and delivering Jerusalem leads on to His depiction of His holiness and power. He is above all and will bring about His will and none but those whom He has chosen and made fit may dwell with Him in His glory, amid the everlasting burnings. The effect of His destruction of the army of Assyria now causes God to challenge the nations. Let all both far and near consider what He has done and acknowledge His power. For what He has done has even awakened the sinners and the godless in Zion to consider their position. It has made them aware of His holiness and power, and of what He essentially is, so that they cry out and ask who can possibly hope to dwell with One Who is so holy that He is like a devouring fire, One Who is like an everlastingly burning flame (compare Deuteronomy 4.11-12, 33, 36; 5.24-25).

The word for dwell means 'to dwell as an outsider, an alien'. They have therefore rightfully recognized that those who are strangers to God and what He is cannot hope to reside in His presence. And they compare themselves with those strangers. For they know that He is a consuming fire of holiness, that He is glorious in holiness, that He is the Holy One of Israel, and can only be truly known by those who have been made holy (compare 4:3-4).

But the reply comes that there are those who can survive and enjoy His presence, and live with His holiness, and of those we now learn (v15-16, see also Psalm 15). This is the description of the one who can dwell with God's holiness. It is the one who has responded to God and to His covenant, who walks in accordance with God's requirements, and whose word is totally true, honest and reliable. He does not seek to obtain gain by the wrong use of power or influence. When any seek to bribe him, pushing something quietly into his hand, he shakes his hand free. If there is talk of injuring others he stops up his ears from involvement. He closes his eyes against all evil sights and refuses even to look at them.

The Glory That Is Coming (33.17-20): In stark contrast with all that has gone before is the destiny of God's true people. For them the future holds the promise of a permanent existence in the presence of God, of a permanent beholding of His glory, of a permanent experience of His presence, when all that is of the past will have been done away, and He has become all in all. This promise to the godly man sums up the future for the godly remnant. They will see the coming King in the splendour of His glorious beauty (Psalm 45.2, 32:1-2).

- God will be with His people (33:21)
- God will be their Judge and King (33:22)
- God will be their Salvation (33:22)

4. JUDGEMENT AGAINST ALL NATIONS (CHAPTER 34)

Isaiah 34:1-4 "Come here and listen, O nations of the earth. Let the world and everything in it hear my words. For the Lord is enraged against the nations. His fury is against all their armies. He will completely destroy them, bringing about their slaughter. Their dead will be left unburied, and the stench of rotting bodies will fill the land. The mountains will flow with their blood. The heavens above will melt away and disappear like a rolled-up scroll. The stars will fall from the sky, just as withered leaves and fruit fall from a tree."

WHY WILL GOD BRING JUDGMENT ON THESE NATIONS?

Because of the indignation of the Lord (v2): Jeremiah 10:10 "But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation." Nahum 1:6 "Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

Because it will be a recompense: Ezekiel 7:4 "I will turn my eyes away and show no pity, repaying you in full for all your evil. Then you will know that I am the Lord!" Ezekiel 9:10 "So I will not spare them or have any pity on them. I will fully repay them for all they have done."

WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF THIS JUDGMENT?

Desolation: Isaiah 34:10 "This judgment on Edom will never end; the smoke of its burning will rise forever. The land will lie deserted from generation to generation. No one will live there anymore." Isaiah 13:9 "For see, the day of the Lord is coming—the terrible day of his fury and fierce anger. The land will be destroyed and all the sinners with it."

Barrenness: Isaiah 34:12 "It will be called the Land of Nothing, and its princes soon will all be gone." This was part of the curse that came upon the earth when Adam and Eve sinned: Genesis 3:12 "No longer will it yield abundant crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless fugitive on the earth, constantly wandering from place to place."

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

Read Isaiah 28

- What is the condition of Ephraim (vv 1-13) and Judah (vv 14-15)?
- What descriptions are given of the stone laid in Zion (v 16)?
- Who is this cornerstone?

Read Isaiah 31-32

- From 31:1-3, what does it mean to "rely on the flesh?" What happens to those who do? Give verses.
- What will happen to: Jerusalem and Assyria?
- From Chapter 32, describe the transformation that will occur when the "righteous king" reigns.
- Define "complacent." How many times does Isaiah use the word in vv 9-11? In what ways are we Christians, complacent today?

Read Isaiah 34-35

- From Isaiah 34:1-7, how will God judge evil?
- From Isaiah 34:8-17, what guarantee do you have that the day of the Lord's vengeance will come? Give the verse.
- How does this knowledge encourage you to share the gospel with unbelievers? (See 2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

SECTION FIVE: GOD'S FUTURE BLESSING ON HIS PEOPLE (CHAPTER 35)

This chapter possibly completes the first half of the book prior to entering the corridor that leads into the second half of the book, that is chapter 36-39 which deal with historical events that carry us from the first to the second, and illuminate both halves. It thus deals with the final triumph of the people of God through redemption.

The contrast of chapter 34 and 35:

This chapter is in huge and deliberate contrast with the previous one. There the dreadful doom of Esau was pronounced, but here the huge blessing of Jacob. In the end all will be as God had determined, but in the case of Jacob/Israel not as they deserved. Their destiny is of God's grace as revealed to the remnant, just as Edom's is of God's wrath (Malachi 1.2-4). For in contrast to the steaming pitch and brimstone on Edom, the desert of Israel will blossom like a rose (or 'crocus'), and in contrast to the everlasting emptiness of Eden, the remnant of the people of God will enjoy their land in everlasting joy. The land will then flourish in such a way that it will be evident that the curse is over. There will be no more curse (Revelation 22.3). The result will be that the redeemed will walk in it in total safety. Gladness and joy will abound and there will be no more sorrow or sighing. The two chapters illustrate well the words of Jesus, 'these (like Edom) will go into eternal punishment, but the righteous (the true Israel) into life eternal' (Matthew 25.46).

The Desert Will Blossom Like A Rose And Reveal The Glory of God (35.1-2): In direct contrast with the barrenness and emptiness of Edom, all the barren places of Israel will flourish. As a result of God's judgment on them large parts of the lands of Judah and Israel would become like a wilderness and a desert, but it is not God's intention that this should be for ever. For eventually His people will return and the land will blossom like a rose or like the autumn crocus, and there will be great joy and singing. It will become fruitful like Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon proverbially were (see also 33.9), and through it the glory of God and the excellency of their God will be revealed. The picture is of a new miracle of growth. Even the most barren parts of the land will be as the most fruitful. There will be fruitfulness everywhere.

God's People Are To Prepare Themselves For Deliverance (35.3-4): Those who would participate in this restoration and new life must prepare themselves and therefore Isaiah here calls on the people to become strong – "strengthen ... make firm ... Be strong, do not fear" The remnant needed to be strong in the Lord because there was coming a time when God will repay the enemies for all that they have done wrong and for salvation for all those who are His.

The Days of Blessing Will Surely Come (35.5-7): For those who are His the day of blessing is guaranteed. And in that day all will be put right. All disability will be removed to be replaced by rivers of living water (John 4.10-14; 7.37-39), which will endure for ever (Revelation 22.1-5). Once God's Day of vengeance and recompense comes, wonderful things will happen. For Edom it would mean slaughter and desolation (34.8). But for God's people it will mean restoration. Abundance of water is a constant indicator of blessing in Scripture, symbolic as in 32:15 of the coming of the Spirit of God (compare 44.1-5).

What will be the blessings of God's glory?

- The eyes of the blind will be opened (v5)
- The ears of the deaf will be unstopped (v5)
- The lame will walk again (v6)
- The tongue of the dumb will speak (v6)
- Living water will come (v6-7)
- The people of God will rejoice (v9-10)

How has this been fulfilled in Christ?

- Matthew 11:4-5 "Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him about what you have heard and seen— the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor."
- John 4:10 "Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who I am, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."

God Will Prepare For His People The Way In Which They Must Walk (35.8-10):

Walking in God's way is a theme of Isaiah (3.12; 8.11; 26.7-8; 28.7; 30.21). It is a way of roses and abundant joy (verses 1-2), it is a way in which all are restored and made whole (3-6), it is a way of abundance of water when the wilderness will be no more (6-7), it is the way of security and holiness (8-9). And all who walk in it turn towards the heavenly Zion in festal joy (10).

Isaiah 35:8 "And a main road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway of Holiness. Evil-hearted people will never travel on it. It will be only for those who walk in God's ways; fools will never walk there."

There is double emphasis here on the fact that there is a Way, a road to travel along. The concentration here is not on where the way leads, (although it is clear from verse 10 that it leads to the heavenly Zion where everlasting joy can be found, so that those who are in it are never far from the heavenly Zion), but on the walking in it. For it is the Holy Way ('way of holiness'), the way of cleanness, of separation to God, the way where God is with His people, and in which they turn to Him.

There is a stress here on choice. A man could choose whether he be made clean, in the Old Testament by the ordinances of sacrifice and offering, and washing and waiting before God, and in the New by the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses from all sin (1 John 1.8-10). Those who would walk that way now must use the means offered. For that Holy Way is in the end only for the cleansed. And in the final kingdom all who are there will be in that way, and those who are not clean will not be there. All will walk with God in the way.

It is no accident that the early Christians saw themselves as the people of The Way (Acts 9.2; 19.9, 23; 22.4; 24.14, 22). The designation may well have had this verse in mind, as in the same way Jesus may have had when He called Himself the Way (John 14.6). For to come to Jesus as the Way was to enter onto the way of holiness. It is the Way of God. In Isaiah this is represented in a number of ways. 'The way' is the way of God's paths (3.12), in contrast with the 'way of the people' (8.11); it is the way of the just which is uprightness (26.7); it is the way of His judgments (26.8). His own do not leave it through drunkenness (28.7), but rather when they begin to go astray to the right hand or to the left they hear a word behind them saying, "This is the way, walk in it" (Isaiah 30.21).

What are the characteristics of this Road?

Safety: Isaiah 35:9 "Lions will not lurk along its course, and there will be no other dangers. Only the redeemed will follow it." The road will be secure from every type of danger, it is for the redeemed of God. On ancient roads the traveler was always in danger of wild beasts, but where this road is there will be no wild beasts.

Ransom: Isaiah 35:10 "Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return to Jerusalem, singing songs of everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be overcome with joy and gladness." God will in some way pay a price for the deliverance of His people. 1 Cor. 6:20 "for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body."

Rejoicing: Those who have been redeemed will walk in His way, and while walking in that way they will constantly turn to Zion to meet with God, in order to give praise and thanks to God. They will be crowned and garlanded with everlasting joy. They will be full of joy and gladness.

Freedom: Galatians 4:26 "But Sarah, the free woman, represents the heavenly Jerusalem. And she is our mother."

God's Presence: Hebrews 12:22 "No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to thousands of angels in joyful assembly."

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

According to Chapter 35, what will be restored in the final kingdom? Give verses

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PART FOUR: HISTORICAL INTERLUDE (36-39)

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this section is to understand the historical events that took place during the reign of King Hezekiah and to understand how the Assyrian empire becomes less prominent and the Babylonian empire becomes the prominent power in the rest of the prophecies of Isaiah.

OUTLINE:

HISTORICAL INTERLUDE
The Boast of the Assyrians Judah's Leaders Respond Isaiah's Response The Prayer of Hezekiah Isaiah Answer from God Hezekiah's Deliverance Babylonian Captivity Promised

These chapters should be compared to 2 Kings 18-20 and 2 Chronicles 29-32 as they bridge the gap between the Assyrian period and the Babylonian period. In Isaiah's day, the chief enemy of the people of Judah were the Assyrians, yet Isaiah's message had most to do with the coming Babylonian captivity.

1. THE BOAST OF THE ASSYRIANS (CHAPTER 36)

The events of this chapter are also recorded in 2 Kings 18:13-27 and 2 Chron 32:1-19 where Sennacherib, King of Assyria came up against the fortified cities of Judah to take them (v1). Up to this point we have only heard mention of the prophetic coming of this invasion (chapter 1-35), but now here in this chapter we see evidence of this prophesied event actually happening.

The Assyrian army swept down from the north, conquering Syria and Israel, as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 8:3-4 and many other passages. The Assyrian army then came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them, as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 7:16-17 and many other passages. At the time of Isaiah 36:1-3, the Assyrian army had conquered all but Jerusalem. Therefore the situation that King Hezekiah found himself in was dire. Here Rabshakeh (the commander of the Assyrian army) stood at the crucial water supply - which would be Jerusalem's life-line in a siege attack (v2). As he stands there, three officials from Hezekiah's government come to meet him.

Here Rabshakeh speaks concerning:

Judah's trust in an alliance with Egypt: Isaiah 36:4-6 "Then the Assyrian king's personal representative sent this message to King Hezekiah: 'This is what the great king of Assyria says: What are you trusting in that makes you so confident? Do you think that mere words can substitute for military skill and strength? Which of your allies will give you any military backing against Assyria? Will Egypt? If you lean on Egypt, you will find it to be a stick that breaks beneath your weight and pierces your hand. The Pharaoh of Egypt is completely unreliable!' One of the great battles for Hezekiah during this time was the temptation to make a defensive alliance with Egypt, which seemed to be the only nation strong enough to protect Judah against the mighty Assyrians. Strangely, Rabshakeh could see the truth of Egypt's weakness better than many of the leaders of Judah could! Egypt had made its one attempt to redeem its promises (28:14) and its army had been beaten at El Tekeh.

As a prophet, Isaiah did everything he could to discourage Hezekiah and the leaders of Judah from putting their trust in Egypt (Isaiah 19:11-17, 20:1-6, 30:1-7). Instead he counseled them to trust in God. In this sense, Rabshakeh is speaking the same thing that Isaiah did. However their motives were different:

- Isaiah counseled them to put their trust in God – the God who was strong enough to deliver them from all their enemies.
- Rabshakeh spoke to completely demoralize Judah and drive them to despair.

Judah's trust in God: Isaiah 36:7 "'But perhaps you will say, 'We are trusting in the Lord our God!' But isn't he the one who was insulted by King Hezekiah? Didn't Hezekiah tear down his shrines and altars and make everyone in Judah worship only at the altar here in Jerusalem?" Rabshakeh anticipated the response of the leaders of Judah. "Rabshakeh, you say that we can't trust in Egypt. All right, we won't. But we can trust in the God."

Rabshakeh knew that King Hezekiah had implemented broad reforms in Judah, including the removal of the high places (2 Kings 18:3-4). The high places were spots of "individual worship" which were prohibited by God's law (Leviticus 17:1-4). Israel was commanded to bring their sacrifices to the official center for sacrifice (the tabernacle or later, the temple). In the pagan world at that time, it was customary to offer sacrifice wherever one pleased - altars would customarily be built on high hills, in forested areas, or at other special places. Hezekiah did right when he took away the high places and the altars, demanding that people come to the temple in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice. However, in Rabshakeh's thinking, Hezekiah's reforms had really displeased God, so he should not expect help from God.

The army of Judah: Isaiah 36:8-9 “‘I’ll tell you what! My master, the king of Assyria, will strike a bargain with you. If you can find two thousand horsemen in your entire army, he will give you two thousand horses for them to ride on! With your tiny army, how can you think of challenging even the weakest contingent of my master’s troops, even with the help of Egypt’s chariots and horsemen?” Rabshakeh’s strategy is to make the army give up in fear, discouragement and despair.

The fact that God was with the Assyrians against Judah: Isaiah 36:10 “What’s more, do you think we have invaded your land without the Lord’s direction? The Lord himself told us, ‘Go and destroy it!’” The best weapon, even greater than the tactic of fear and discouragement, was to say to King Hezekiah that God was against them. In one sense, God was with the Assyrian army, as Isaiah had prophesied this earlier by saying that Assyria would be an instrument in the hand of God in conquering Israel, and in bringing Judah to the brink (Isaiah 8:3-4, 7:16-17). However, we should never think that God tempted an innocent man with an evil plan. In fact, even though God predicted and planned this invasion of the Assyrians, Rabshakeh may have been lying indeed when he said, “The Lord said to me.” God did not have to do anything special to direct the bloodthirsty, conquest-hungry Assyrians to attack Syria, Israel, and Judah. He simply allowed the Assyrians to carry out the corrupt desires of their evil hearts. Therefore, the Assyrians could never excuse themselves by saying, “We were doing the Lord’s will!” even as Judas could never make that excuse regarding his wicked betrayal of Jesus.

When Rabshakeh stood before the people and spoke to them, we notice that his speech was intended to:

- Glorify the enemy facing God’s people (v13)
- Make God’s people doubt their leader (v16)
- Build fear and unbelief in God’s people (v16-20)
- Destroy their trust in God (v16-20)

2. JUDAH’S LEADER’S RESPOND (36:21-37:5)

The leaders who Rabshakeh spoke to: The leaders who had heard Rabshakeh did not speak initially nor did they argue with him but they remained silent (36:21). They came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn (v22): Though they were silent, they were still deeply affected by this attack.

