

ISAIAH

Evangelist – Prophet

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assemblies Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "What the Bible Teaches," J.M. Riddle. John Ritchie Ltd.
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan
- "Isaiah," by Harry Ironside. Loizeaux Brothers Inc., New York, NY

THE PROPHETS

For many Christians, the prophecy-books of the Bible are not of much interest. That may be in part to the language style of writing which is somewhat poetic. It may be that they don't feel the messages in the prophets are relevant to us in this day and age. When the Spirit of God included the messages of the prophets in the scriptures, we know there was a good reason for Him to do that. We are able to learn truths in the books of the prophets that are useful lessons that help meet the needs of God's people in every age. Much of human history follows the same pattern of life as it was lived in the times of the prophets. There are obviously external differences because of the place things happened and the circumstances surrounding them. But the spiritual principles are there for our learning as well as our admonition.

Historical events can give us lessons as to how to avoid things that are bad or how to promote that which is good. The spoken words of prophets, the preachers of that time, who heralded out the messages of the Lord, puts shoes on the feet of history for our instruction. Those early spokespersons for the Lord were loyal in their service for God, and they were willing to risk everything they had, even their lives, to confront the people of their time with the word of God. That need remains the same today. We cannot overlook the consequences of sin and departure that are happening now and are taking away the moral fiber of our nation, the moral conduct of the lives of the citizens, and the moral leadership of those in places of authority in our governments.

The prophets of the Old Testament poured out their hearts and souls into carrying out their responsibility to God by calling for repentance on the part of sinful people, and a return to the Lord for mercy. They knew the dangers and results of idolatry. They knew the teaching and practice of idolatry was contrary in every way to the worship and service of the One True God. Even though in the early days of human history when people like Enoch, Noah and Abraham were God's messengers to warn the people of the consequences of sin, it was Moses who was the first one designated to fill that role which we read about in Exodus 3 and 4.

Words God commonly told the prophets were such as, "Go; speak; I will send" etc. and they in turn would call upon people to "hear the word of the Lord," or "thus saith the Lord." The Lord through His servants the prophets, made it plain that He was the authority over the prophets and the people to whom they spoke. The prophets were obligated to obey Him, although some like Jonah, resisted occasionally. They knew they were responsible to represent the Sovereign of the universe. That gave a sense of urgency to be their Lord's messenger in the Lord's message, as Haggai wrote. Whether the hearers obeyed or rebelled was not in their power to control. They were also responsible to report back to the Lord in prayer, and some of those prayers were very emotional because of the lack of response by the people. Jeremiah wept when he heard what was going to happen, and he wept when he knew the response of the people.

Samuel started out young in his prophetic ministry, and both Elijah and Elisha had long years of service for the Lord as prophets to God's people in both good and bad times. Whether a prophet is called "major" or "minor" has to do with the amount of written material they have and the length of their service. It has nothing to do as to whether some of them were more important than the others. The times in which they lived and preached were much like our times. In our day "evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." The whole course of society is morally downward and away from God and His divine will and purposes. The mindset of many in our day is "down with God – up with man." It doesn't seem like we are making any headway against all the moral and spiritual decline going on world-wide, but it is still our responsibility to speak out for God even though we might seem like John the Baptist, "a voice crying in the wilderness." We can learn much from those men and women that we can apply to ourselves, our service for the Lord and the times in which we live.

Generally speaking, prophets were God's messengers to His own people, but sometimes there were messages to those who were in some way connected with Israel. Hosea experienced in a personal way, his prophecy. It reads like

a pathetic, sad story of love lost and a family breakup, but it was God's way of impressing His message on the people. So, we learn that there is more than one way to pass on the messages God wants to give to those He loves. Enemies of God's people were spoken against on occasions because the contrast of God's covenant people Israel to be a holy nation, stood out against the immoral practices of other idol worshiping nations in the name of religion. Local gods of human imaginations were designed to please the people and satisfy the basic sinful lusts of unregenerate mankind. Even though the Israelites rebelled over and over against the Lord He still sent His prophets to warn His people, teach them and guide them.

Most prophecies fall into these categories: There was a call to repent and turn to the Lord. Then there was the promise of salvation to those who obeyed the Lord and acted upon His word. Thirdly, there was given a look ahead to the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Jewish forefathers, which the Israelis today still look to see happen. The prophets also gave people of their day, and us, a look way ahead to the time when the nation of Israel will be a society of people who will be wholehearted in their devotion to the Lord, and that will result in a fruitful country and happy populace. The ultimate prophecy as far as looking into the future will be when the whole world will be blessed through the Messiah of Israel. Our Lord Jesus Christ, will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords in a time of universal peace. Faith in the prophecies of God gives to us a sense of security and purpose in our lives today. To life for the Lord, means that we trust Him and His word to be true, and as those who believe on Him our confidence is strong in every situation in which we find ourselves. That gives meaning to all that we do, and joy in doing it.