King Hezekiah: Hezekiah’s immediate reaction upon hearing the words of Rabshakeh was to seek the Lord. “And so it was, when King Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. Then he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, 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 trouble and rebuke and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth. It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the 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 lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.'" So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah." (Is 37:1-5)

His reaction to this news was:

- To tear his clothes and mourn for the situation that they were in. The tearing of clothes and the wearing of sackcloth (a rough, burlap-type material) were expressions of deep mourning, usually for the death of a loved one. Hezekiah takes this report regarding Rabshakeh seriously, knowing how dedicated they are to completely conquering Jerusalem.
- To go to the house of the Lord (v1)
- To seek the Word of the Lord (v2).
- To ask Isaiah to pray for them (v4)

3. ISAIAH'S RESPONSE TO RABSHAKEH (37:6-7)

"And Isaiah said to them, "Thus shall you say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: "Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.'"" (V6-7)

4. THE PRAYER OF HEZEKIAH (37:8-20)

While Rabshakeh went back to Assyria, the Assyrians learnt that Egyptian troops (under an Ethiopian king) were advancing from the south. This would be the Egyptian intervention Assyria feared, and that many in Judah trusted in. But as Isaiah prophesied, it would amount to nothing (Isaiah 20:1-6 and 30:1-7).

Rabshakeh on hearing what was happening sent word to King Hezekiah saying, Isaiah 37:10-13 "This message is for King Hezekiah of Judah. Don't let this God you trust deceive you with promises that Jerusalem will not be captured by the king of Assyria. You know perfectly well what the kings of Assyria have done wherever they have gone. They have crushed everyone who stood in their way! Why should you be any different? Have the gods of other nations rescued them—such nations as Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Tel-assar? The former kings of Assyria destroyed them all! What happened to the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad? What happened to the kings of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?"

Hezekiah's response to this letter was one of fear and once again we see him going to the house of the Lord and praying to God (v14-20). Here we see Hezekiah doing exactly what Peter later speaks about, 1 Peter 5:7 "Give all

your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you."

The outline of his prayer:

"O Lord of hosts": This title for our God essentially means, "Lord of armies." Hezekiah was in a crisis that was primarily military in nature, so it made sense for him to address the Lord first according to the aspect of God's nature that was most needful for him. "Lord of armies, send some troops to help us!"

"God of Israel": This title for God reminded Hezekiah - and God - that the God was the covenant God of Israel, and that He should not forsake His people.

"The One who dwells between the cherubim": Here, Hezekiah sees the great majesty of God. Surely, the One who dwells between the cherubim would never allow Rabshakeh's blasphemies to go unpunished.

"You are God, You alone": God is a simple title, but perhaps the most powerful. If He is God, then what can He not do? If He is God, then what is beyond His control? Hezekiah realizes the most fundamental fact of all theology: God is God, and we are not! God is God, and Rabshakeh or the Assyrians are not!

"You who made heaven and earth": In recognizing God as Creator, Hezekiah sees that the LORD has all power and all rights over every created thing. We can almost feel Hezekiah's faith rising as he prays this!

"Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see": Hezekiah knew very well that God did in fact hear and see the blasphemies of Rabshakeh. This is a poetic way of asking God to act upon what He has seen and heard, assuming that if God has seen such things, He will certainly act!

"All the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to reproach the living God": In his prayer, King Hezekiah draws the contrast between the living God and the false gods of the nations the Assyrians have already conquered. Those false gods were not gods, but the work of men's hands - wood and stone, so they were not able to save them from the Assyrians. But Hezekiah prays confidently that the living God will save them, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD, You alone.

5. ISAIAH'S ANSWER FROM GOD (37:21-35)

Isaiah 37:21 "Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent this message to Hezekiah: "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: This is my answer to your prayer concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria."

The glorious answer which fills the rest of the chapter came because Hezekiah prayed. What if he would not have prayed? Then we are to think that no answer would have come, and Jerusalem would have been conquered. Hezekiah's prayer really mattered and therefore we read here the prophecy concerning the:

The future judgment upon the proud Assyrian nation (v24-25): Isaiah 37:29 "And because of your arrogance against me, which I have heard for myself, I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle in your mouth. I will make you return by the road on which you came." Isaiah 37:33-34 "And this is what the Lord says about the king of Assyria: His armies will not enter Jerusalem to shoot their arrows. They will not march outside its gates with their shields and build banks of earth against its walls. The king will return to his own country by the road on which he came. He will not enter this city, says the Lord."

In the latter part of this chapter we see that the angel of the Lord went amongst the camp of Assyria and struck 185000 people. This caused the king to depart and therefore he returned to Nineveh (v36-37). The prophet Hosea made this same prediction: "Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword or battle, by horses or horsemen." (Hosea 1:7)

The future of the city of Jerusalem: Isaiah 37:35 "For my own honor and for the sake of my servant David, I will defend it." Jerusalem would not fall under the Assyrian kingdom.

The future of the remnant: Isaiah 37:31-32 "And you who are left in Judah, who have escaped the ravages of the siege, will take root again in your own soil, and you will flourish and multiply. For a remnant of my people will spread out from Jerusalem, a group of survivors from Mount Zion. The passion of the Lord Almighty will make this happen!"

6. HEZEKIAH'S DELIVERANCE (CHAPTER 38)

Hezekiah becomes sick: Isaiah 38:1 "About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: "This is what the Lord says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness." We know from comparing 2 Kings 18:2 with 2 Kings 20:6, that Hezekiah was 39 years old when he learned he would soon die.

Hezekiah prays: Isaiah 38:2 "When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord,"

Hezekiah receives an answer:

- **Concerning his own physical condition:** Isaiah 38:4-5 "And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, "Go and tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years.'""
- **Concerning the future of Judah:** "I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city." (v6). This promise is in accord with the LORD's previous prophecies of deliverance, and dates this chapter as being before God destroyed the Assyrian army (Isaiah 37:36-37). The connection of the two promises indicates that one would confirm the other. When Hezekiah recovered his health, he could know that God would also deliver him from the Assyrians.

Hezekiah receives a sign: Isaiah 38:7 'And this is the sign that the Lord will give you to prove he will do as he promised"

God showed even more mercy to Hezekiah. God was under no obligation to give this sign yet out of His compassion, He did. God shows the same mercy to us. It should be enough for God to simply say to us, "I love you." But God did so much to demonstrate His love to us (John 3:16, Romans 5:8).

Hezekiah praises God: Isaiah 38:15 "But what could I say? For he himself had sent this sickness. Now I will walk humbly throughout my years because of this anguish I have felt." Isaiah 38:20 "Think of it—the Lord has healed me! I will sing his praises with instruments every day of my life in the Temple of the Lord."

7. BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY PROMISED (CHPATER 39)

Isaiah 39:1-2 "Soon after this, Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent Hezekiah his best wishes and a gift. He had heard that Hezekiah had been very sick and that he had recovered. Hezekiah welcomed the Babylonian envoys and showed them everything in his treasure-houses—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the aromatic oils. He also took them to see his armory and showed them all his other treasures—everything! There was nothing in his palace or kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them."

The first part of Isaiah (chapters 1 through 38) mainly dealt with the present threat from the Assyrian Empire. The rest of Isaiah (chapters 39 through 66) will prophetically speak to the threat of the coming Babylonian Empire. Therefore, this brief chapter is actually an introduction to the second half of Isaiah.

Hezekiah entertains the envoys: In gratitude to the gift and best wishes from the Babylonian envoys, Hezekiah took them and showed them the house of his treasures.

Isaiah reproves Hezekiah: “Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: ‘Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,’ says the LORD. ‘And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’” (v6-7).

Hezekiah thought that this display of wealth would impress the Babylonians. All it did was show them what the kings of Judah had, and what they could get from them.

The treasures would be taken: One day the kings of Babylon would come and take it all away. This was fulfilled in 2 Kings 24:10-13 and 2 Kings 25:11-17, under the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. It would be more than a hundred years before Babylon carried away the royal treasures of Judah, but they did come, just as Isaiah prophesied.

Their sons would be taken: Worse than taking the material riches of the kings of Judah, the king of Babylon would take the sons of the king of Judah - his true riches! One fulfillment of this was the taking of Daniel and his companions into captivity. Daniel was one of the king's descendants taken into the palace of the king of Babylon (Daniel 1:1-4).

Hezekiah response to the Word of the Lord: Isaiah 39:8 “Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “This message you have given me from the Lord is good.” But the king was thinking, “At least there will be peace and security during my lifetime.”

This is a sad state of heart in the king of Judah. God announces coming judgment, and all he can respond with is relief that it will not happen in his lifetime. In this, Hezekiah shows himself to be almost the exact opposite of an “others-centered” person. He is almost totally self-centered. All he cares about is his own personal comfort and success. There is no doubt that Hezekiah started out as a godly king, and overall his reign was one of outstanding godliness (2 Kings 18:3-7). Yet his beginning was much better than his end; Hezekiah did not finish well. God gave Hezekiah the gift of 15 more years of life, but the added years did not make him a better or more godly man.

ASSIGNMENT

Draw a “chart” / “time line”, to show this period of history from king Uzziah until the Babylonian captivity. Your chart / time line should include the following :

- The names of the kings reigning during that period
- The names of the prophets prophesying during that period
- Major events that took place and are noted in the historical books as well as in the book of Isaiah.

PART FOUR: THE COMFORT OF GOD (40-66)

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of this part of the course is to show in how God was going to bring comfort to His people. In this section more details to the Messianic Prophecies is given.

OUTLINE:

THE COMFORT OF GOD
Deliverance from Babylonian Captivity Jehovah's Suffering Servant Effect of the Word of Messiah The New Worship

DELIVERANCE FROM BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY (40-48)

DELIVERANCE FROM BABLON'S CAPTIVITY
God's Comfort of His People (chapter 40)
God's Promises to His people (Chapter 41, 44)
God's Servant will bring judgment (chapter 42, 45) • Messianic Prophecies • Cyrus, the Servant of God
Who will receive this judgment? • The Dead idols (chapter 46) • Babylonian Empire (chapter 47)
Israel's Chastisement and Redemption (chapter 48)

1. GOD'S COMFORT OF HIS PEOPLE (CHAPTER 40)

Isaiah 40:1 "'Comfort, comfort my people," says your God."

The second half of the book of Isaiah deals with the salvation that God will bring to those who are His remnant. In this second half, Isaiah begins by bringing comfort to the people of God.

In this chapter we see that Isaiah prophecies seven things that will bring comfort to the people of God:

1. Their warfare has ended

Isaiah 40:2 ""Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days ..."

Isaiah prophesies to the remnant that God was about to change the situation around for her. Even though they would have to be judged as a result of their sins and lack of repentance, their outcome will not be like the other nations who will be blown away. Isaiah 40:24 "They hardly get started, barely taking root, when he blows on them and their work withers. The wind carries them off like straw." Amidst her hopeless situation God has given hope – her "sad days" and her days of warfare will end and she will once again be comforted.

2. Their iniquity has been pardoned

Isaiah 40:2 ""Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and that her sins are pardoned. Yes, the Lord has punished her in full for all her sins."

When Adam and Eve sinned, a law came into place whereby sin had to be dealt with. Sin could not exist with a holy God and therefore punishment for sin was a result. Here we notice that Isaiah mentions this same principle, "the Lord has punished her in full" or as Paul said, "the wages of sin are death" (Rom 6:23). Through the judgment of Judah, God had satisfied (pardoned) her sin.

Later in his prophecies, Isaiah mentions this same principle when he said: Isaiah 43:25 ""I—yes, I alone—am the one who blots out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again." Isaiah 44:22 "I have swept away your sins like the morning mists. I have scattered your offenses like the clouds. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free."

Micah also said, Micah 7:18 "Where is another God like you, who pardons the sins of the survivors among his people? You cannot stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing mercy."

3. God's Word will stand

Isaiah 40:8 "The grass withers, and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."

God's Word is absolutely trustworthy. When God prophesies judgment it will come to pass. God will use the nations of Babylon and Assyria as instruments of discipline against the nation of Israel and Judah. However, even more powerful is that when He prophesies a remnant will return and worship Him (as we have seen throughout the prophecies of Isaiah), this too will come to pass.

God's promise of the Messiah and the future hope of Israel will not fade as the grass and the flowers fade because God is not nature, He is not comparable to the idols and the man carved images that are made by man (v18-v20, v25-26). He is not comparable to the weakness of man - Isaiah 40:6-7 "A voice said, "Shout!" I asked, "What should I shout?" "Shout that people are like the grass that dies away. Their beauty fades as quickly as the beauty of flowers in a field. The grass withers, and the flowers fade beneath the breath of the Lord. And so it is with people." No, He is God and therefore His Words will stand – His Words will not fade until they have accomplished His desired plans just as He spoke and created the Worlds. Psalm 119:89 "Forever, O Lord, your word stands firm in heaven." Matthew 5:18 "I assure you, until heaven and earth disappear, even the smallest detail of God's law will remain until its purpose is achieved." Luke 21:33 "Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will remain forever."

4. God is!

Isaiah 40:9 "Messenger of good news, shout to Zion from the mountaintops! Shout louder to Jerusalem—do not be afraid. Tell the towns of Judah, "Your God is coming!"

Who is the God who is coming to their aid?

The God who is Sovereign: Isaiah 40:10 "Yes, the Sovereign Lord is coming in all his glorious power. He will rule with awesome strength. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes." Isaiah 40:21-23 "Have you never heard or understood? Are you deaf to the words of God—the words he gave before the world began? Are you so ignorant? It is God who sits above the circle of the earth. The people below must seem to him like grasshoppers! He is the one who spreads out the heavens like a curtain and makes his tent from them. He judges the great people of the world and brings them all to nothing." God's Sovereignty is clearly seen in His control of all men (v23). Job 12:19 "He leads priests away stripped of status; he overthrows the mighty."

The God who is the Creator: Isaiah 40:27-28 "O Israel, how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? How can you say God refuses to hear your case? Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? ..." The God who has come to the remnant to bring comfort and strength is:

- The Everlasting God – The God who encompasses all time and beyond. The God who has no beginning and Who has no end. The God Who simple is!
- The Lord – The God who is in complete control of every situation in the lives of the remnant, even the situations which are difficult and seemingly out of control and chaotic (like the judgment which was coming)

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- The Creator – The God who is the Master Architect. Not only is He the God who has created the waters and the nations (see Is 40:12-15, 21, 26) but He is the Planner of every life. He is intimately involved in saving those who are in. The Psalmist understood this aspect of God when he said, Psalm 139:13-16 “You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.” Jeremiah understood this when he wrote, Jeremiah 29:11-12 “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen.” Isaiah 44:24 “Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

The God who does not grow weary or faint: Is 40:28 “He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.” God is Powerful! Once again Isaiah brings a contrast here to the created things compared to the Creator. Things that have been created by God grow weary and faint and therefore He has provided man with a means by which he can rejuvenate himself – through sleep and rest. However, Isaiah says, Isaiah 40:18 “To whom, then, can we compare God? What image might we find to resemble him?” Isaiah 40:25 ““To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?” asks the Holy One.” God is not man – He does not slumber nor sleep. He is powerful and able to accomplish all that He has said without growing weary and resting. Psalm 121:4 “Indeed, he who watches over Israel never tires and never sleeps.”

5. God is preparing the Way

Isaiah 40:3-5 “Listen! I hear the voice of someone shouting, “Make a highway for the Lord through the wilderness. Make a straight, smooth road through the desert for our God. Fill the valleys and level the hills. Straighten out the curves and smooth off the rough spots. Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The Lord has spoken!”

Before the Messiah was to come, John the Baptist would be sent to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. This preparation will be made by the preaching of repentance and by water baptism (see Matt 3, Mark 1). Mark 1:4 “This messenger was John the Baptist. He lived in the wilderness and was preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had turned from their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.” Isaiah spoke of this repentance and getting your life right before God as “make a straight, smooth road” and “straighten the curves”.

6. The Messiah is Coming

He will be the “glory of God”: Isaiah 40:5 “Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The Lord has spoken!” The splendor and the glory of who God is will be revealed in and through Jesus Christ, the Coming Messiah. John 1:14-16 “So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. John pointed him out to the people. He shouted to the crowds, ‘This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘Someone is coming who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before I did.’ ‘We have all benefited from the rich blessings he brought to us—one gracious blessing after another.’”

He will be the Shepherd: Isaiah 40:10-11 “Yes, the Sovereign Lord is coming in all his glorious power. He will rule with awesome strength. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes. He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.”