Isaiah 1

FAITHFUL WARNINGS

God has His servants for the time and places of His choosing. He knows each personality and each situation as well as the condition of the people to whom He wants them to minister. The population of a nation, takes their attitude and actions from those who lead the nation, like the four kings who ruled during the time of Isaiah's ministry. Those who led God's people in the past have left a legacy for young people who want to please the Lord and make their lives count for the sake of the kingdom of God. That will make their purposeful living now, have meaning for them, and will let them send "treasure" ahead to heaven that will benefit them and others for eternity.

Isaiah was a young man when he came on the stage of the nations of Israel and Judah. He was a patriotic prophet who was concerned about revival for his people and longed for that to bring God's people back to the blessings of their covenant relationship with Him. He is considered to be the chief of the prophets because of the great scope of his prophecies that began in the time of the four kings mentioned, and goes all the way to the new heavens and new earth in the distant future. Also, the descriptions of our Lord Jesus Christ and of God's grace to erring people, stand out as beacons of hope to Jews and Gentiles alike.

In Isaiah's prophecies to Judah concerning the sins of Israel and Judah, he does not hold back from denouncing them because of their sins. He likely saw what happened to those Jews of the northern ten tribes when the Assyrians came and took them away as captives to be dispersed among the various nations of the Assyrian empire. He could see the same things happening in Judah if there weren't some changes made, and genuine repentance, and turning back to the Lord and His sovereign governance.

Judah was still an identity as a nation, but was in serious trouble with the God regarding their national covenant with Him. They were willfully sinning against God and didn't seem to care. They were rebelling against Him and refusing to submit to divine guidance and authority. They had been given prosperity as God acted as a Father to them in making provision for their every need. But the moral and spiritual relationship that was intended between the Lord and His people had been broken by the people. Consequently, judgment was coming which is the overriding theme of the first thirty-nine chapters of the book of Isaiah. As a chosen people who broke the covenant agreement, they were bringing judgment down on themselves.

The attitude and actions of blessed people like us, are not hidden in any way from the holy God with whom we have to do. It is wise for us to ask ourselves, "To what degree do I want to live for the Lord? How far am I willing to go in obedience to Him? How seriously do I want to sanctify the Lord God in my heart so that I will not sin against Him?" Our Owner is the Lord Jesus Christ who has purchased us with His own blood. Our Master who has the "crib, the manger," of the word of God for our nourishment, has made full provision for all we need to maintain a close happy relationship with Him.

But sin and guilt isolate us from our Lord in the same way it happened to the people of Judah. God didn't abandon His people. They abandoned Him, and the same thing can happen to us. Our sins will cut us off from our fellowship

with our Lord. When that happens, and we face the fact that we have turned our back on the Lord and what we know He wants from us, confession of sin and not returning back to it, will bring us back to Him. Our Lord is willing to forgive those who deal appropriately with their own sin. To see ourselves and sin as our righteous, holy God sees it, should awaken our consciences. An awakened conscience doesn't compare its sins with those of other people and think it is not too bad. It faces the responsibility that there is absolutely no justification for sin, and deals with it. There is no excuse for sin nor can we make comparisons of my sins with those of other people. All sin is against God and must be dealt with by holy justice and judgment, either by me in confessing and forsaking it, or by God if I don't.

Isaiah warned the people of what would happen when judgment came on God's people by those who were their enemies. There would be no place to hide and they would be as defenseless as a field of "cucumbers." Open ungodly sin like what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah, is absolutely inexcusable. When people hear warnings but do not obey, and are not willing to return to the Lord in repentance and faith, they can do what they want but it has no purpose.

Making sacrifices, religious activity, giving to charitable causes, keeping religious holidays and going through religious forms are a burden and offense to God. Prayers made by those who do not repent of sin nor live by faith in Christ, mean nothing. Guilt is not taken away by doing things our way instead of God's way. However, we might say things, or we might try doing things for God in our own way and on our own terms, but that is an exercise in futility. But when we apply God's word to our conscience, and in our heart, return in genuine faith to the Lord, the power of the word of God takes effect. Self-judgment will lead us back to the Lord who is willing to reason with a repentant person. In the case of Isaiah making this call, he let the people of Judah know that God was willing to reason with a repentant nation. This a clear Gospel principle. The invitation of our righteous God to an ungodly sinner is real and purposeful. God is ready and willing to cleanse the vilest sinner and make them fit for heaven "When they come as a sinner to Jesus."

Contrary to that attitude is this fact. If the invitation to come to God and reason with Him is refused, and if rebellion is evident instead of contrition and confession of sin, there will be unavoidable judgment that cannot be stopped. God has given His word. He is willing to forgive and cleanse the repentant sinner. But He will definitely bring righteous judgment on the rebellious one who refuses His offer of grace.

Jerusalem and Judah had become as abhorrent to God as a woman who was once an honorable, just and clean-living lady, turning willfully to one who sells herself on the streets for money. That is how God looks at those who were once committed to faith in Him and obedience to His word, but then turn to idolatry and spiritual adultery for personal gain or social popularity. To turn from whole-hearted commitment to God for the love of money or the pleasures of the world and what it has to offer, is to open one's self up to a just judgment from the Lord.

The refining of the soul is painful and costly, but is necessary for a sinning believer in order for them to return back to God. Then we can become what he intended us to be when He saved us. The last part of this first chapter has warnings and promises mixed. Israel as a nation has suffered and will suffer as they have through the generations that have come and gone. The nation is waiting for God's promised recovery, but that cannot happen until there is real repentance. We as individual believers need to rid ourselves of anything and everything that is in any way taking the place of the Lord God in our hearts. Our main interests and commitments identify those things that are of most importance to us.

Isaiah 1:11. *"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats."*

APPEARANCES.

They move in stately order to the appointed places -
The pecking order carefully maintained.
Everything looks proper; there is a somber countenance on their faces -
To those looking on, they would see tradition is sustained.
But another One is looking on who sees more than face or form.
While men look on outward appearance, He looks on the heart.
Their smug attitude towards holy things, should have them mourn -
The intention God had was fellowship with them from the start.

The enemies were near, but instead of calling upon God -
They turned to mercenary men who were waiting on them nearby.
When a nation's leaders turn away and forsake the Lord -
They are bound to fail in every enterprise they choose to try.
As God observed their departure and predicted their downfall -

He, through His prophets, still called for them to come and reason.
There was a place of repentance if they turned from sin to call -
On the Lord who loved them and still desired to save them.

History is repeating itself, our nation that was so blessed -
Is turning from the inward faith to blatant outward sham.
Tolerance is the new watchword and sin has so deeply messed
With our national character that we soon will be a beggared land.
Our priority has changed from fear of God to the pleasure of man -
And anything the citizens desire is what goes in place of laws.
Some of the appearances may seem the same, but it seems no one can
Turn the tide of materialism back to a righteous cause.

Unless there is some divine intervention, we will be captive to the nations.
The national will and loyalty to truth and righteousness is gone.
We may for a while keep up appearances, but the real situation
Is no longer as a nation under God, are we all as one.
Each one wants his own, no longer is there patriotic cohesion;
Moral darkness and greed for gain has us overcome -
The righteous past we had when opportunities came, we seized them.
But now we have wasted them, and what we had will soon be gone.

“O God, have mercy on our nation. If there is any chance at all for recovery; bring it to pass. If not, help me to be involved in seeing some saved before the end comes. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 2

BLESSING IS COMING, BUT FIRST --

In chapter two the second sermon of Isaiah which is still given in poetic form, is not a vision which he saw like the first chapter, but is a specific word from the Lord to His servant regarding the future of the people of Israel. Throughout the book of Isaiah there are a number of different themes used by the Spirit of God to seek to awaken His careless people to their condition before the Lord and why punishment and judgment came upon them. A Holy God wants fellowship with holy people. When sin comes in among His people, He will punish them for their sin. Twenty-eight times in the book “salvation” is spoken of in many of its different aspects. The Messiah of Israel is promised as the coming Sovereign who will rule over His people, and over all the nations of the earth in peace and righteousness. Hope motivates all of us when we are in hard times and situations, so to His people God promises comfort and deliverance in the future when Christ comes.

In this chapter we see God’s goal for His people. He wants them to know experimentally and personally, spiritual victory, and peace that comes when He is supreme in the lives of His people. This is what He wants from us in our day. It should be foreign to a child of God to live in spiritual defeat and despair. The cause of that state of mind is our minds get turned off of our Lord Jesus Christ to the problems of life, the deceptive hope of success in this world, and a lack of faith in our Lord. When the people of God are in fellowship together in gathered companies to Him, and in His name, there is a strength and security that is not taken away by the affairs and the state of the world around us. We are renewed weekly when we gather unto Him and join our voices, hearts and minds in worship and praise to Him. When we read the scriptures together and discuss among ourselves the truths contained in God’s word, all the compromises, difficulties and deception that goes on around us in the name of success, pleasure and religion, fades into insignificance. The promises of God that are “Yea and Amen,” remain unchanged, and our faith is strengthened.