The results of the nations of Judah and Israel falling into the sin of idolatry and therefore forsaking God was that there were no true shepherds (leaders and kings) to lead the people along the right paths of God (see Ezekiel 34). Therefore God was sending a True Shepherd to feed and guide the people of God. This True Shepherd prophesied here in Isaiah was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” Hebrews 13:20 “And now, may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, all that is pleasing to him. Jesus is the great Shepherd of the sheep by an everlasting covenant, signed with his blood. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 2:25 “Once you were wandering like lost sheep. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.”

7. God will bring strength to His remnant

Isaiah 40:29-31 “He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak. Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up. But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”

The tired and weary remnant (again a contrast to the powerful God who faints not) will be strengthened by God when they wait upon Him. The word “wait” here refers to ministering unto the Lord, those who become plaited together with Him – as a cord – to be twisted with Him. Those people who are walking with God, who become totally dependent upon Him, will be strengthened with His strength. God will be strong when they are weak. Psalm 46:1 “God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.” Psalm 73:26 “My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,

but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever." God will cause them to have the wings of an eagle and therefore they will have the ability to rise above the circumstances of the natural and soar with Him above it all. Ephes. 2:4-6 "But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, that even while we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's special favor that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ, and we are seated with him in the heavenly realms—all because we are one with Christ Jesus."

PRODUCT OF FAITH BIBLE COLLEGE

2. GOD'S PROMISES TO HIS PEOPLE (CHAPTER 41, 43, 44)

Isaiah 41:8-9 ""But as for you, Israel my servant, Jacob my chosen one, descended from my friend Abraham, I have called you back from the ends of the earth so you can serve me. For I have chosen you and will not throw you away."

Isaiah 44:1-2 "Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen."

Isaiah 43:1 "But now, O Israel, the Lord who created you says: "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine."

GOD'S PEOPLE:

Unlike the other nations discussed in the first part of Isaiah 41:1-7, God speaks of His people as being:

- **His servant:** In contrast to the God-rejecting and idol-making people in the distant lands (coastlands) (see 1, 7), Israel is God's servant, preserved and contended by God.
- **His chosen ones:** Not only is Israel, God's servant, but they are chosen by God. Even though they are "Jacob", conniving and untrustworthy connemen", they are a generation who seeks God. Psalm 24:3-6 "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob."
- **Descendants of His friend, Abraham:** Israel stood in the favor of God not because of their own righteousness but because of their family relationship with Abraham. Since Abraham was the friend of God, so his descendants had a special place before God as well. 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)
- **Jeshurun:** The name Jeshurun appears only three more times in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 32:15, 33:5, 26; and in all cases it is used of Israel. This name speaks of a wonder of grace, for He calls His deeply sinful people His beloved, His upright one.

GOD'S PROMISES:

WHY IS GOD ABLE TO PROVIDE US WITH SUCH GREAT PROMISES?

Isaiah 41:4 "Who has done such mighty deeds, directing the affairs of the human race as each new generation marches by? It is I, the Lord, the First and the Last. I alone am he."

Isaiah 44:6 ""This is what the Lord, Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty, says: I am the First and the Last; there is no other God."

Unlike idols, man made images (44:9-17), God is the First and the Last. An idol can never be the First, because an idol needs someone to make him. An idol can never be the Last, because they wear out and break. But the God of Israel is both the First and the Last; He is completely unique, and besides Him there is no God. He is Self-existing.

WHAT ARE HIS PROMISES?

And therefore upon these principles, God will not turn His back on His people if they will repent and return to Him. God will not allow them to be thrown away (see 41:9, 44:21). But He:

Will be their present Help: Isaiah 41:10-13 "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. "See, all your angry enemies lie there, confused and ashamed. Anyone who opposes you will die. You will look for them in vain. They will all be gone! I am holding you by your right hand—I, the Lord your God. And I say to you, 'Do not be afraid. I am here to help you."

Idols must be "fastened . . . with pegs", so they "might not totter" (Isaiah 41:7). You have to hold them up. But God holds us (v10) up and holds our "right hand" (v13). Hebrews 13:6 "That is why we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

With God's help no obstacle will be too great (41:14-16): God so helps Israel, so empowers them, that they are able to cut down mountains as if they were a great threshing machine, removing mountains and seeing their dust blown away. The point is clear: nothing, not even a mountain, will stand in their way when God helps them. Jesus expressed the same idea in Matthew 17:20: If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." When we overcome great obstacles with the help of God, we know it is His work. We "rejoice in the LORD", not in ourselves. We "glory in the Holy One of Israel", not in ourselves.

Will provide them with abundant resources (41:17-20): When water is sought for, God, will provide them with water. When they are barren, He will make them fruitful. Why is God willing to provide us with His abundant provision? Because it will be a means of testimony of the hand of God upon His people.

Will raise up one from the north (41:25): In contrast to the idols who can tell nothing of the future (41:21-24), God knows what is going to happen in the future. He knows that He will bring Cyrus from the north to conquer the Babylonians, who conquered Judah and Jerusalem and took them captive. Isaiah 44:28 "When I say of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd,' he will certainly do as I say. He will command that Jerusalem be rebuilt and that the Temple be restored." Cyrus was a special instrument in God's hand, for God's work. He would do the work of the LORD (He shall perform all My pleasure), and open the door for the work of rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple after the Babylonians destroyed them. The royal proclamations of Cyrus fulfilling this prophecy are found in Ezra 1:2 and 2 Chronicles 36:23.

Will pour out the Spirit (44:3): Joel 2:28 ""Then after I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions." Matthew 3:11 ""I baptize with water those who turn from their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is far greater than I am—so much greater that I am not even worthy to be his slave. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

An effect of the out pouring of the Holy Spirit is that He identifies us as belonging to the Lord. Isaiah 44:5 "Some will proudly claim, 'I belong to the Lord.' Others will say, 'I am a descendant of Jacob.' Some will write the Lord's name on their hands and will take the honored name of Israel as their own." Ephesians 1:13 speaks of the Holy Spirit as being an identifying seal who is upon all those who believe.

Will redeem them: Isaiah 44:22 "I have swept away your sins like the morning mists. I have scattered your offenses like the clouds. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free." Isaiah 44:24 "The Lord, your Redeemer and Creator, says: "I am the Lord, who made all things. I alone stretched out the heavens. By myself I made the earth and everything in it." Isaiah 43:1 "But now, O Israel, the Lord who created you says: "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine." Isaiah 43:4 "Others died that you might live. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you." Isaiah 43:14 "The Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says: "For your sakes I will send an invading army against Babylon. And the Babylonians will be forced to flee in those ships they are so proud of."

God is the Author of redemption because of His love for His people: John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." Psalm 111:9 "He has paid a full ransom for his people. He has guaranteed his covenant with them

forever. What a holy, awe-inspiring name he has!"

Christ has paid the Redemption Price: Romans 3:24 "Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins." Hebrews 9:12 "Once for all time he took blood into that Most Holy Place, but not the blood of goats and calves. He took his own blood, and with it he secured our salvation forever."

Will supernaturally protect them: Isaiah 43:2 "When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you." Even though they were to enter into this period of judgment they would not be harmed nor would they be destroyed because God will be with them. Just as He constantly protected them in the early history of the Israelites, by being the cloud by day and the fire by night, so God would be constant with them. Zech. 2:10 "The Lord says, 'Shout and rejoice, O Jerusalem, for I am coming to live among you.'"

Will bring the remnant back: Isaiah 43:5-7 "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west and from north and south. I will bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth. All who claim me as their God will come, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them." Deut. 30:3 "then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes. He will have mercy on you and gather you back from all the nations where he has scattered you." Jeremiah 16:15 "Instead, they will say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.' For I will bring them back to this land that I gave their ancestors." Jeremiah 23:3 "But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from wherever I have driven them. I will bring them back into their own fold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number."

Will judge the enemy of God's people: Isaiah 43:14-15 "The Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'For your sakes I will send an invading army against Babylon. And the Babylonians will be forced to flee in those ships they are so proud of. I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel's Creator and King.'"

Isaiah prophesied before the Babylonians ever conquered Judah and sent the nation into a 70-year exile. Yet Isaiah prophesies, not only about the coming captivity, but also beyond it to the eventual judgment upon Babylon for what they will do to Judah. At the time Isaiah prophesied, Babylon was an up-and-coming world power. Before they would be judged, they would be a world dominating super-power. How could Israel be confident that God was up to the job of delivering them and judging Babylon? All they had to do was look at God's great works in the past, such as when He made a way in the sea - when He parted the Red Sea so Israel could cross and escape the Egyptian armies (Exodus 14). Isaiah brings up these images when he writes of

the chariot and the horse, the army and the power of these enemies of God's people, and how they shall lie down together . . . they are extinguished. Just as God overwhelmed the Egyptian armies that had enslaved Israel, so would He judge the Babylonians also.

Will do a new thing: Isaiah 43:18-19 "But forget all that—it is nothing compared to what I am going to do. For I am about to do a brand-new thing. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness for my people to come home. I will create rivers for them in the desert!" Isaiah 42:9 "Everything I prophesied has come true, and now I will prophesy again. I will tell you the future before it happens."

As Isaiah writes prophetically to Israel, they were mired in the desperate circumstances of captivity and exile. God however wanted to focus their eyes on the new work He would do and therefore we see a reminder to not remember the former things. If they remained stuck in the failure and sin and discouragement of the past, they would never go forward to the new thing God had for them. There is a remarkable switch between Isaiah 43:16-17 and Isaiah 43:18. In Isaiah 43:16-17, Israel is told to look to the past by remembering the great things God did for them at the Red Sea. But in Isaiah 43:18, they are told, "Do not remember the former things". This shows us that there is a sense in which we must remember the past, in terms of God's great work on our behalf. There is also a sense in which we must forsake and forget the past, with all its discouragement and defeat, and move on to what God has for us in the future. Staying stuck in the past can keep us from the new thing God wants to do. If Israel stayed stuck in the discouragement and seduction of Babylon, they would never look for the new thing of release from exile.

GOD'S PROMISES IN CHAPTER 41:

- I will strengthen you. (Isaiah 41:10)
- I will help you. (Isaiah 41:10, 13, and 14)
- I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)
- I will make you into a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth. (Isaiah 41:15)
- I will open rivers in desolate heights. (Isaiah 41:18)
- I will make the wilderness a pool of water. (Isaiah 41:18)
- I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree. (Isaiah 41:19)
- I will set in the desert the cypress tree. (Isaiah 41:19) I will give to Jerusalem one who brings good tidings. (Isaiah 41:27)

What a contrast with Isaiah 14 - the "I will" chapter of Satan! Look at the "I wills" of Satan:

- I will ascend into heaven. (Isaiah 14:13)
- I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. (Isaiah 14:13)
- I will also sit on the mount of the congregation. (Isaiah 14:13)
- I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. (Isaiah 14:14)
- I will be like the Most High. (Isaiah 14:14)

The "I wills" of Satan were all proud and self-directed. Every "I will" of God in Isaiah 41 is for the benefit and blessing of His people. Though Satan was lifted up in pride, and proclaimed his "I wills," none of them came to pass. But each and every one of God's "I will's" will happen!

WHAT THE RESPONSE OF GOD'S PEOPLE SHOULD BE?

Fear Not: Isaiah 41:10 "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand." Isaiah 41:14 "Despised though you are, O Israel, don't be afraid, for I will help you. I am the Lord, your Redeemer. I am the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 43:1 "But now, O Israel, the Lord who created you says: "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine." Isaiah 44:2 "The Lord who made you and helps you says: O Jacob, my servant, do not be afraid. O Israel, my chosen one, do not fear."

Know and Believe God: Isaiah 43:10 "'But you are my witnesses, O Israel!" says the Lord. And you are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God; there never has been and never will be." A witness is a passive observer of what someone has done, and Israel had seen the great works of God. But they were more than passive observers; God called Israel to be His servant. That was why they were chosen - not to sit around and glory in their chosenness, but to serve God and to know and believe Him in every way. Jeremiah 9:24 "Let them boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord who is just and righteous, whose love is unfailing, and that I delight in these things. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

Look to His salvation: Isaiah 45:22 "Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other. I have sworn by my own name, and I will never go back on my word:" In this verse we see the simple plan of salvation:

- "Look": This shows the simplicity of salvation, all a person needs to do is look.
- "God": This shows the focus of salvation. If a person desires to find salvation then they need to look to God.
- "Look to Me": This shows the love behind salvation. Sin will bring death and therefore God, through Christ has made a way for man to escape the punishment that sin brings. God therefore made a plan by which man can be saved and then tells him how to receive this salvation. In Numbers 21, the people of Israel were stricken by deadly snake bites, and Moses lifted up the image of a bronze serpent, raised on a pole, and the people who looked to it lived. The people were saved not by doing anything, but by simply looking to the bronze serpent. They had to trust that something as seemingly foolish as looking at such a thing would be sufficient to save

them, and surely, some perished because they thought it too foolish to do such a thing!

- "and be saved": This shows the assurance of salvation.
- "all you ends of the earth": This shows the extent of God's saving love.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

Isaiah 43:22-24 ""But, my dear people, you refuse to ask for my help. You have grown tired of me! You have not brought me lambs for burnt offerings. You have not honored me with sacrifices, though I have not burdened and wearied you with my requests for grain offerings and incense. You have not brought me fragrant incense or pleased me with the fat from sacrifices. Instead, you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your faults."

Isaiah 42:24 "Who allowed Israel to be robbed and hurt? Was it not the Lord? It was the Lord whom we sinned against, for the people would not go where he sent them, nor would they obey his law."

Because of the present state of the people of God, their hard heartedness, God said, Isaiah 42:25 "that is why he poured out such fury on them and destroyed them in battle. They were set on fire and burned, but they still refused to understand." "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance; let us contend together; state your case, that you may be acquitted. Your first father sinned, and your mediators have transgressed against Me. Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches." (43:25-28).

"Your first father sinned" speaks of the sin of Adam. Romans 5:12 "When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned."

"Your mediators have transgressed" speaks of the leaders and the priests of the nation of Israel who were responsible in speaking God's Word to the people. Not only were they - and we - born in sin because of Adam, they trusted in the wrong mediators. The ones they trusted to save them before God were sinners themselves. Looking to a perfect, sinless Mediator can only save us, for there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5). Because of this deep sinfulness, and failure to look to God's solution for sin, there was only a curse for Jacob. Because we are born in sin, and when we reject God's Mediator, then all there is left for us is the curse and reproaches.

3. GOD'S SALVATION WILL COME THROUGH HIS SERVANT (CHAPTER 42, 45)

In these chapters God reveals how salvation would come to the people of God. Chapter 42 deals with salvation from a more distant future aspect whereas chapter 45 deals with the aspect of salvation as being in the near future.

THE MESSIAH – THE SERVANT OF GOD (CHAPTER 42)

THE CHARACTER OF THE MESSIAH

Isaiah 42:1-4 ""Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, and I am pleased with him. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will reveal justice to the nations. He will be gentle—he will not shout or raise his voice in public. He will not crush those who are weak or quench the smallest hope. He will bring full justice to all who have been wronged. He will not stop until truth and righteousness prevail throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction."

He will be a servant: Jesus described Himself as a servant in Matthew 20:25-28, Matthew 23:11, Mark 9:35, Mark 10:43-45. Peter, in his Acts 3 sermon, gives our Savior the title His Servant Jesus (Acts 3:13 and 3:26). In Acts 4, the praying people of God speak of Your holy Servant Jesus (Acts 4:27, 4:30). Jesus said in Matthew 20:25-28 "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many".

- When Jesus said "let him be your servant", it means being a servant is a choice.
- When Jesus said "let him be your slave", it showed how deep service should go.
- When He said that "He did not come to be served, but to serve", it showed the essential heart of a servant.
- When Jesus said "and to give His life a ransom for many", it showed how far servants will go in completing their task.

He will have the Spirit of God upon Him: Three times in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah prophecies concerning the Spirit of God being upon the Coming Messiah – Isaiah 11:12, 42:1 and 61:1. We see the fulfillment of this in Jesus when He was filled with the Spirit, and did ministry in the power and flow of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16).

He will be gentle: Isaiah 42:3 "He will not crush those who are weak or quench the smallest hope. He will bring full justice to all who have been wronged." A reed is a fairly fragile plant, yet if a reed is bruised, the Servant

will handle it so gently that He will not break it. And if flax, used for tinder to start a fire, does not flame but only smokes, He will not quench it into extinguishing. Instead, the Servant will gently blow on the smoking flax, fanning it into flame again! When Jesus spoke to the outcasts and the sinners He never rebuked them to shame them but rather He lovingly confronted them in their sin to bring them to a place of repentance (See John 6). In the same manner God will deal with the people of God who have sinned against Him. He will not completely destroy them but He will make a way of salvation for them.

He will bring forth justice: "He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged" The Servant is gentle, but not weak.

THE MINISTRY OF THE MESSIAH:

What will be the ministry of the Messiah?