After the look ahead Isaiah gives into the future day of blessing, when the goals of the Lord will be real and established, and there is true peace on earth and good will to men, he gave a frank open challenge to the people of Israel and Judah as to what is going to happen to them first. Sadly, many people do not want to accept the fact that there is severe punishment for sin. People get so used to sin and evil, that they are willing to overlook its effects on humanity and the world in general, and with a tolerant attitude, indicate they don’t think sin is all that bad. So, humans kill their unborn children, while protecting animals as if they are equal in value to people who have been made in the image of God. The prophet made plain the fact that judgment on sin will come before peace comes under the rule of the Messiah.

The people of Israel and Judah were ripe for judgment. They were being adversely influenced by the religions of idol worshiping people and were attracted to the licentious lifestyle of idolatry. That happens today as people add various attractions to what is supposed to be a spiritual exercise of worship and praise to the Lord. The people of Israel were yielding to the ideas of the world system and were ignoring the unchanging laws of God. Materialism had become as big a problem to them as it is to the world today. People now, live for what they can get, thinking they will find some satisfaction in “things” rather than in a relationship with the Lord. The heathen paganism of the Assyrian

empire in that day was like the paganism of our day and our country. Punishment for sin was promised then, and it will not escape us either.

Idol worship insults God by demeaning the Creator when people worship that which is created instead of the Creator of all things. Idol worship keeps us from knowing and serving God when we put our confidence in anything else. Idol worship causes us to rely on our own efforts to please our basic need of spiritual life rather than on putting our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Idols are anything that takes the place of God in one's life. What I think about most, may be the idol to which I stand in awe and want to please. The focus of attention in the activities in which I daily am engaged, can be the idol that will keep me from happy fellowship with my Lord.

Before the blessings of the coming kingdom can be experienced, there will come "the day of the Lord." The coming "day of the Lord," is mentioned four times in the book of Isaiah as a warning that there will be judgment on some people from which there will be no escape. At the same time, blessing will come as a result of it to others. The nation of Israel was ripe for judgment at the time of Isaiah's writing. The high and mighty; the proud and arrogant; the successful and pleasure-seeking people were all going to be brought down. The pride of man will always be brought low by those who dread the appearing of our Lord Jesus. People do not want Him to interfere with their lives today and try to convince themselves that there is nothing beyond the grave, nor a God who will judge them for their sin.

The "cedars" and "oaks" of leadership in society and the pride of nations will be humbled in the day of the Lord. The pleasure seekers who travel the world looking for new experiences and vistas to try to get some happiness will be humbled as well. Arrogant philosophers and false teachers who try to explain away the fact of God and the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ will be brought down before Him and will confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord." The moral, spiritual and physical weakness of mankind will be exposed, and all who rejected the Savior will be humbled and look for a place to hide. The false religionists who have ornate idols of gold and silver, and who have formed entertaining things in the name of religion, so that God can be made "relevant" to people, will run from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His Person.

When the Lord returns to reign on earth, all that men have gloried in of their own making and their own imaginations, will be shown for what it really is – a temporary effort of people to exalt themselves and be their own god, and worship themselves in their own eyes. Those who fall for the deception of the antichrist, will find that he too only has "breathe in his nostrils." Even though the world will exalt him for awhile and he will exalt himself, he will be of no lasting account. He is powerless before our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord alone has "all power in heaven and in earth."

Lasting rest and peace only can, and will, come from our Lord. So, it is right to "Cease from man..."; stop trusting in human efforts and in the leadership of men who will eventually fail. The return of the Lord will bring an end to the man of sin and his self-exalting leadership. He will be cast into the everlasting burnings with the false religious leader and ultimately the devil who controlled them, will be in the lake of fire with them and all who followed them. The mortality of humanity limits any feeble power to be unreliable, unstable, shortsighted and selfish. Such ambition of human beings to exalt themselves will not last, will fail, and will be judged.

As those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, our trust is in the Eternal, Almighty God who knows all, is everywhere and has all power forever and ever. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh the flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord."

Isaiah 2:3. *"And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."*

A LOOK AHEAD.

A day will come after the night of dark desolation has gone -
When the Word of the Lord will go forth.
Those who had wanted God to leave them alone -
Will realize what in life has real worth.
The proud will have been humbled and brought down to the dust.
The rich who trusted in their treasure will see it go to rust.
The covetous will let go of all that in once they did trust -
When the day of the Lord shall come.

There is going to be a time of real peace -
When armaments become tools for work.
The animosity of nations against each other will cease -
People won't be seeking each other's hurt.
But the proud must be humbled and brought to the ground -
Those who exalted themselves will all be brought down -

In fear, many will hide hoping they will not be found -
When the day of the Lord shall come.