- **He will bring His people to righteousness** (42:6): Romans 10:4 "For Christ has accomplished the whole purpose of the law. All who believe in him are made right with God." 1 Cor. 1:30 "God alone made it possible for you to be in Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made Christ to be wisdom itself. He is the one who made us acceptable to God. He made us pure and holy, and he gave himself to purchase our freedom."
- **He will keep His people** (42:6): John 10:28 "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them away from me,"
- **He will bring light to all nations**, even the Gentiles (42:6): Isaiah 9:2 "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light—a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow." John 1:4 "Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone."
- **He will open the eyes of the blind** (42:7): Psalm 146:8 "The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts the burdens of those bent beneath their loads. The Lord loves the righteous." The sight spoken of here is both spiritual and physical. We see in the gospels that Jesus opened the eyes of the blind (See John 9) but He also opened the eyes of those who were spiritually blind. 2 Cor. 4:3-6 "If the Good News we preach is veiled from anyone, it is a sign that they are perishing. Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them. They don't understand the message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. We don't go around preaching about ourselves; we preach Christ Jesus, the Lord. All we say about ourselves is that we are your servants because of what Jesus has done for us. For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made us understand that this light is the brightness of the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ."

- **He will release those who are captive** (42:7): John 8:32 "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Romans 8:2 "For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death." Romans 8:21 "All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay."
- **He will lead His people:** (42:16): Isaiah 48:17 "'The Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good and leads you along the paths you should follow.'" Luke 1:79 "to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace." John 16:13 "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not be presenting his own ideas; he will be telling you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future."
- **He will justify His people** (45:25): Romans 5:1 "Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us." 1 Cor. 6:11 "There was a time when some of you were just like that, but now your sins have been washed away, and you have been set apart for God. You have been made right with God because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God have done for you."

CYRUS, THE SERVANT OF GOD (CHPATER 45)

Isaiah 45:1-3 "This is what the Lord says to Cyrus, his anointed one, whose right hand he will empower. Before him, mighty kings will be paralyzed with fear. Their fortress gates will be opened, never again to shut against him. This is what the Lord says: "I will go before you, Cyrus, and level the mountains. I will smash down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness—secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name."

Isaiah 45:12-13 "I am the one who made the earth and created people to live on it. With my hands I stretched out the heavens. All the millions of stars are at my command. I will raise up Cyrus to fulfill my righteous purpose, and I will guide all his actions. He will restore my city and free my captive people—and not for a reward! I, the Lord Almighty, have spoken!"

Isaiah 46:11 "I will call a swift bird of prey from the east—a leader from a distant land who will come and do my bidding. I have said I would do it, and I will."

Here Isaiah prophecies more clearly concerning the near salvation of the people of God previously mentioned in Isaiah 41:22-25 and Isaiah 44:28.

The armies of the Medes and Persians, under Cyrus, conquered the city of Babylon in a remarkable raid described in Daniel 5. According to the ancient historian Herodotus, while King Belshazzar of Babylon held a reckless party,

Cyrus conquered the city by diverting the flow of the Euphrates into a nearby swamp; thus lowering the level of the river so his troops could march through the water and under the river-gates. But they still would not have been able to enter, had not the bronze gates of the inner walls been left inexplicably unlocked. God opened the gates of the city of Babylon for Cyrus, and put it in writing 200 years before it happened! The night they conquered the city, Cyrus and his armies took all the staggering treasures of Babylon.

What was the purpose of raising up Cyrus? (v4-7)

- “For Jacob’s sake” (v4): It was not Cyrus who moved God to act and use Him as His servant. Cyrus was an ungodly king. However, God was moved because of the condition and the cry of His people. It was therefore for their sake that He delivered them.
- “That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none beside Me” (v6): This was wonderfully fulfilled in Ezra 1:1-3. In this passage in which Cyrus made his proclamation allowing the people of God to return to the Promised Land, he acknowledged to the whole world the greatness and uniqueness of God of Israel. Ezra 1:2-3 “This is what King Cyrus of Persia says: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build him a Temple at Jerusalem in the land of Judah. All of you who are his people may return to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this Temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, who lives in Jerusalem. And may your God be with you!”
- “But the Lord will save the people of Israel with eternal salvation. They will never again be humiliated and disgraced throughout everlasting ages.” (Is 45:17): God through Cyrus will bring salvation to the people of God. However, there is a greater salvation spoken of here – not just an immediate salvation from the captivity of Babylon but also an everlasting salvation, a salvation which cannot be taken away from His people. Isaiah 51:6 “Look up to the skies above, and gaze down on the earth beneath. For the skies will disappear like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a piece of clothing. The people of the earth will die like flies, but my salvation lasts forever. My righteous rule will never end!”

4. GOD'S JUDGEMENT WILL BE ON ... (CHPATER 46, 47)

DEAD IDOLS AND A LIVING GOD (CHAPTER 46):

In the last few chapters, God spoke of being incomparable with the idols and the man made images that the people of God had turned to:

- Isaiah 40:18-20 "To whom, then, can we compare God? What image might we find to resemble him? Can he be compared to an idol formed in a mold, overlaid with gold, and decorated with silver chains? Or is a poor person's wooden idol better? Can God be compared to an idol that must be placed on a stand so it won't fall down?"
- Isaiah 44:9-11 "How foolish are those who manufacture idols to be their gods. These highly valued objects are really worthless. They themselves are witnesses that this is so, for their idols neither see nor know. No wonder those who worship them are put to shame. Who but a fool would make his own god—an idol that cannot help him one bit! All who worship idols will stand before the Lord in shame, along with all these craftsmen—mere humans—who claim they can make a god. Together they will stand in terror and shame."

The idols are carried into captivity – God carries His people:

Now in chapter 45 we see the people of God and the idols being taken captive to Babylon. Isaiah 46:1-2 "The idols of Babylon, Bel and Nebo, are being hauled away on ox carts. But look! The beasts are staggering under the weight! Both the idols and the ones carrying them are bowed down. The gods cannot protect the people, and the people cannot protect the gods. They go off into captivity together." In these verses Isaiah pictures God's people going into captivity with their idols loaded on animals. Here Isaiah reiterates the weakness, the absolute futility of the idols whom the people of God had placed their trust in. Not only could they not save the people from being taken into captivity, but they had to be carried.

Isaiah 46:3-4 "'Listen to me, all you who are left in Israel. I created you and have cared for you since before you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you.'" In complete contrast to the idol who had to be carried when they were taken from one place to another – God is not carried but rather He carries His people.

The idols cannot save those who cry to them: God hears and save His people

Isaiah 46:5-7 "'To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal? Some people pour out their silver and gold and hire a craftsman to make a god from it. Then they bow down and worship it! They carry it around on their shoulders, and when they set it down, it stays there. It cannot even move! And when someone prays to it, there is no answer. It has no power to get

anyone out of trouble." Again in Isaiah 47:12, God challenges the idols of Babylon to deliver them from their fate. Isaiah 47:12 ""Call out the demon hordes you have worshiped all these years. Ask them to help you strike terror into the hearts of people once again."

In contrast with the idols,

- God hears His people's cry, Psalm 34:17 "The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles." Isaiah 41:17 ""When the poor and needy search for water and there is none, and their tongues are parched from thirst, then I, the Lord, will answer them. I, the God of Israel, will never forsake them."
- God speaks to His people. Isaiah 46:9-10 "And do not forget the things I have done throughout history. For I am God—I alone! I am God, and there is no one else like me. Only I can tell you what is going to happen even before it happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish."
- God acts. Isaiah 46:11 "I will call a swift bird of prey from the east—a leader from a distant land who will come and do my bidding. I have said I would do it, and I will." Isaiah 46:13 "For I am ready to set things right, not in the distant future, but right now! I am ready to save Jerusalem and give my glory to Israel."

BABYLON WILL BE BROUGHT LOW (CHAPTER 47)

Babylon will be like a woman, humbled: Isaiah 47:1-3 ""Come, Babylon, unconquered one, sit in the dust. For your days of glory, pomp, and honor have ended. O daughter of Babylonia, never again will you be the lovely princess, tender and delicate. Take heavy millstones and grind the corn. Remove your veil and strip off your robe. Expose yourself to public view. You will be naked and burdened with shame. I will take vengeance against you and will not negotiate."

Why did God humble her?

Isaiah 47:5-7 "O daughter of Babylonia, sit now in darkness and silence. Never again will you be known as the queen of kingdoms. For I was angry with my chosen people and began their punishment by letting them fall into your hands. But you, Babylon, showed them no mercy. You have forced even the elderly to carry heavy burdens. You thought, 'I will reign forever as queen of the world!' You did not care at all about my people or think about the consequences of your actions."

Babylon thought they conquered in their own strength: Isaiah 47:6 "For I was angry with my chosen people and began their punishment by letting them fall into your hands...." Babylon thought that she conquered Judah and

Jerusalem through her own power. But Babylon didn't see that she really conquered them because God was angry with His people, and therefore used Babylon as an instrument of His work. God says, "You didn't know that I had given them into your hand." Isaiah 47:10 "You felt secure in all your wickedness. 'No one sees me,' you said. Your 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' have caused you to turn away from me and claim, 'I am self-sufficient and not accountable to anyone!'

Babylon showed no mercy to God's people: As an instrument in God's hand, Babylon was too enthusiastic in their attack on God's people. Even though God allowed it and used it, they still should have showed mercy to God's people.

Babylon became proud: Babylon became proud and thought that she would be queen forever. Isaiah 47:8 ""You are a pleasure-crazy kingdom, living at ease and feeling secure, bragging as if you were the greatest in the world! You say, 'I'm self-sufficient and not accountable to anyone! I will never be a widow or lose my children.'"

How will she be humbled?

Isaiah 47:9 "Well, those two things will come upon you in a moment: widowhood and the loss of your children. Yes, these calamities will come upon you, despite all your witchcraft and magic."

Isaiah 47:11 "So disaster will overtake you suddenly, and you won't be able to charm it away. Calamity will fall upon you, and you won't be able to buy your way out. A catastrophe will arise so fast that you won't know what hit you."

Isaiah 47:12-15 "Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee."

See Daniel 5 for fulfillment of these prophecies.

Daniel 5:5-8 "At that very moment they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace, near the lampstand. The king himself saw the hand as it wrote, and his face turned pale with fear. Such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him. The king shouted for the enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers to be brought before him. He said to these wise men of Babylon,

"Whoever can read this writing and tell me what it means will be dressed in purple robes of royal honor and will wear a gold chain around his neck. He will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom!" But when all the king's wise men came in, none of them could read the writing or tell him what it meant."

Daniel then came and gave the meaning: Daniel 5:26-30 "This is what these words mean: Mene means 'numbered'—God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end. Tekel means 'weighed'—you have been weighed on the balances and have failed the test. Parsin means 'divided'—your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians." Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was dressed in purple robes, a gold chain was hung around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed."

5. ISRAEL'S DISCIPLINE (CHPATER 48)

ISRAEL IS CHASTENED:

Isaiah 48:10 "I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering."

Once again God repeats the reasons why He will cause His people to be refined and chastised:

They make false professions: Isaiah 48:1 ""Listen to me, O family of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel and born into the family of Judah. Listen, you who take oaths in the name of the Lord and call on the God of Israel. You don't follow through on any of your promises,"

Here Isaiah reveals their sin - They take God's name, identify with the holy city, and give appearance that they lean on the God of Israel. Yet it is only image, not reality, and God sees through the image to the reality.

Ezekiel said, "So they come pretending to be sincere and sit before you listening. But they have no intention of doing what I tell them. They express love with their mouths, but their hearts seek only after money. You are very entertaining to them, like someone who sings love songs with a beautiful voice or plays fine music on an instrument. They hear what you say, but they don't do it!" (Ezek 33:31-32)

They are stubborn: Isaiah 48:4 ""I know how stubborn and obstinate you are. Your necks are as unbending as iron. You are as hardheaded as bronze."

Even though God has shown them His power and His glory, in spite of all the revelation that He has given to them concerning things to come, they still stand in stubborn rebellion against God (v3, 5). This stubbornness was not some new sin, but it was seen early on in their history. Psalm 95:8 "The Lord says, "Don't harden your hearts as Israel did at Meribah, as they did at Massah in the wilderness." Just before the fall of Jerusalem we notice that King Zedekiah exhibited this trait: 2 Chron. 36:13 "He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken an oath of loyalty in God's name. Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man, refusing to turn to the Lord, the God of Israel.

IF ONLY THEY HAD OBEYED HIM:

In the light of His power and His love for Israel, God laments their unfulfilled potential because of their disobedience and reveals to them the promises of God that cannot come to pass for them because of their disobedience.

Isaiah 48:18 "Oh, that you had listened to my commands! Then you ..."

- Would have had peace. Deut. 28:13 "If you listen to these commands of the Lord your God and carefully obey them, the Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you will always have the upper hand." Instead of the dire situation of the coming armies of the Assyrians and Babylonians to come and fight against them and take them captive, if they had obeyed God, God would have brought them peace. Psalm 29:11 "The Lord gives his people strength. The Lord blesses them with peace." Proverbs 16:7 "When the ways of people please the Lord, he makes even their enemies live at peace with them."
- Would have been righteous. The idea of "righteousness" deals with our relationship with God. It means to be in right standing with God. Therefore had this nation obeyed God they would be in right standing with God and therefore His protection, His provisions and all His covenantal blessings would have been theirs.
- Would have remained a great nation. Abraham was promised this blessing in Genesis 12:1-2 "Then the Lord told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others." The nation of Israel had grown great before the time of the captivity by Assyria and Babylon. However, when they were taken captive many died and those remaining became scattered. The remnant that remained was small in comparison to the greatness of what this nation had once been.

GOD'S MERCY ON AN UNDESERVING PEOPLE:

Why will He be merciful to His people? For His Name sake: Isaiah 48:9-13 "Yet for my own sake and for the honor of my name, I will hold back my anger and not wipe you out. ... I will rescue you for my sake—yes, for my own sake! That way, the pagan nations will not be able to claim that their gods have conquered me. I will not let them have my glory! "Listen to me, O family of Jacob, Israel my chosen one! I alone am God, the First and the Last. It was my hand that laid the foundations of the earth. The palm of my right hand spread out the heavens above. I spoke, and they came into being."

God's mercy is not shown on His sinful people because they deserve it but rather because it brings Him glory. Isaiah 48:20-22 "Yet even now, be free from your captivity! Leave Babylon and the Babylonians, singing as you go! Shout to the ends of the earth that the Lord has redeemed his servants, the people of Israel. They were not thirsty when he led them through the desert. He divided the rock, and water gushed out for them to drink. "But there is no peace for the wicked," says the Lord." Despite Israel's disobedience and unfulfilled potential, God still loved them and therefore will free them from their captivity in Babylon. When they leave Babylon, they will go forth with a voice of singing. Just as He delivered His people and provided for them – water – He will do so again.

JEHOVAH'S SUFFERING SERVANT (49-57)

The objective of this lesson is to study the Messianic prophecies and their fulfillment as seen in the Scriptures.

JEHOVAH'S SUFFERING SERVANT

The Servant of the Lord
Future Jerusalem
The Servant's Suffering and Humiliation
Effects of the Word of Messiah

1. THE SERVANT OF THE LORD (CHAPTER 49)

THE IDENTITY OF THE SERVANT (MESSIAH):

"Called Me from the womb" (v1): Micah 5:2 "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past." The Servant of God would be born from the womb of a woman. This speaks of the incarnation of Christ. Isaiah 7:14 "All right then, the Lord himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel—'God is with us.' Isaiah 9:6 "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Romans 8:3 "The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins." 1 John 4:2 "This is the way to find out if they have the Spirit of God: If a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ became a human being, that person has the Spirit of God."

"He has made mention of My name" (v1): Matthew 1:21 "And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Luke 1:31 "You will become pregnant and have a son, and you are to name him Jesus." The Servant whom God was to send will be named by God.

"You are My Servant, Israel" (v3): Philip. 2:7 "He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form." The identity that Isaiah prophecies concerning Jesus Christ is that He would be a servant. All through the history of Israel, Israel had waited for an mighty warrior to bring them deliverance – this however would have only brought them deliverance in the natural realm – deliverance from their immediate enemy. Jesus however came to bring them eternal deliverance from the wages of sin. He therefore did not have the form that they expected – He came as a servant to seek and save those who were lost.