The desire of many will finally be
To go up to the house of the Lord.
They will there be taught and will finally see
The value of the law and God's Word.
But before that time comes, false worship and deceit must go -
Those who put their trust in idols must be bowed low -
Any man who trusted in man will surely know -
When the day of the Lord shall come.

“The favored nations seem to be going farther away from Thee, O God. Those who have very little seem to be the ones who are listening to, and heeding, Thy Word. Still, here is where I believe you want me to be. So, Gracious Father, empower me for this day to do Thy will as it is revealed to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 3

UNFAITHFUL LEADERS – UNHEEDING PEOPLE

When the effects of sin become so widespread that it is accepted and commonplace, the time will come when justice exposes sin for what it is. Judgment will then begin at the house of God even though there may be the appearance of religious holiness and success in “church life.” Idolatry of whatever kind it is, will become obvious and the worldliness among those who claim to be God’s people will bring chastening. The fallen condition of those who go their own way will bring the reward of evil for evil. Most people are not aware of how a vain empty show will be mocked and rejected in a person or even in a religious group.

Isaiah chapter three is a description of Jerusalem “being trodden down” by the Gentile nations beginning with the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. The whole population was humbled and chastened as judgment promised became judgment accomplished. The support of food and rainfall was taken away and famine came. All the responsible leaders were taken away and children and childish unqualified people took control. The whole leadership was counterfeit because those in the position of leaders were not only unqualified, but were incapable of leading the people.

Isaiah warned that the capital city of Jerusalem would be ruined even before it happened. His prophecies took place just like he said. The Lord can see right through outward sham and hypocrisy to what is really the root problem of sin and why people take to sin like a duck takes to water. Time after time Jerusalem has been destroyed and brought to ruins and rubble. Time after time it has been rebuilt. A foreshadowing of things yet to come took place in 1948 when the Jews became a nation again though not recognized by many nations around them. In 1956 and again in 1967 there was great rejoicing when much of Jerusalem was returned to Jewish leadership. Quite a lot of the promised land is now under that leadership, but this is not the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy.

The people of Israel are like the majority of the people of the world today. They have a form of religion, whether it be Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam or atheism. There is no slacking from the busy pursuit of sinful pleasure and sinful success. National destruction will come on the nation and the righteous will survive, but the end of the wicked will be bad. Isaiah warned that because of departure from the Lord, the departure of Judah and Jerusalem would be like what happened to the northern ten tribes that has been dispersed in the world until they are unrecognizable as a unique people. The Lord took away from them that which they took for granted, and gave them that which they deserved.

When the incompetent and degenerate people, and the children, rule a society, the time will come when the Lord takes over to carry out justice. It is in the nature of God to be just and deal fairly. He has implanted in the minds of every person the desire for fairness, but most only want it for themselves. When leaders ignore justice and deal unfairly with those for whom they are responsible, poor and oppressed people suffer. The worship of the Lord is hindered. God regards the plight of the poor because they are usually the ones who call upon Him for help and comfort. In faith they look to the One who is waiting for such a call.

When sin is taken for granted and becomes normal practice in a person, church or nation, a just payday is certain to come. Leaders who lead people astray and treat those under their authority as if they are of little or no account, will find they are up against God. He has made them “ministers of righteousness.” They are not intended to be those who mislead, mistreat and malign those who follow them and even disagree with them. Flippant disregard for dignity, integrity and honesty will be exposed for what it really is. Even Jerusalem, the city, became like a flirting woman, full of vain, self-centered impressions of herself. People often are only taken up with what they look like outwardly, but the inward person will ultimately be exposed as a proud, covetous, narcissistic person who can’t be trusted. There will

be just judgment on the population of a city of people who think “When we go, wisdom will die with us.” Those who glory in themselves will have no recourse and will be made desolate. Such arrogance will be exposed like a woman stripped of all her jewelry, fine garments and revealed as an unclean sinner. When all the finery is gone, that which is left to see is nothing at all of value.

In Isaiah’s prophecy, he told the people they will be led away as captives tied to a rope, unkempt, covered in burlap and shame, instead of glory. They will leave an abhorrent scent instead of perfume. They will be wearing a slave’s brand instead of beauty. There will be nothing left of the city to look at except rubble.

However, in a future day yet to come, a new day of return to morality, justice and peace will bring back glory to Jerusalem. The Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, will sit on David’s throne carrying out justice as the final authority over every matter. How wonderful it is for us who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and know Him personally as our Savior and Lord, to be able to experience kingdom blessings now! We are able to “Rejoice in the Lord always,” when by faith we live for Him who is our life! We are with Him now, and will be with Him forever as a result of the eternal life we have been given by God when we trusted the Lord Jesus alone for our salvation.