THE MISSION OF THE SERVANT (MESSIAH):

- **To show God's glory (v3):** Jesus Christ came to reveal God's glory. Israel had been chosen and separated to reveal God's glory on earth however because of their rebellion and idolatry they had failed. Jesus however, the ideal "Israel" will fulfill this purpose. He will reveal the glory of the Father. John 13:31 "As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus said, 'The time has come for me, the Son of Man, to enter into my glory, and God will receive glory because of all that happens to me.'" John 14:13 "You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father." John 17:4 "I brought glory to you here on earth by doing everything you told me to do."
- **To bring Jacob back (v5-6):** As a Servant He is to bring the tribe of Jacob back. Physically, Judah was restored once again in the promise land under the Medes Persian Empire. Spiritually, estranged Israel would be restored to God through Christ. Romans 11:26 "And so all Israel will be saved. Do you remember what the prophets said about this? 'A Deliverer will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel from all ungodliness.'"
- **To be a light of the nations (v6):** Not only will the Servant restore a spiritually blind nation back to God but He will bring all nations to God. John 8:12 "Jesus said to the people, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'"
- **To go forth:** Isaiah 49:9-10 "Through you I am saying to the prisoners of darkness, 'Come out! I am giving you your freedom!' They will be my sheep, grazing in green pastures and on hills that were previously bare. They will neither hunger nor thirst. The searing sun and scorching desert winds will not reach them anymore. For the Lord in his mercy will lead them beside cool waters. Jesus' ministry set people free from bondage and imprisonment. Jesus set the demon possessed free from the bondage of chains and demonic torture (Mark 5:1-15). Jesus set the sick and diseased free from the bondage of their infirmities (Luke 13:16). Jesus set the righteous dead captive in Hades free from their place (Ephesians 4:8). Jesus sets those in bondage to sin and the law free (John 8:33-36, Galatians 3:22-23).

THE MEANS OF THE SERVANT (MESSIAH)

How will the Servant accomplish all that He has been called to do?

"A sharp sword" (v2): The weapon of the Servant is the Word of God in His mouth. Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are."

- Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1)
- Jesus used the Word of God to overcome the devil (Matt 4:1-11)
- Jesus opens the Word of God to us (Luke 24:45)

“A select arrow” (v2): The Word that the Servant speaks will be like a sharpened arrow. It will be:

- Prepared: Jesus was always ready to speak the Word of God to the people. Even when He was in mourning over John the Baptist, when the people came to Him, He had a prepared Word ready for them. 1 Peter 3:15 “Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.”
- Effective: Jesus spoke words that were effective, they hit their mark like an arrow. Through the preaching and the teaching of His Word, people were delivered, healed, set free and forgiven. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.”

Jesus was like a carefully made and polished arrow in the service of God, ready to be used at the right time. This probably has reference to the “hidden” years of Jesus, when He lived in obscurity, as a polished shaft waiting in the quiver of the LORD.

THE REASON FOR THE MISSION:

Isaiah 49:15-16 “‘Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! See, I have written your name on my hand. Ever before me is a picture of Jerusalem's walls in ruins.’”

The Psalmist said, Psalm 27:10 “Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.” Psalm 94:14 “The Lord will not reject his people; he will not abandon his own special possession.”

- **God loves His people and therefore affirms the restoration of His remnant:** Isaiah 49:22 “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “See, I will give a signal to the godless nations. They will carry your little sons back to you in their arms; they will bring your daughters on their shoulders.”

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- **God loves His people and therefore will judge those who deal treacherously with them:** Isaiah 49:25-26 "But the Lord says, "The captives of warriors will be released, and the plunder of tyrants will be retrieved. For I will fight those who fight you, and I will save your children. I will feed your enemies with their own flesh. They will be drunk with rivers of their own blood. All the world will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel."

THE SERVANT'S OBEDIENCE (CHAPTER 50)

ISRAEL, GOD'S SERVANT REFUSED TO OBEY

Isaiah 50:1-3 "The Lord asks, "Did I sell you as slaves to my creditors? Is that why you are not here? Is your mother gone because I divorced her and sent her away? No, you went away as captives because of your sins. And your mother, too, was taken because of your sins. Was I too weak to save you? Is that why the house is silent and empty when I come home? Is it because I have no power to rescue? No, that is not the reason! For I can speak to the sea and make it dry! I can turn rivers into deserts covered with dying fish. I am the one who sends darkness out across the skies, bringing it to a state of mourning."

Israel, the chosen servants of God, did not obey God. They had been told by Moses countless times to obey God and to follow in only His statutes, yet they had refused to obey and rather chose to disregard His precepts. Because of their iniquity and sin, they were sold under sin and separated from God. Isaiah 59:2 "But there is a problem—your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, he has turned away and will not listen anymore."

Even when God called for His people to repent, they refused to listen. Psalm 81:11 "'But no, my people wouldn't listen. Israel did not want me around.'" Isaiah 65:12 "I will 'destine' you to the sword. All of you will bow before the executioner, for when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen. You deliberately sinned—before my very eyes—and chose to do what you know I despise." Romans 10:21 "But regarding Israel, God said, "All day long I opened my arms to them, but they kept disobeying me and arguing with me."

JESUS, GOD'S SERVANT OBEYS AND TRUSTS

In contrast with Israel, the servant of God, comes another Servant, One who obeys God.

- Jesus knew the heart and the mind of God (v4): Col. 2:9 "For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body,"
- Jesus declared and did that which was of Father God (v4): Mark 1:14 "Later on, after John was arrested by Herod Antipas, Jesus went to Galilee to preach God's Good News." John 4:34 "Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work."
- Jesus did not rebel like Israel even to the point of great suffering (v5-9): Here we see mention of the ceremony which is mentioned in Exodus 21:5-6 where the servant's ear would be pierced - opened - with an awl, in the presence of witnesses - then, he shall serve him for ever (Exodus 21:5-6). Psalm 40:6 also speaks of this ceremony taking place between the Father

and the Son, where the Psalmist speaks prophetically for the Messiah: Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears You have opened. Jesus was a perfect bond-slave to the Father (Philippians 2:7). John 14:31 "but I will do what the Father requires of me, so that the world will know that I love the Father. Come, let's be going." John 15:10 "When you obey me, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father and remain in his love." Hebrews 10:9 "Then he added, "Look, I have come to do your will." He cancels the first covenant in order to establish the second."

How great was His submission: "I gave My back I did not hide My face ... I have set My face." Here we see how Jesus voluntarily submitted to the Father to accomplish His plan of redemption. We know that Jesus was beaten on the back (Mark 15:15). We know Jesus was beaten on the face (Luke 22:63-65). We know that Jesus was mocked and spat upon (Mark 15:19-20). We know that Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem, even knowing what waited for Him there. "Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem". (Luke 9:51)

WHO ELSE WILL OBEY LIKE THIS?

Isaiah 50:10-11 "Who among you fears the Lord and obeys his servant? If you are walking in darkness, without a ray of light, trust in the Lord and rely on your God. But watch out, you who live in your own light and warm yourselves by your own fires. This is the reward you will receive from me: You will soon lie down in great torment."

2. THE FUTURE OF JERUSALEM (CHAPTER 51-52)

LOOK TO ABRAHAM:

Isaiah 51:1-3 "'Listen to me, all who hope for deliverance—all who seek the Lord! Consider the quarry from which you were mined, the rock from which you were cut! Yes, think about your ancestors Abraham and Sarah, from whom you came. Abraham was alone when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation." The Lord will comfort Israel again and make her deserts blossom. Her barren wilderness will become as beautiful as Eden—the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found there. Lovely songs of thanksgiving will fill the air."

Remember that although the Babylonian Captivity was still to come in the future, God used the writings of Isaiah to speak to those in captivity, reassuring them of His plan for them. In Babylon, these future captives would be released to return after 70 years. But they would be discouraged by their small number and distance from their homeland. God reminds them of their ancestors Abraham and Sarah. Just one man, far from the Promised Land. But God was faithful to him and his wife, and they became a great nation. Genesis 15:5 "Then the Lord brought Abram outside beneath the night sky and told him, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that—too many to count!"

The Jews would once again be blessed, along with their land. Though Judea lay in ruins after the Babylonian invasion, the Lord would once again restore it. Hosea 6:1 "Come, let us return to the Lord! He has torn us in pieces; now he will heal us. He has injured us; now he will bandage our wounds."

LOOK UP TO THE SKY AND THE EARTH BELOW:

Isaiah 51:4-8 "Listen to me, my people. Hear me, Israel, for my law will be proclaimed, and my justice will become a light to the nations. My mercy and justice are coming soon. Your salvation is on the way. I will rule the nations. They will wait for me and long for my power. Look up to the skies above, and gaze down on the earth beneath. For the skies will disappear like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a piece of clothing. The people of the earth will die like flies, but my salvation lasts forever. My righteous rule will never end! "Listen to me, you who know right from wrong and cherish my law in your hearts. Do not be afraid of people's scorn or their slanderous talk. For the moth will destroy them as it destroys clothing. The worm will eat away at them as it eats wool. But my righteousness will last forever. My salvation will continue from generation to generation."

Ever since chapter 42 began, God has been telling about the coming of His Servant. This is the One with the Spirit upon Him Who would bring forth justice to the nations (42:1-3). This is the Servant Whose mouth is like a sharp sword (49:2), Whose ministry was to bring the Jews back to God (49:5), to be a light of the nations (49:6). He would be despised at His first coming, but princes will

bow down to Him at His second coming (49:7). He would be a covenant of the people and would restore the land of Israel (49:8), setting the captives free (49:8). He can sustain the weary with a word (50:4), and would suffer horrible torture and humiliation (50:6).

God is now telling the Jews again that His Servant will come. He will be the law and He will be justice. He will be a light of the nations. He will be God's righteousness, and He will be God's salvation.

When will this happen? They will be able to tell just by looking at the earth and sky as it undergoes terrible tribulation. The book of Revelation describes such events prior to the return of Jesus Christ. Rev. 6:12-14 "I watched as the Lamb broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became as dark as black cloth, and the moon became as red as blood. Then the stars of the sky fell to the earth like green figs falling from trees shaken by mighty winds. [14] And the sky was rolled up like a scroll and taken away. And all of the mountains and all of the islands disappeared."

As horrifying as these things sound, God reassures His people that although the earth will be wearing out like an old shirt and people around the world are dying by the millions, He will be faithful. His salvation will be forever. And all those who opposed God's people will be gone, like a shirt eaten by moths.

WAIT FOR THE ARM OF THE LORD:

Isaiah 51:9-11 "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

The title given to Jesus, "the Arm of the Lord" is mentioned in Isaiah in three other places:

Firstly, it is mentioned in connection with judgment: Isaiah 30:30 "And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones." The mention of "Rahab" in chapter 51, speaks of the name given to one of the Egyptian idols, the water dragon. Egypt became known by this name. Psalm 87:4 "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there." If we go back to the history of the people of Israel we note that it was by God's strong Arm that the people of God were delivered from the nation of Israel and judgment came upon Pharaoh and his army (See details in Exodus 13-14).

Secondly, it is mentioned in connection with salvation: Isaiah 40:10 "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." Just as the nation of Israel rejoiced when the armies of Egypt were destroyed in the Red Sea (Ex 15), so the people of God, coming out from captivity will rejoice in God.

THE EXILE WILL SOON BE SET FREE:

Isaiah 51:12-16 "I, even I, am the one who comforts you. So why are you afraid of mere humans, who wither like the grass and disappear? Yet you have forgotten the Lord, your Creator, the one who put the stars in the sky and established the earth. Will you remain in constant dread of human oppression? Will you continue to fear the anger of your enemies from morning till night? Soon all you captives will be released! Imprisonment, starvation, and death will not be your fate! For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea, causing its waves to roar. My name is the Lord Almighty. And I have put my words in your mouth and hidden you safely within my hand. I set all the stars in space and established the earth. I am the one who says to Israel, 'You are mine!' "

God's continual words of reassurance to those who are in exile include a comparison: "Why are you afraid of man when I am on your side? I'm the eternal one, and you're fearing man, who dies." Remember that Jesus told us, Matt.10:28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

The Jews were afraid of their Babylonian opponents, but had walked away from the Lord, Who was the One Who could help them. And yet, He again tells them that they will not be abandoned in the Babylonian Captivity. They are His people, and He will not leave them to die in their foreign dungeon.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF JERUSALEM:

Her present condition:

- She is like a drunk as she has drunk the cup of God's wrath (v17)
- She is destitute and desolate (vv18-19)
- She is like a prisoner who has lost all hope (v18-23)

But, her future condition will be:

- She will become spiritually awake (52:1) Romans 13:11 "Another reason for right living is that you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for the coming of our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."
- She will put on beautiful robes (52:1): Isaiah 61:10 "I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit or a bride with her jewels." Psalm 132:16 "I

will make its priests the agents of salvation; its godly people will sing for joy." Zech. 3:4 "So the angel said to the others standing there, "Take off his filthy clothes." And turning to Jeshua he said, "See, I have taken away your sins, and now I am giving you these fine new clothes." Luke 15:22 ""But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger, and sandals for his feet.'"

- She will be set apart and holy (52:1): When God had called Israel to Himself, He had called her to holiness, to being set apart from all the other nations of the earth. She however had not obeyed and had allied herself with idolatrous nations. Now however, after she has been drunk with God's judgment, God will once again call her to holiness.
- She will be freed from captivity (52:2): This spoke of two types of captivity. The most imminent one was being released from the Babylonian captivity which would take place in 70 years. However, greater than this physical captivity would be her liberation from the power of the devil. Romans 8:21 "All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay."
- She will be redeemed (52:3, 9): Tragically, Jerusalem went after other gods like someone selling themselves for nothing. Isaiah now prophesied that their redemption would not be with money. This does not mean that they would be redeemed with something that did not cost anything, but the redemption price would be by the Blood of Jesus Christ. The end of this chapter begins to describe the great cost of this redemption.
- She will know God (52:6): In the days of Isaiah, the people did not recognize his words as being from God. However there is coming a time when they will recognize God is speaking. This is fulfilled when the Word was made Flesh.
- She will be protected by God (52:12)

3. THE SERVANT'S HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION(52:13 – 53:12)

THE SERVANT'S SUFFERING:

He was cruelly beaten: Isaiah 52:14 "Many were amazed when they saw him—beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know he was a person." This speaks of the cruel and vicious beating Jesus endured at the hands of his enemies. Jesus was beaten so badly on His face that He hardly looked like a man. The result was so shocking that many were astonished when they saw Jesus. Luke said, "Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?" (Luke 22:63-64)

He was despised and rejected: Isaiah 53:3 "He was despised and rejected—..." During the ministry of Jesus we see that He was rejected:

- By the Gergesenes (Matt 8:34)
- By the people of Nazareth (Mark 6:3, Luke 4:28-29)
- By the chief priests and rulers (Luke 23:18)
- By the religious leaders (Mark 15:29, Luke 16:14)
- By the Jewish nation (John 1:11, 12:48)

He was a Man of Sorrows: "a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care." (v3) After leaving the place of the Last Supper, Jesus and His disciples made their way to Gethsemane. This was a garden outside the Kidron Brook at the foot of Mount of Olives. It's name means "olive press", and was possibly a remote walled garden. The Garden was a place of suffering. It was at this Garden that Jesus was going to:

Experience great distress as He prayed: The Gospels give the following accounts:

- He was "deeply distressed" (Mt 26:37),
- He was "troubled and deeply distressed" (Mk14:33).
- He was "in agony", and
- His sweat became like great drops of blood (Lk 22:44).

His pain and His distress was not only because of the physical pain that He knew that He would have to endure in the next few hours, but it was because of the burden of our sins and separation from His Father as He bore our sins on the cross! (Isa 53:6; Mt 27:46)

Endure intense sorrow: Jesus described Himself as "exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" (Mt 26:38). The writer of Hebrews refers to His "vehement cries and tears" (He 5:7).

Encounter solemn loneliness: While in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus wanted His closest disciples to watch with Him (Mt 26:37-38). These were the disciple who had been with Him from the beginning (Mt 4:18-22) and who were privy to one of His greatest miracles (Mk 5:37-43). They were the ones who had seen Him being transfigured on the mountain (Mt 17:1-2). Yet after each episode of praying, He found them sleeping (Mt 26:40-41,43,45).

He was wounded, bruised and afflicted: Isaiah 53:3-5 "He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins! But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!"

Jesus was then blindfolded and struck in the face repeatedly. ". . . So His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men," (Isaiah 53:14). "I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting," (Isaiah 50:6).

Jesus was stripped of His clothing and then scourged. In scourging, a soldier used a whip called a flagrum consisting of leather straps embedded with metal and glass fragments with small metal balls sewn into the end of each thong. This whip was brought down with full force and when struck against the back of Jesus, was pulled thus tearing the skin off, exposing muscle, and maybe even exposing His very bones. Undoubtedly, His back was reduced to an oozing mass of mutilated flesh. Scourging stops when it is determined that the victim is near death or 39 lashes was reached. 39 was the number of mercy according to Jewish law. By this time, Jesus was in great pain, suffering severe blood loss, and was becoming very weak and thirsty. Only after this was He taken to be crucified. "Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified," (Matt. 27:26).