Isaiah 3:10. *“Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for the rewards of his hands shall be given him.”*

LIGHT IN A DARK TIME.

Strangely, everything seems to be out of order.
The children are leading instead of the father.
People are being oppressed by one another.
Babes are speaking instead of the orator.
Something is definitely wrong!

Leadership is no longer done by the qualified.
People are living in ruinous pride
Immorality has become a national mudslide.
No longer is immorality of lifestyle something to hide.
Standards are definitely gone!

Children become oppressors as they scratch and fight.
People no longer care if something is wrong or right.
Women are walking in darkness, they don’t want the light.
Faces are brazen and bold that in times past were bright.
Righteousness doesn’t reign in Zion!

But amidst all this departure there is a light that still shines.
There are the righteous few you can seek out and find.
Though all around things deteriorate, to those temptations they are blind
And their righteous life is on-going for they control their minds.
Fixed upon the will of God!

Do not be discouraged, though all around you fails.
Keep on doing right whatever that entails.
Though wickedness and evildoers attack, they will not prevail.
And satanic opposition against the righteous is to no avail.
Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world!

“Heavenly Father, keep by Thy power those who stand for Thee in these dark days. May Thy people here be able to maintain a strong testimony to Thy Holy Name. May I be able this day to guide some soul to Thee, or help them in Thy ways. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 4

WHEN THE LORD RETURNS

The first verse of this chapter concludes the warnings of Isaiah regarding “that day” when Jerusalem and Judah will be decimated by the coming judgments. The male population will have been so depleted by death as a result of war, that there will be a scarcity of men. The women will be willing to support themselves and not be dependent on their husbands if only they could have a name for posterity and have their “reproach” taken away. In those ancient times an unmarried woman was looked down upon. Christianity declares men and women to be equal in value with gifts given by God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that are suitable to them. The value of each person is the same, even though the roles that each fill are different and diverse.

In the New Testament church, there are “diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.” Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Women are to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord. Men are given an audible role in church gatherings. Women are given a visible role in church gatherings. Each are priests in the “kingdom of priests,” so each worships the Lord and offers gifts and sacrifices in the way suitable to their gender and their capacity. When this life is over and we are in heaven, the people are the same, but the relationships will be different. We will all be as children in the family of God rather than identifiable couples as in a marriage relationship.

“In that day” in verse two, describes a very different time than that in verse one. This is a reference to the millennium which will be a day of redemption rather than a day of judgment. This redemption will come from “The Branch of the Lord,” who will bring abundance of blessing to His people Israel. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who came from the kingly line of David, will bring true glory and beauty back to Israel.

“Those of Israel who have escaped” are those true believers who have been born again during the tribulation. That will be a cleansing time from idolatry and wickedness by the fires of divine judgment dealing with sin and bringing in justice upon sin. A minority of Israel will “believe the report,” and “the arm of the Lord” will be revealed to them. They will endure to the end to be physically saved from the terrors of the tribulation. The saved Jews who have been truly born again and by God’s grace have been made holy, will live holy lives as citizens of Jerusalem in spite of all that will go on around them. The grace of God will set them apart for Himself, and He will protect them.

People who are saved in any age are those who know that our Lord Jesus Christ, “The Branch,” “was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.” They have personal knowledge of the sacrifice of Christ who died for them and bore away their sins forever. People who have been healed and cleansed, love the Lord and want to obey Him in spite of what other people may do. There has always been, and always will be, a marked contrast between those who believe and those who believe not. The Jews living in Jerusalem in the time of Isaiah, were very different from those described in the coming day of blessing. True believers in Christ are marked by holiness, not by material success, wealth and prestige because of the positions they hold. That was true in the past, it is true in the present, and it will be true in the future.

The cleansing necessary by the Righteous King, will take place when the “wheat” will be gathered and the “chaff” burned. The population in the cleansed city will want to obey God and will want the moral standards of holiness that make peaceful living possible. They will be devoted to the Lord and He will shield them from disasters and adversity. He will put an end to the widespread evil that permeated society in Isaiah’s day and likewise, in our day. The covenant God made with Israel will be fulfilled. “In Thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed.” The presence of the Lord Jesus Christ will create a covering that will overshadow the people of Israel who have been so terribly persecuted down through the centuries. It will be especially terrible for them during the tribulation.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth; peace, good will toward men,” will be an actual fact. Israel will be preserved by the Lord; they will be placed in His presence; they will enjoy the promised blessings of the covenant when they dwell with Him as His earthly people in a scene which will be like heaven on earth.