He died and was buried: Isaiah 53:8-9 "From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people realized that he was dying for their sins—that he was suffering their punishment? He had done no wrong, and he never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave."

Jesus did not only shed His blood for us, but He died for us. Mark 15:37 "Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last."

- Christ died for us: The death of Jesus was not only necessary and voluntary, it was also beneficial. He did not need to die for Himself as He was sinless, however He died for us, those who knew sin and were condemned by it.

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- Christ died for us that He might bring us to God: 1 Peter 3:18 "Christ also suffered when he died for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners that he might bring us safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit."
 - Christ died for our sins: Our sins were the obstacle that was preventing us from fellowship with God. In order for us to receive the blessings and the promises of His Presence, these sins needed to be removed – thereby removing the wall of separation and reconciling us to the Father.
 - Christ died our death: Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." Death was a penal event that took place because of sin. It was a divine judgment on human disobedience. Romans 5:12-14 "When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. And though there was no law to break, since it had not yet been given, they all died anyway—even though they did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. What a contrast between Adam and Christ, who was yet to come!"

Peter characterized His death as being:

1 Peter 2:21-25 "This suffering is all part of what God has called you to. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps. He never sinned, and he never deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. He personally carried away our sins in his own body on the cross so we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. You have been healed by his wounds! Once you were wandering like lost sheep. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls".

- Painful
- Innocent (innocent for the guilt)
- Unresisting
- Willing
- Shameful and disgraceful
- Triumphant
- Effective

THE RESULTS OF HIS SUFFERING:

Isaiah 53:10 "But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and fill him with grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have a multitude of children, many heirs. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's plan will prosper in his hands."

There were great and wonderful results that occurred because of the Obedient Servant, Jesus Christ.

HE WILL BRING CLEANSING:

Isaiah 52:15 "So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." Sprinkling is often associated with cleansing from sin in the Old Testament (Exodus 24:8, Leviticus 3:6, Numbers 19:21, Ezekiel 36:25). Here, the promise is that the work of the Messiah will bring cleansing to many nations.

HE WILL BE A SUBSTITUTE:

Isaiah 53:5-6 "But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the guilt and sins of us all."

HE WILL BE A LAMB:

Isaiah 53:7 "He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. Because of the insufficiency of the blood of animals in removing the sins of the people once and for all, God prophesied that He would provide a Lamb. Genesis 22:12-14 "'Lay down the knife," the angel said. "Do not hurt the boy in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld even your beloved son from me." Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering on the altar in place of his son. Abraham named the place "The Lord Will Provide." This name has now become a proverb: "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." Who was the Lamb? John 1:29 "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

When Jesus is called the Lamb of God in John 1:29 and John 1:36, it is in reference to His being the perfect and ultimate sacrifice for sin. In order to understand who Christ was and what He did, we must begin with the Old Testament, which contains prophecies concerning the coming of Christ as an "offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10). In fact, the whole sacrificial system established by God in the Old Testament set the stage for the coming of Jesus Christ, who

is the perfect sacrifice that God would provide as atonement for the sins of His people (Romans 8:3; Hebrews 10).

The sacrifice of lambs played a very important role in the Jewish religious life and their sacrificial system. When John the Baptist referred to Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), the Jews who heard him might have immediately thought of any one of several important sacrifices. With the time of the Passover Feast being very near, the first thought might be the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. The Passover Feast was one of the main Jewish holidays and a celebration in remembrance of when God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. Another important sacrifice involving lambs was the daily sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem. Every morning and evening, a lamb was sacrificed in the Temple for the sins of the people (Exodus 29:38-42).

These daily sacrifices, like all others, were simply to point people towards the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross. In fact, the time of Jesus' death on the cross corresponds to the time the evening sacrifice would have been being made in the Temple. The Jews at that time would have also been familiar with the Old Testament prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah, whose prophecies foretold the coming of one who would be brought "like a lamb to the slaughter" (Jeremiah 11:19; Isaiah 53:7) and whose sufferings and sacrifice would provide redemption for Israel.

It is through His death on the cross as God's perfect sacrifice for sin and His resurrection three days later that we can now have eternal life if we believe in Him. The fact that God Himself has provided the offering that atones or pays for our sin is part of the glorious good news of the gospel that is so clearly declared in 1 Peter 1:18-21 - "knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

How was Jesus the ultimate sacrifice? Jesus is sinless, holy, and divine. He is described as a lamb without spot or wrinkle in 1 Peter 1:19: "...the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." Jesus was chosen from the beginning of time to be the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of mankind. No one else was qualified to save the world! Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice, because He restored the pathway for humanity to come back to God. In John 14:6 Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus was tempted in every way, but He did not succumb to temptation and sin. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin."

Jesus, the willing sacrifice: "He opened not His mouth" (Is 53:7)

One of the things that we notice concerning the offering of the animals in the old covenant sacrificial system is that the animals that God chose for these sacrifices were not violent or aggressive when they went to the place of sacrifice. They had no natural defence that they could use against those who were leading them to the altar, but were defenceless, non aggressive, meek and mild.

The lamblike character of this Perfect Man was manifested in two ways:

- His absolute refusal to fight back or in any way resist the evil that ultimately took His life. When prophesying about Jesus, Isaiah said, "He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth." (Is 53:7) Peter said, 1 Peter 2:22-23 "He never sinned, and he never deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly."
- His utter dependence upon His Heavenly Father: Matthew 26:39 "He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine."

Jesus' blood was shed: "He was wounded ..." (Is 53:5)

Blood was a necessary ingredient in the atoning of sins. Hebrews 9:22 "In fact, we can say that according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified by sprinkling with blood. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins." As the Lamb of God, we notice that the Blood of Jesus was shed. "...This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). Matthew 26:28, "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." When Jesus suffered and died for our redemption, He shed His blood seven different times buying back our freedom:

- Willpower: In Genesis 3:6-17 Adam and Eve chose to eat of the fruit that God had specifically told them not to. At that moment Adam sacrificed the willpower of mankind. The first place where Jesus shed His blood was in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:30-44). The loss of the willpower of man was in a Garden, the redeeming of our will is also in a garden. Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane fully aware of the sacrifice that He was to make. Three times here in this Garden we hear Jesus crying out, "Not as I will but as You will". In Luke 22:43-44 it says that Jesus was in such agony in the Garden that His sweat became drops of blood that fell on the ground. Sweating drops of blood is not unknown in medicine but it is a rare occurrence. The clinical word for it is "hematohidrosis". It can happen when the blood vessels around the sweat glands constrict (due to

extreme stress) and then dilate to the point of rupture. The blood is released from the body through the sweat glands.

- Whipped and scourged: In the Old Testament, God said to the Israelites, Exodus 15:26 "'If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and laws, then I will not make you suffer the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you.'" When Jesus was whipped and beaten, He redeemed this promise for us. Isaiah 53:5 "But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!" In Matthew 27:26, Jesus was scourged. Scourging was the cruelest form of punishment. The flesh was generally cut with whips that had bones or nails at the ends of the leather. Jesus was publically lashed with a cat of nine tails 39 times. Psalm 129:3 "My back is covered with cuts, as if a farmer had plowed long furrows." Isaiah 50:6 "I give my back to those who beat me and my cheeks to those who pull out my beard. I do not hide from shame, for they mock me and spit in my face."
- Crown of thorns: In Genesis 3:17-19, we read of how a curse was brought on the ground due to the sin of Adam and Eve. The result is seen in Genesis 3:18 "It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains." A thorn is something that pricks and causes wounds. A thistle is something that multiplies quickly. After Jesus was beaten, a crown of thorns was placed on His head. It was said that these thorns were probably about 3 – 3 ½ inches in length. As this was placed on His head, blood flowed to break the curse of poverty off the land. Matthew 27:29 "They made a crown of long, sharp thorns and put it on his head, and they placed a stick in his right hand as a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mockery, yelling, "Hail! King of the Jews!"
- His hands were pierced: All dominion and rule had been given to Adam and Eve (Gen 1:26-28). However this dominion and authority was lost in Genesis 3. When Jesus' hands were pierced, He redeemed the authority and the dominion of man.
- His feet were pierced: Deut. 28:13 "If you listen to these commands of the Lord your God and carefully obey them, the Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you will always have the upper hand." Deut. 11:24 "Wherever you set your feet, the land will be yours. Your frontiers will stretch from the wilderness in the south to Lebanon in the north, and from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west." When Jesus' feet were pierced He gave us back the position of walking with Him, walking in His blessings (Gen 12).
- His side was pierced: When Jesus was pierced in the side, blood and water flowed. Why? Because Jesus died of a broken heart. Mark 15:34 "Then, at that time Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken

me?" Medically it is said that when you suffer such agony your heart develops a sack of water around it. When the soldiers pierced His side, this water flowed with the blood and fell on the ground. Jesus' blood from His side heals our brokenness. Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."

- He was bruised: Isaiah 53:5 "But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!" A bruise is a bleeding that occurs internally. Jesus was bruised for our "iniquity". Iniquity is often used in the Bible not as an action, but rather as the character of an action (something that is hidden – internal motives). Jesus died so that our character and our hidden emotional motives could be changed, that we no longer are evildoers, wicked, unrighteous etc.

THE FULFILLMENT OF CHRIST IN THE PASCHAL LAMB

	Old Testament Ref	New Testament Ref
Without blemish	Ex 12:5	1 Peter 1:19
Taken out of the flock	Ex 12:5	Heb 2:14, 17
Chosen beforehand	Ex 12:3	1 Peter 2:4
Killed by the people	Ex 12:6	Acts 2:23
Killed in the evening	Ex 12:6	Mark 15:34-37
Blood was shed	Ex 12:22	Heb 9:13-14, 10:22
Not a bone broken	Ex 12:46	John 19:36
Closely Examined	Ex 12:6	John 8:46, 18:38

HE WILL BRING US JUSTIFICATION:

Isaiah 53:11 "When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of what he has experienced, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins." "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38, 39).

Justification can be defined as that act of God whereby He declares absolutely righteous any and all who take shelter in the blood of Christ as their only hope for salvation. Justification is a legal term which changes the believing sinner's standing before God, declaring him acquitted and accepted by God, with the guilt and penalty of his sins put away forever. Justification is the sentence of the Judge in favor of the condemned man, clearing him of all blame and freeing him of every charge. Justification does not make the sinner righteous, but when God sees him "in Christ," He declares that he is righteous, thereby pronouncing the verdict of "not guilty."

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24). Look carefully at the text and notice that word "freely." The Greek word (dorean) translated "freely" means "without a cause." The same Greek word is so translated in John 15:25. John 15:25 "This has fulfilled what the Scriptures said: 'They hated me without cause.' There was no cause in the words and works of Jesus for which men should hate Him, yet He was hated "freely," "without a cause." Just as there was no cause that men should hate our Lord, so there was no cause that God should justify man; but He justifies him "freely," without a cause. Justification is something for nothing. In the Latin version the word "freely" is "gratis," "being justified gratis." God's method of justifying men gives us a glorious demonstration of His sovereign grace.

The provision for righteousness is solely through the blood of Christ. "Much more then, being now justified by His (Christ's) blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom 5:9). "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3:24-26). These verses are of tremendous importance because they show the only ground of justification.

HE WILL BRING US PEACE:

Isaiah 53:5 "But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!" Romans 5:1 "Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us."

The peace spoken of here is not subjective; it is objective. It is not the tranquility and quietness of our own feelings and emotions. "Peace with God" means that the strife between God and the believer has ended, hostilities have ceased, and no longer are we His enemies. Sin has been fully and finally judged in the Person of Christ, our Substitute and Sin-Bearer. God was satisfied with the sacrifice of His Son, and never again will He take up a case against those who have been justified by faith. He sees the believer just as if he had never sinned. A judicial peace between a holy God and a guilty sinner has been established. Jesus Christ "made peace through the blood of his cross . . . And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight" (Col 1:20-22).

THE SERVANT'S EXALTATION:

Isaiah 52:13 "See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted."

Isaiah 53:12 "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The first and the last words of Isaiah regarding Messiah, the Servant of God declared His victory. He shall be exalted and extolled means that the Messiah will triumph. There is no doubt about it. Before any of His suffering is announced, His glorious triumph is assured. We see evidence of the fulfillment of His exaltation in the New Testament:

Mark 16:19 "When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand." Ephes. 1:20 "that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms." Philip. 2:9 "Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name," Rev. 5:12 "And they sang in a mighty chorus: 'The Lamb is worthy—the Lamb who was killed. He is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.'"

THE MINISTRY OF THE MESSIAH (CHAPTER 61)

Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, because the Lord has appointed me ..."

Here, Isaiah prophetically speaks for the Messiah, and the Messiah announces that He is blessed and empowered by the Spirit of God. In Luke 4:16-22, Jesus spoke in the synagogue of Nazareth, His hometown. He opened up the scroll to Isaiah 61 - perhaps an assigned reading, perhaps chosen by Him - and read from the beginning of the chapter through the first line of verse 2. When He sat down, He simply said *today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*. Jesus is the person described in Isaiah 61:1-3 and He is the one the Spirit of God is upon.

The word "anoint" means *to rub or sprinkle on; apply an unguent, ointment, or oily liquid to*. Persons in the Old Testament were often literally anointed with oil. For example, priests were anointed for their special service to the LORD (Exodus 28:41). Literal oil would be applied, but as a sign of the Holy Spirit upon their lives and service. The oil on the head was only the outward representation of the real, spiritual work going on inside them.

Why was He anointed?

Isaiah 61:1-3 "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, because the Lord has appointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to announce that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies. To all who mourn in Israel, he will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, praise instead of despair. For the Lord has planted them like strong and graceful oaks for his own glory."

- Because sin impoverishes, He will preach good tidings to the poor.
- Because sin breaks hearts, He will heal the brokenhearted.
- Because sin makes captives, He will proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.
- Because sin oppresses, He will proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.
- Because sin is a crime that must be avenged, He will proclaim . . . the day of vengeance of our God.
- Because sin brings grief, He will comfort all who mourn. The extent of the comfort and restoration is beautifully described. Instead of the ashes of mourning, He gives His people beauty. Instead of the mourning itself, He gives His people the oil of joy. Instead of the spirit of heaviness, He gives His people the garment of praise. The word beauty has in mind a beautiful crown or head ornament. It is translated exquisite hats in Exodus 39:28 and headdresses in Isaiah 3:20. In mourning, ashes would be cast upon the head (2 Samuel 13:19). Here, the ashes are replaced with a beautiful crown.

He will establish a new covenant with His people: Isaiah 61:8 "For I, the Lord, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. I will faithfully reward my people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them." This covenant will not be based on the old sacrificial system of bringing offerings to God on the set days and seasons. This covenant will be based on the Work of Christ (Heb 9 – 10). "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen". (Hebrews 13:20-21) This covenant will bring salvation and righteousness to the people (v10-11).

What will God's people do because of His ministry?

God's people will rebuild what is ruined (v4): A beautiful example - and partial fulfillment - of this is Nehemiah, who took the decades-old rubble of Jerusalem's walls and rebuilt the walls.

God's people will be set apart to serve Him (v5-6): God's people, under the anointing of the Spirit and the ministry of the Messiah, have a holy occupation. They are Priests of the LORD, and Servants of our God. God provides others to take care of the flocks and to be your plowmen and your vinedressers. Exodus 19:6 "And you will be to me a kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' Give this message to the Israelites." 1 Peter 2:5 "And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are God's holy priests, who offer the spiritual sacrifices that please him because of Jesus Christ." Rev. 1:6 "He has made us his kingdom and his priests who serve before God his Father. Give to him everlasting glory! He rules forever and ever! Amen!" Rev. 20:6 "Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. For them the second death holds no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him a thousand years."

God's people will rejoice at God's great blessings (v7): What a change under the anointing of the Spirit and the ministry of the Messiah! No more shame. Now, you shall have double honor. No more confusion. Now, they shall rejoice in their portion. Indeed, everlasting joy shall be theirs, a joy that can never be taken away. Zech. 3:4 "So the angel said to the others standing there, "Take off his filthy clothes." And turning to Jeshua he said, "See, I have taken away your sins, and now I am giving you these fine new clothes."

THE EFFECTS OF THE WORK OF THE MESSIAH (CHAPTER 54-57)

THE EFFECTS OF THE WORK OF MESSIAH

Restoration
An Invitation
A Promise

THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL, HIS WIFE (CHAPTER 54)

Isaiah 54:1-3 ""Sing, O childless woman! Break forth into loud and joyful song, O Jerusalem, even though you never gave birth to a child. For the woman who could bear no children now has more than all the other women," says the Lord. "Enlarge your house; build an addition; spread out your home! For you will soon be bursting at the seams. Your descendants will take over other nations and live in their cities."

She will no longer be barren: In ancient Israel, the barren woman carried an enormous load of shame and disgrace. Here, God is likening captive Israel to a barren woman who can now sing because of what God will cause to happen through His Servants – Cyrus and Jesus Christ. The Babylonian exile and captivity meant more than oppression for Israel; it meant shame, disgrace, and humiliation. God promised a glorious release from not only the exile and captivity (Cyrus), but also from the shame, disgrace, and humiliation (Jesus Christ). This passage is quoted by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 4:27, in reference to the miraculous "birth" of those under the New Covenant.

The curse and shame of barrenness would be so completely broken, and Israel would be so fruitful, that they would have to expand their living space. This would be of particular comfort to the returning Babylonian exiles, who felt themselves small in number and weak. This promise would strengthen them. This prophecy correlates to the Word that was given to Abraham concerning his descendants – not only those which are natural but those which are spiritual, those (both Jews and Gentiles) who come to God through faith.

She will no longer be ashamed (4-6): Israel will be restored like a widow who is rescued from her reproach. Just as God compared the disgrace of Israel to the shame of barrenness, now He compares their humiliation to the reproach of widowhood. Here, God promises rescue from Israel's shame. "Shame . . . disgrace . . . humiliated" represent three synonymous Hebrew verbs sharing the fundamental idea of disappointed hopes, the embarrassment of expecting - even publicly announcing - one thing and then reaping another.

Though Israel might have been regarded as forsaken as a widow, God promised to be her Husband. Hosea 2:19-20 "I will make you my wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love and compassion. I will be faithful to you and make you mine, and you will finally know me as Lord."

Here in Isaiah 54:5, God reminds them of what type of Husband He is:

- He is their Maker,
- He is the LORD of hosts,
- He is their Redeemer,
- He is the Holy One of Israel, and
- He is called the God of the whole earth.

She will receive God's mercy: "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer." (Is 54:7-8). In God's judgment, it felt as if God had forsaken His people, however, God's mercy was going to be revealed to His people. Notice the contrast that Isaiah uses in these verses:

Forsaken	Mercy
Present tense (what they were feeling at the time in which Isaiah was prophesying.	Future tense (this would be a prophetic utterance which would bring hope and comfort to His people)
A moment – God's judgment will only be a "moment".	Everlasting – God's mercy and loving-kindness is forever. Isaiah 54:9-10 "Just as I swore in the time of Noah that I would never again let a flood cover the earth and destroy its life, so now I swear that I will never again pour out my anger on you. For the mountains may depart and the hills disappear, but even then I will remain loyal to you. My covenant of blessing will never be broken," says the Lord, who has mercy on you."

She will receive promises (v11-17): Israel, though they will go through trials and storms, being tossed to and fro, can be comforted in the fact that God has promised that they will:

- Be built on a foundation (v11)
- Be taught of the Lord (v12)
- Have great peace (v12)
- Be established in righteousness (v13)
- Be invincible and therefore will have future security (v17)

AN INVITATION TO RECEIVE THE GLORY OF RESTORATION (CHAPTER 55)

AN INVITATION TO RECEIVE BLESSING:

Isaiah 55:1-2 ""Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink—even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it's all free! Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen, and I will tell you where to get food that is good for the soul!

Here Isaiah sends out an invitation to everyone who is thirsty to come and drink of the blessings and provision of God. Why only to those who are thirsty?

Only those who thirst will come to the waters. If we aren't thirsty for what God can give us, then we will never come to His waters. Jesus cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink". (John 7:37). Those who are thirsty and come to drink do not need to bring anything in exchange for the gift of God. Here we see evidence of the fact that we cannot be saved through works because salvation is a free gift. Ephes. 2:8-9 "God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." Romans 4:16 "So that's why faith is the key! God's promise is given to us as a free gift. And we are certain to receive it, whether or not we follow Jewish customs, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe."

AN INVITATION TO ACCEPT THE EVERLASTING COVENANT:

Isaiah 55:3-5 ""Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, for the life of your soul is at stake. I am ready to make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the mercies and unfailing love that I promised to David. He displayed my power by being my witness and a leader among the nations. You also will command the nations, and they will come running to obey, because I, the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, have made you glorious."

What was the covenant that God made with David?

2 Samuel 7:12-16 "For when you die, I will raise up one of your descendants, and I will make his kingdom strong. He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for my name. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. If he sins, I will use other nations to punish him. But my unfailing love will not be taken from him as I took it from Saul, whom I removed before you. Your dynasty and your kingdom will continue for all time before me, and your throne will be secure forever.' "

The key terms in this prophecy are:

- "House" refers to the Davidic royal dynasty (2Sam.7:11,16).
- "Seed", or "descendant", refers to the male heirs, beginning with Solomon and ending with Jesus Christ (2Sam.7:12; Ps.89:4,29,36)
- "Covenant" refers to the binding contract between God and His servant, David (Ps.89:3a,28b,34a).
- "Throne" refers to the right to rule over the kingdom defined by the land grant of the Abrahamic Covenant (2Sam.7:13,16; Ps.89:4,29,36).

Promises associated with the Covenant fulfilled in David's lifetime. David was promised:

- An heir who would succeed him and who would build the Temple (2Sam.7:12,13).
- Continued success over his enemies (Ps.89:21-23).
- A great name among the peoples of the earth (2Sam.7:9).
- An expanded kingdom according to the Abrahamic mandate (Ps.89:25; Ex.23:31; Deut.1:7,8; 11:24; 1Kgs.4:21,24).
- Elevation to the highest rank of kings (Ps.89:27; cp. 2Sam.7:14).

The eternal provisions of the Covenant are centered in two spheres: "seed/descendants" and "throne" (Ps.89:3,4,28,29,35-37).

- There is the promise that there will always be a Davidic descendant (Ps.89:4a; 2Sam.7:16).
- There is the promise that the throne of David would last forever (Ps.89:4b; 2Sam.7:13).

This is an unconditional covenant made between God and David because God does not place any conditions of obedience upon its fulfillment. The surety of the promises made rests solely on God's faithfulness and does not depend at all on David or Israel's obedience.

AN INVITATION TO BE FORGIVEN

Isaiah 55:6-7 "Seek the Lord while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near. Let the people turn from their wicked deeds. Let them banish from their minds the very thought of doing wrong! Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Seek God now! The prophet impresses a sense of urgency on God's people. "This is the time. God can be found now. Seek Him now." It isn't that God is hidden, and can only be found now. It is that He can only be found when our hearts are inclined to look for Him, and that inclination itself is a gift from God! We must receive the gift, and make the most of it while we have it. Not seeking, and failing to call upon Him while He is near, means we will not receive the blessings He promises.

Forsake your evil ways and thoughts: The prophet impresses the need for repentance among God's people. Repentance is simply turning around our way - turning from our own way, turning unto God's way. We can never walk on God's way until we forsake our own way. Wickedness may be demonstrated by our actions (our way); but unrighteousness can be found in our very thoughts. The battleground for a righteous walk with the LORD is often found in our minds, in our thoughts. Paul knew this also when he wrote of bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), and how we must not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2).

Here after challenging the people to change their ways and their thoughts, Isaiah then goes on to contrast the difference and distance between God and man.

Thoughts and Ways	Isaiah 55:8-9 ""My thoughts are completely different from yours," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts Israel's thoughts were "unrighteous" (55:7)
Words	Isaiah 55:10-11 ""The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it." Israel's oaths and words were false (Is 48:1)

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONDING TO HIS INVITATION:

Isaiah 55:12-13 "You will live in joy and peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song, and the trees of the field will clap their hands! Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where briers grew, myrtles will sprout up. This miracle will bring great honor to the Lord's name; it will be an everlasting sign of his power and love."

When God's people turn to Him, listen to Him, and His Word does His work in them, joy and peace are always the result. Where before there was barrenness and reminders of the curse (the thorn), now there will be beautiful and useful trees. The picture is clear; in His glorious work of restoration, God takes away the barren and the cursed, and brings forth beauty and fruit (compare with Isaiah 54).

A PROMISE TO THE GENTILES (CHAPTER 56)

GOD'S SALVATION IS NEAR:

Isaiah said, Isaiah 56:1 "'Be just and fair to all," says the Lord. "Do what is right and good, for I am coming soon to rescue you."

John the Baptist said, Matthew 3:2 "'Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

Jesus said, Matthew 4:17 "From then on, Jesus began to preach, "Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

GOD'S SALVATION IS FOR THE GENTILES:

Isaiah 56:3-7 "'And my blessings are for Gentiles, too, when they commit themselves to the Lord. Do not let them think that I consider them second-class citizens. And my blessings are also for the eunuchs. They are as much mine as anyone else. For I say this to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbath days holy, who choose to do what pleases me and commit their lives to me: I will give them—in my house, within my walls—a memorial and a name far greater than the honor they would have received by having sons and daughters. For the name I give them is an everlasting one. It will never disappear! "I will also bless the Gentiles who commit themselves to the Lord and serve him and love his name, who worship him and do not desecrate the Sabbath day of rest, and who have accepted his covenant. I will bring them also to my holy mountain of Jerusalem and will fill them with joy in my house of prayer. I will accept their burnt offerings and sacrifices, because my Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

At the time of the prophecy given, Israel was under the impression that only they were the people of God. However, through the prophecies of Isaiah, God was revealing something new to them – God was not only the God of the Jew but He was God to the Gentiles too. Therefore salvation was not only going to be revealed to the people of God who repented and obeyed His ways, but it would come to even the Gentile when they turn to God. We see further reference to this in the following scriptures:

- Psalm 22:27 "The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him. People from every nation will bow down before him."
- Psalm 86:9 "All the nations—and you made each one— will come and bow before you, Lord; they will praise your great and holy name."
- Isaiah 60:3 "All nations will come to your light. Mighty kings will come to see your radiance."
- Isaiah 65:1 "The Lord says, "People who never before inquired about me are now asking about me. I am being found by people who were not

looking for me. To them I have said, 'I am here!'

- Daniel 7:14 "He was given authority, honor, and royal power over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed."
- Ephes. 3:6 "And this is the secret plan: The Gentiles have an equal share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's children. Both groups have believed the Good News, and both are part of the same body and enjoy together the promise of blessings through Christ Jesus."
- Romans 15:9 "And he came so the Gentiles might also give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote: 'I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing praises to your name.'"

The ministry and work of Christ was not only to seek and save those Jews that were direct descendants of Abraham (naturally speaking). His ministry and the work of the cross has been made available for all men. God so loved the world (Jew and Gentile) and therefore He gave His Son to bring salvation to them.

GOD'S SALVATION IS FOR THE JEWS:

Isaiah 56:8 "For the Sovereign Lord, who brings back the outcasts of Israel, says: I will bring others, too, besides my people Israel."

Why did Israel need to be brought back?

They had committed spiritual adultery (57:3-10): Here Isaiah makes mention of the Canaanite worship. The picture of "spiritual adultery" is especially fitting, because many of the pagan gods the Israelites went after were "worshipped" with illicit sex rituals. A green tree might be a place of such idolatry, because the evergreen tree spoke of constant fertility. One of the Canaanite gods the Israelites worshipped was named Molech, and he received children as sacrifices. Molech was "worshipped" by heating a metal statue representing the god until it was red hot, then by placing a living infant on the outstretched hands of the statue, while beating drums drowned out the screams of the child until it burned to death. Molech was one of the "lovers" God's people forsook God for in their spiritual adultery. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, God told Israel to inscribe His name and His word on every door post. Here, there is a perverse twisting of that - the remember their pagan gods behind the doors and their posts.

How will they be brought back to God?

Through trusting in God and not their idols: Isaiah 57:13 "Let's see if your idols can do anything for you when you cry to them for help. They are so helpless that a breath of wind can knock them down! But whoever trusts in me will possess the land and inherit my holy mountain." By changing their focus from off their idols onto God, God will come and heal their backslidden ways and bring them to a place of restoration.

Through a contrite and humble spirit: Isaiah 57:15 "The high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, the Holy One, says this: 'I live in that high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I refresh the humble and give new courage to those with repentant hearts.'"

To be right with God, the first thing to do is to understand His great majesty. God introduces Himself to His people with titles reflecting His great majesty, and expects His people to respond to Him as such a glorious God. Though God is the High and Lofty One, and lives in the high and holy place, at the same time He will live with men - with him who has a contrite and humble spirit.

What will be the benefits of returning?

Mercy from God: Isaiah 57:16-18 "For I will not fight against you forever; I will not always show my anger. If I did, all people would pass away—all the souls I have made. I was angry and punished these greedy people. I withdrew myself from them, but they went right on sinning...."

Healing: Isaiah 57:18 "... I have seen what they do, but I will heal them anyway! I will lead them and comfort those who mourn." Psalm 41:4 "'O Lord,' I prayed, 'have mercy on me. Heal me, for I have sinned against you.'" Jeremiah 3:22 "My wayward children," says the Lord, "come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts." "Yes, we will come," the people reply, "for you are the Lord our God."

Peace: Isaiah 57:19 "Then words of praise will be on their lips. May they have peace, both near and far, for I will heal them all," says the Lord." In His mercy, God invites all men to peace - both him who is far off and him who is near. Each one can receive God's shalom, which is more than the absence of hostility; it is the gift of precious well-being. In Ephesians 2:17, Paul speaks of Jesus fulfilling this promise exactly: "And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near". As revealed through Paul, God shows that him who is far off refers to the Gentiles, while him who is near is the Jewish man. Both can come to peace through receiving God's gift through Jesus.

THE NEW WORSHIP (58-65)

THE NEW WORSHIP

A Different Fast
A Different Sabbath
A Different Fellowship
God's Response

In the last section of the book of Isaiah we receive a clearer glimpse of the outcome of the Messiah's work spoken of in the last section. Although prophecies of restoration and the results of the Messiah have been mentioned in some aspects in the other prophecies of Isaiah, we notice here he gives more details of what it means to have accepted the finished work of the Cross of Calvary. In these last chapters we notice that there is a new way which the people of God are to come before Him IN WORSHIP.

A DIFFERENT FAST (CHAPTER 58)

In this chapter, Isaiah once again uses the tool of comparison when discussing the fast that the people of God were offering Him compared to that which is desired by God.

1. THE FASTS OF THE PAST:

In the first part of this chapter, God exposes the shallow worship of His people concerning the fast.

Israel had the appearance of holiness but none of what they brought to God was of any substance. Isaiah 58:5 "You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like a blade of grass in the wind. You dress in sackcloth and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord?"

- They sought the Lord daily (v2): However their seeking of God was not the type of seeking which Isaiah had prophesied earlier (55:6) which would bring them deliverance. Their seeking was more ritualistic than spiritual.
- They looked righteous (v2): Here Isaiah says the words, "as a nation that did righteous" referring to the fact that they appeared to be righteous but in actual fact they were not. They had the reputation of a nation that did righteousness, and the looked like people who would take delight in approaching God.
- They fasted yet their actions did not speak of their heart condition (v3-4): The reality was that His people didn't fast with the right heart, and did it only as an empty ritual. The reality was that even on a day when they fasted, they still exploited their employees. They fasted for needs, certainly;

but selfish needs like “God help me win this argument” or “God help me defeat this person.” Though their prayer was accompanied with fasting, it was still a selfish, even wicked prayer - so God did not answer. The purpose of their fasting was to glorify themselves, to make their “voice heard on high”.

The people of Isaiah's day had the same problem as the Pharisees of Jesus' day. They trusted in empty ritual, apart from the spiritual reality. Real fasting - fasting that is partnered with real repentance, and isn't only about image - has great power before God (Matthew 17:21). But God sees through the hypocrisy of empty religious ritual, including fasting. In Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, He told how the self-righteous Pharisee made a special point to say, “I fast twice a week” (Luke 18:9-14). Here, as in the times of Isaiah, the point is not that fasting is religious but rather that it needs to be more than superficial and to appear as if a person is holy by doing it.

2. THE NEW FAST:

Now that Isaiah has described the way in which these people used to fast, he then goes on to define the character and the blessings of a true fast before God.

Isaiah 58:6 “No, the kind of fasting I want calls you to”

First however, Isaiah begins by contrasting the different fasts by saying, “the kind of fasting I want ...”. Here Isaiah moves from a self-centered fast as described in the first part of this chapter, to a fast that is God-centered.

The type of fast that pleases God is characterized by love. The fast that God desires will result in them not acting wickedly, undoing heavy burdens and letting the oppressed go free (v6). This speaks of not oppressing others but rather helping others. They had to start by acting lovingly towards each other by sharing their bread with those who are hungry, by clothing those who had no clothes and not by hiding from those who are relatives (v7). James 1:27 “Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us” Mark 12:33 “And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbors as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law.”

Isaiah 58:9-10 “...”Stop oppressing the helpless and stop making false accusations and spreading vicious rumors! Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as day.”