The descriptions of our Lord Jesus Christ in this little chapter are very instructive and a blessing to us. As “The Branch of Jehovah, His deity is declared. As “the fruit of the earth, His humanity is declared. “Beautiful and glorious,” is His priesthood. “Excellent and comely (appealing),” speaks to us of His majesty and glory. “For those of Israel have escaped,” He is the Deliverer. For “those written among the living,” His holiness is extended. He will “wash away” the filth of those in that city, telling us of His purity. A canopy of a “cloud by day and a fire by night,” like in the past when Israel was in the wilderness, will cover the whole habitation of Israel when the Lord is their Protector. The tabernacle will indicate His presence with them as His dwelling place and as a “refuge” and “covert,” His glory will be obvious to all. God will dwell with His people.

He has dwelt with His people in the past and He will in the future. He dwells with those today who know Him and love Him. We are “His seed” that is “accounted to the Lord for a generation.” He is in the midst of His own giving grace when needed, showing mercy and loving kindness, granting the joy of His presence to those who worship Him. He hears our prayers, meets our needs according to His will and guides our pathway through life. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”

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.”*

THE BRANCH.

There is very little left after the times of evil and distress.
But God still loves His own and will show His grace and bless.
Those who survive have one defining characteristic that remains -
Holy, is the Branch of the Lord, and holy is their name.

In times of judgment, God's people often despair.
And sometimes forget that for His people He still does care.
When sin takes its toll and a people are brought down -
Only those who are called holy, are anywhere left to be found.

The Lord God remains the same, never changed by men
Who deny Him and provoke Him because God doesn't yield to them.
His name is "Holy" and wickedness cannot before Him survive.
When judgment for sin is passed, the holy ones are still alive.

I don't really expect these days of increasing darkness to change.
Increasingly people think a holy God is very strange.
There is a mind-set in many that think God is who they want Him to be.
To them God is only a concept or a force, not a Person they someday will see.

The Branch of the Lord to all those of us who know Him -
Is a suitable title for Him, by those of us who are just little limbs.
Through the Branch, and someday spread over all the earth -
There will be that nurturing fruit of grace of inestimable worth.

Like a small branch in the Vine, in Him I will abide.
Grace to meet every need the Branch of the Lord will provide.
I experience the beauty and glory of that Branch every day -
Israel and the nations in the future will to the Branch, homage pay.

"How blessed I am Father, because of all that flows to me from the Living Vine. Keep me with a sense of gratitude through this whole day. May I never lose the awe of being joined to the Savior and accepted by Thee through Him. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 5

THE SONG OF THE VINEYARD

Isaiah was a very versatile man when it came to doing the work of the Lord. In passing on the message the Lord gave him for the people of Jerusalem and Judah, the poetic form he used in this chapter was that of a song. But what a song! This was no bedtime melody nor was it a song to please the people. The very fact of the message being put into a song makes it more of a funeral dirge. The Lord loves His people in spite of what they do or don't do, but He does not let them get away with sin unpunished. How impacting it must have been when Isaiah stood and sang this warning message! Some people would likely have mocked, others would have been embarrassed. The mournful tune and the warning message would have been talked about all through the city. God gives warnings to us because He cares for us, not because He wants to destroy us. The Lord Jesus used this same kind of parable of the vineyard to warn the people of His day as to what they can expect when they "turn everyone to his own way."

In both the Old Testament and New Testament, the vineyard is Israel. The religious leaders understood that when the Lord Jesus told the parable, and it is the same group of people in this chapter that were leading the Lord's people astray. They were wicked husbandmen and that resulted in evil coming from a good land. The vineyard the Lord planted was in the best place because it was the place of His choosing. He had prepared the ground to plant the best vines to potentially produce good fruit. There was even a tower in the vineyard for protection and security from thieves.

It is the Lord's intention for us to be fruitful in every way. When that is true, there is blessing for believers and unbelievers as the truth of God is publicly proclaimed. In contrast to the ways of the world system, God expects His people to uphold justice as He does and to give honor to Him, and benefits to His people from that which He has entrusted to us. As the prophet sang his prophecy, he briefly reviewed Israel's history in the promised land. But what God wanted from them did not come. The fenced vineyard brought bitter fruit. His rebellious people dishonored the Lord and because of their sins there was no protection for them, no production from them and no prospect to avoid the judgment that was coming upon them. God's verdict of their actions was guilty, and there were six woes that were pronounced on them. Failure to do what we know God wants, will bring unavoidable consequences and judgment; especially on those who are leaders of God's people. When a person knows to do right and doesn't do it, it is sin. When a person is warned as to what they know is wrong, and they go ahead and do it, that person will have to face the power of justice being done. There was a famine of righteousness in Israel, and that same problem is here in this country today.