This verse seems to repeat what has already been said in verses 6-7, here again God gives them **three things that they need to stop doing** (continuing the theme of love):

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- They must stop oppressing others, treating them as animals bound with a yoke.
 - They must stop pointing . . . the finger at others, and see where they are to blame.
 - They must stop speaking wickedness.

He then continues to tell them two things which they need to do:

- They needed to minister to the hungry with more than food; they had to extend their soul to the hungry.
- They had to look for the afflicted soul and seek to satisfy it.

3. THE RESULTS OF THIS NEW FAST:

- Light: The radiance of God's glory will be revealed. (v8, 10) Psalm 97:11 "Light shines on the godly, and joy on those who do right." Psalm 112:4 "When darkness overtakes the godly, light will come bursting in. They are generous, compassionate, and righteous." John 8:12 "Jesus said to the people, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'" 1 John 2:10 "Anyone who loves other Christians is living in the light and does not cause anyone to stumble."
 - Health: The people of God will be healed from all afflictions (v8). Exodus 15:26 ""If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and laws, then I will not make you suffer the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you." Deut. 7:15 "And the Lord will protect you from all sickness. He will not let you suffer from the terrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will bring them all on your enemies!"
 - Protection: God's glory will go before and at the rear of His people (v8). Exodus 14:19 "Then the angel of God, who had been leading the people of Israel, moved to a position behind them, and the pillar of cloud also moved around behind them." Isaiah 52:12 "You will not leave in a hurry, running for your lives. For the Lord will go ahead of you, and the God of Israel will protect you from behind".
 - Answered prayer: God will hear the prayers of the contrite heart as opposed to the prayers of the past fasts that they did before God (compare verse 3 with verse 9).
 - Guidance (v8, 11): God will guide those who have sincere fasts. Isaiah 30:21 "and you will hear a voice say, 'This is the way; turn around and walk here.'" Isaiah 42:16 "I will lead blind Israel down a new path, guiding them
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along an unfamiliar way. I will make the darkness bright before them and smooth out the road ahead of them. Yes, I will indeed do these things; I will not forsake them."

- Restoration (v12): Those who serve God with sincere hearts and actions also accomplish things for God's kingdom. They build, and are called "the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to Dwell in". Those who were part of the remnant were builders of the Temple of God and the walls of Jerusalem (See Ezra and Nehemiah).

A DIFFERENT SABBATH

Isaiah 58:13 "Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don't pursue your own interests on that day, but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the Lord's holy day. Honor the Lord in everything you do, and don't follow your own desires or talk idly. If you do this, ..."

The Sabbath was another empty religious observance for the Jewish people of Isaiah's day. God called them to take a delight in the heart and in the purpose of the Sabbath which was to honour Him. When we keep the meaning of the Sabbath, not merely as an empty religious ritual, then

- God will be their delight (v14): Psalm 37:4 "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires".
- God will honour them (v14): Deut. 26:19 "And if you do, he will make you greater than any other nation. Then you will receive praise, honor, and renown. You will be a nation that is holy to the Lord your God, just as he promised."
- God will bless them with the inheritance of Jacob (v14): Col. 1:12 "always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light."

A DIFFERENT FELLOWSHIP

1. THE OLD WAY – SINS BRINGS SEPERATION:

Isaiah 59:1-3 "Listen! The Lord is not too weak to save you, and he is not becoming deaf. He can hear you when you call. But there is a problem—your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, he has turned away and will not listen anymore. Your hands are the hands of murderers, and your fingers are filthy with sin. Your mouth is full of lies, and your lips are tainted with corruption."

In this first verse, Isaiah identifies the reason why Israel had not experienced the salvation of God as yet. It was not because God is unable to provide for salvation, nor was it because He is powerless. The problem is the sin that had been placed like a wedge between God's people and Himself.

- Sin separates us from fellowship with God, because we no longer think alike with God.
- Sin separates us from the blessing of God, because we are not trusting God and relying on Him.
- Sin separates us from the some of the benefits of God's love, even as the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) was still loved by the father, but didn't enjoy the benefits of his love when he was in sin.
- Sin separates us, in some way, from the protection of God, because He will allow trials to come our way to correct us.

WHAT WERE THE SINS OF GOD'S PEOPLE (59:3-8)

- "Your hands are defiled with blood": They practiced and approved of violence and murder.
- "Your lips have spoken lies" They lied with ease and regularity.
- "No one calls for justice": They did not share God's heart for what was fair and good; everyone simply thought in terms of their own good. Both justice and truth were distant concepts, and instead of justice there were empty words, instead of truth there were lies.
- "They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity", as if they were snakes giving birth to more evil serpents, bringing forth nothing but death (he who eats of their eggs dies) and more evil (from that which is crushed a viper breaks out).
- "The act of violence is in their hands". Their feet run to evil: Both hands and feet are given to sin. But it doesn't end there; even their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity.

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- “They have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace”: Their choice and the consequences are plain. Their crooked paths will never lead them into the way of peace, meaning peace in the full sense of shalom. Paul quotes Isaiah 59:7-8 in Romans 3:15-17. He uses this passage, connected with other Old Testament passages, to demonstrate that man is a sinner from “head to toe.”

2. GOD'S PROVISION (59:15-21)

The state of God's people was no mystery to God (59:15). The people of God had cried out to God (59:12-15), stating how desperate their condition was and therefore He made provision for them.

Isaiah 59:16-19 “He was amazed to see that no one intervened to help the oppressed. So he himself stepped in to save them with his mighty power and justice. He put on righteousness as his body armor and placed the helmet of salvation on his head. He clothed himself with the robes of vengeance and godly fury. He will repay his enemies for their evil deeds. His fury will fall on his foes in distant lands. Then at last they will respect and glorify the name of the Lord throughout the world. For he will come like a flood tide driven by the breath of the Lord.”

Isaiah 63:5 “And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.”

God waited and waited for a disobedient Israel to turn to Him. He waited and waited for a man to lead them back to Him, or an intercessor to plead before Him. None arose; so God did it Himself.

He had an Intercessor for Israel (59:16): Isaiah 53:12 “I will give him the honors of one who is mighty and great, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among those who were sinners. He bore the sins of many and interceded for sinners.” Romans 8:34 “Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us.”

He had a Redeemer for Israel (59:20-21): The goel - sometimes translated kinsman-redeemer, here simply as Redeemer - had a specifically defined role in Israel's family life. The kinsman-redeemer was responsible to buy a fellow Israelite out of slavery (Leviticus 25:48). He was responsible to be the “avenger of blood” to make sure the murderer of a family member answered to the crime (Numbers 35:19). He was responsible to buy back family land that had been forfeited (Leviticus 25:25). And he was responsible to carry on the family name by marrying a childless widow (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). In these, we see that the goel, the kinsman-redeemer, was responsible to safeguard the persons, the property, and the posterity of the family.

He had a Light (60:1): Isaiah 60:19-20 “No longer will you need the sun or moon to give you light, for the Lord your God will be your everlasting light, and he will be your glory. The sun will never set; the moon will not go down. For the Lord will be your everlasting light. Your days of mourning will come to an end. After the thick and desperate darkness described in Isaiah 59:9-10, this is the glorious rescue from the Redeemer. Light has come - so God tells His people to respond to it, and to arise and shine! Darkness is for lying down; light is for rising up. Darkness is for gloom and sleep; light is for shining. When the light has come, we must respond, and arise, shine! What will be the effects of the Light on His people?

- The Gentile nation will come to the same Light (60:3, 62:2)
- The scattered people of Israel and Judah will return (60:4, 9)
- The blessings of God will be on His people (60:5-7, 13) The nations will willingly give them their wealth, much as the Egyptians willingly gave the Israelites riches when they left Egypt (Exodus 12:35-36). Fulfilment of this came to pass when the King of Persia offered them wealth and treasures to take back with them when they went to build the Temple of God and the walls of Jerusalem (Ezra 1:7-11, Neh 2:8-9)
- The people of God will become a glorified city (60:15-22). Those who previously persecuted Israel, and specifically Jerusalem, will have a different heart, they will come bowing to Jerusalem; they will recognize it as The City of the LORD. From the violence and unrestrained bloodshed of Isaiah 59:6-8, to walls called Salvation and gates called Praise!
- They will receive a new name (62:2, 4): Jerusalem knew the experience of war and defeat and desolation. God's people knew what it was like to feel Forsaken and Desolate, so it is as if they could take those names. But God says that they will have new names now, “Hephzibah” and Beulah. The days of Forsaken and Desolate will one day pass. There will come a day when Zion and God's people will know that God delights in them (Hephzibah means “My delight is in her”). There will come a day when Zion and God's people will know the unbroken presence and love of God, as a wife should know the presence and love of her husband (Beulah means “Married”). At this time God's people will know God's delight in them. The same idea is beautifully communicated in Zephaniah 3:17: The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing. No wonder Paul made a special prayer that we could somehow begin to comprehend such love, that we may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. (Ephesians 3:18-19)
- They will be visited by God (62:11)

3. THE NEW WAY – CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE (CHAPTER 63-64)

REMEMBER THE MERCY OF GOD: 63:7-14

In the midst of God discipline - in this case, prophetically speaking, the Babylonians exile – Isaiah prayed remembering the days of old. He remembered the mighty hand of God in days of old, and knew that mighty hand could be raised again for His people. Specifically, in this case, he remembered what God did in the days of Moses and the Exodus. Since now they were in a place of exile (Babylon), the story of God's deliverance from Egypt had special relevance. The exiled one wasn't there for the Exodus; he had to read about it in God's Word. But he saw how God's great works in the past had meaning right now.

PLEA FOR RESTORATION: 63:15 – 64:12

Come in power and glory (64:1-3): Earlier Isaiah remembered God's great work for Israel in the days of the Exodus (Isaiah 63:11-13). Here, he remembers how God shook Mount Sinai when Israel camped there on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land (Exodus 19:17-18).

Acknowledgement of sin (64:4-7): Isaiah in verse 4 understood that the prayers that God would act upon would be from the person who trusts and waits in Him. Knowing this he acknowledges the sinfulness of the remnant and their need to be saved.

The nature of sin:

- Sin makes us "like an unclean thing"; it makes us unacceptable and unworthy before God. Even the good we may try to do is unacceptable and unclean before God. Isaiah 65:2-3 "I opened my arms to my own people all day long, but they have rebelled. They follow their own evil paths and thoughts. All day long they insult me to my face by worshiping idols in their sacred gardens. They burn incense on the rooftops of their homes...."
- Sin makes us "fade as a leaf". Our sinful condition has made us weak and unstable, with no lasting power before God.
- Sin removes us from God's presence. "Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away"
- Sin refuses to call for help: "And there is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You:

The result of sin:

First, **"You have hidden Your face from us" (64:7)** - fellowship is broken, or at the very least, damaged.

Second, the LORD has **consumed us because of our iniquities (64:7)**. Our sinful condition has invited - even demanded - the righteous judgment of God. Isaiah 65:6-7 "Look, my decree is written out in front of me: I will not stand silent; I will repay them in full! Yes, I will repay them— both for their own sins and for those of their ancestors," says the Lord. "For they also burned incense on the mountains and insulted me on the hills. I will pay them back in full!"

PLEA FOR MERCY (64:8-9):

Here Isaiah brings forth again the fact that God is their Father (see 63:16, 64:8). Why? Because a father is always a father; he can never truly disown his children. A potter cannot disown the pot; it is only there because he made it. Even though they were sinners and deserved the judgment of the Lord, Isaiah reminds God that "we are all Your people".

Moses used this same method of intercession when the people of Israel were rebellious towards God. Deut. 9:26-29 "I prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Sovereign Lord, do not destroy your own people. They are your special possession, redeemed from Egypt by your mighty power and glorious strength. Overlook the stubbornness and sin of these people, but remember instead your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If you destroy these people, the Egyptians will say, "The Lord destroyed them because he wasn't able to bring them to the land he had sworn to give them." Or they might say, "He destroyed them because he hated them; he brought them into the wilderness to slaughter them." But they are your people and your special possession, whom you brought from Egypt by your mighty power and glorious strength.'

GOD'S RESPONSE TO THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION (CHAPTER 65-66)

Isaiah 63:7 through 64:12 is the prayer of the remnant, voiced through the prophet Isaiah. It is one of the most beautiful and moving prayers in the Bible. Yet it does not seem to be representative of the heart of all the Jewish exiles in Babylon. Here in Isaiah we see God's responses to two groups of people:

1. THOSE WHO REPENT – GOD WILL SAVE (CHAPTER 65)

Isaiah 65:8-10 ""But I will not destroy them all," says the Lord. "For just as good grapes are found among a cluster of bad ones (and someone will say, 'Don't throw them all away—there are some good grapes there!'), so I will not destroy all Israel. For I still have true servants there. I will preserve a remnant of the people of Israel and of Judah to possess my land. Those I choose will inherit it and serve me there. For my people who have searched for me, the plain of Sharon will again be filled with flocks, and the valley of Achor will be a place to pasture herds."

Isaiah 66:2 "My hands have made both heaven and earth, and they are mine. I, the Lord, have spoken! "I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word."

Amongst the exiles in captivity were a group (a remnant) of people who were sincere in their repentance towards God – those whose hearts echoed Isaiah's prayer in chapter 63-65. Because of these people, God would:

- Not destroy them (v8-9) but would save the elect.
- Will provide them with an inheritance (v9)
- Will bless them (v10)
- Will redeem them and make them a new creation (v17-19) 2 Cor. 5:17 "What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!"
- Will provide them with joy (v19): Psalm 30:5 "His anger lasts for a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime! Weeping may go on all night, but joy comes with the morning." Psalm 132:16 "I will make its priests the agents of salvation; its godly people will sing for joy." Isaiah 12:3 "With joy you will drink deeply from the fountain of salvation!"
- Will be restored (v21-23): This once again speaks of them going back to the land and the city from where they had been taken into captivity and rebuilding and replanting. See Ezra and Nehemiah.

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- Will be answered by God (v24): Zech. 10:6 "I will strengthen Judah and save Israel; I will reestablish them because I love them. It will be as though I had never rejected them, for I am the Lord their God, who will hear their cries." Micah 7:7 "As for me, I look to the Lord for his help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me."

2. THOSE WHO REFUSE TO REPENT – GOD WILL BRING JUDGMENT (CH 65)

Isaiah 65:11-12 "But because the rest of you have forsaken the Lord and his Temple and worship the gods of Fate and Destiny, I will 'destine' you to the sword. All of you will bow before the executioner, for when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen. You deliberately sinned—before my very eyes—and chose to do what you know I despise."

Isaiah 66:3 "But those who choose their own ways, delighting in their sins, are cursed. Their offerings will not be accepted. When such people sacrifice an ox, it is no more acceptable than a human sacrifice. When they sacrifice a lamb or bring an offering of grain, it is as bad as putting a dog or the blood of a pig on the altar! When they burn incense, it is as if they had blessed an idol."

This idea is repeated in several different places in Scripture. The phrase in the book of Judges that characterized the wickedness of that age shows it: everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6, 21:25). Proverbs expresses the idea like this: There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25). To live according to their own thoughts may sound like freedom, but really it is bondage.

God will bring judgment upon them: Isaiah 66:4 "I will send great troubles against them—all the things they feared. For when I called, they did not answer. When I spoke, they did not listen. They deliberately sinned—before my very eyes—and chose to do what they know I despise."

Isaiah 66:15 "See, the Lord is coming with fire, and his swift chariots of destruction roar like a whirlwind. He will bring punishment with the fury of his anger and the flaming fire of his hot rebuke."

In a dramatic contrast to the blessings that the repentant will receive, Isaiah prophecies concerning their future condition because of God's judgment (65:13-15):

THE REPENTANT	THE UNREPENTANT
They will eat. This speaks of eating of the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ See Eph 5:18	They will go hungry See Luke 15:14
They shall drink. This speaks of drinking the Living Water, Jesus Christ	They will be thirsty
They will rejoice. This speaks of a joy that comes from our sins being forgiven (John 16:24, 15:11)	They will be ashamed and be filled with grief (Is 44:11, Is 66:5, Jer 17:13 , Hos 4:19)
They will receive a new name (Is 56:5, 62:2)	Their name will become a curse. (Ps 9:5, 109:13)

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

As we have already seen through the study of the book of Isaiah, God sent a Word to His People to tell them how they would be able to identify their Messiah. However, these Messianic prophecies were not only exclusive to the book of Isaiah. All the books of prophecy, both the major and the minor prophets, prophesy about Him.

ASSIGNMENT

Following the example below complete the chart by making mention of all the Messianic prophecies of the prophets and how they some of them have already been fulfilled in the incarnation and the ministry of Christ.

Messianic prophecy	Which prophet prophesied it?	Has it been fulfilled?	Scripture reference

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