The woes pronounced by Isaiah are like bad fruit. Selfish ambition produces covetousness and greed. Sinful pleasures, both physical and spiritual bring self-indulgence. The endless search for frivolous pleasure, does not satisfy and leads to dissipation. Unrestrained pleasures may destroy those who seek them because of wild drinking

and substance abuse. Deliberate sins of presumption and defiance against the revealed word of God, leave a person or a nation open to divine judgment because of God's holy displeasure. The perversion of moral standards and tried and proven values, lead to no restraint, no spiritual sense and is like a person dragging their sins behind them like a burden on a rope of bondage. Even if people call on the Lord, sin has to be faced and confessed, then truly forsaken.

A special woe is called on those who make up their own moral standards to suit themselves. Selfish pride, self-sufficiency and intellectual pride can bring a person down quickly. This will lead to suffering, breakdown of order and the loss of a peaceful society. Unchanging justice will demand and carry out judgment in the time, place and way the Lord chooses. Disobedience to divine standards and the miscarriage of justice will bring righteous retribution. Bad consequences are inevitable even though they may not come immediately. God gives room for repentance and restoration.

The transgressions of leaders, and consequently of the population was described in Isaiah's song. The vineyard would be destroyed by enemy nations divinely directed to carry out the sentence God passed on his sinful people. A foreign power would come on them swiftly, strongly and noisily they would overwhelm Jerusalem and Judah. The bodies of the people would lie on the streets like garbage. They would be like a withered plant and dry stubble that burns quickly. Spiritual dry rot had settled in, and the people of Israel would be powerless against the enemies summoned by the Lord to bring justice upon His willful, sinful, rebellious people.

The warning is clear! We cannot sin against God and expect to get away with it. A sinful nation and sinful people pollute not only themselves but their children who come after them, and those around who follow them. The grace of God gives opportunity to repent and return to Him. The mercy of God withholds justice as long as God deems necessary. The love of God waits for those He has set His love upon to respond. But when all is refused, ignored and rejected, judgment will come.

Isaiah 5:20. *"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"*

DISAPPOINTMENT.

Full of expectation, God planned for His own people to be fruitful.
Every provision was there.

Obstacles were removed and the situation was most suitable -
Good fruit the vines were expected to bear.

But bad fruit came forth, six sins did appear -
Each one as bad as the other.

Instead of righteousness, cries of distress God did hear -
As they went about exploiting their brothers.

They became drunk on their wine; mocked God in their pride -
Left standards of morality behind.

They were clever in their own sight; their conceit didn't hide -
And justice to others they denied.

So, God allowed others to come in and defeat -
Those who chose to live as they please.
Payday will come to those who deceive and cheat -
Alas, today we have the same sins as these.

We dare not think that God will allow
Sin to go on forever unpunished.
Many think because they are getting away now -
Their obligation to God is finished.

We have yet to see what will really happen -
When as a nation God brings us down,
For many years we used our blessings to gladden-
But now everything is turned around.

From nations and individuals God has a right to expect
Good fruit from the blessings He dispensed.
If we take them for granted or those benefits neglect-
The time will come when all of them we will lose.

To disappoint people is bad enough indeed-
But to disappoint God is so much more.

When to His intentions for us, we give no heed-
Then His grace-period for us will be over.

“O Lord God, we have gone so far from Thee in such a short time, I am wondering how much farther it is possible to go. I remember days of prayer; acts of kindness; righteousness in communities. O God, have mercy on us! In Thy Name, Amen.”

Isaiah 6

“I SAW... I HEARD”

This chapter concludes the first section of the book of Isaiah. In the fourteenth jubilee year since Israel had occupied Canaan, Uzziah died. Even though in general, he was a good king, he acted one time in self-will and in his impatience, he tried to offer a sacrifice. That was not his place even though he was the king, and immediately he became a leper, and he died leprous man in spite of being king. Perhaps he thought being king gave him more authority than the priests. God has an order He intends us to follow, and if we take matters in our own hands and change things to suit ourselves, we are intruding into that which is none of our business.

The death of Uzziah affected the whole nation, and for Isaiah it was a life-changing year. The glory was about to depart from the temple, and it will not come back until Christ reigns in the future. Shortly after the death of Uzziah, Rome was founded which was the power God chose to finally devastate Jerusalem and scatter the Jews world-wide. It was then Isaiah gave his personal testimony as to how he was cleansed from his sin and the call of God came to him. He told how the Lord was revealed to him and the cleansing power of the sacrifice on the altar was personally applied to him Every person's salvation experience is unique to them, but the result is the same – acceptance in the “Beloved.” The start of a person's ministry begins at conversion, and the cleansing power of the sacrifice of Christ for us being made plain to u personally.

Isaiah's vision of God, “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up...,” was a fearful thing to him. The holiness of God is very seldom realized as a power, not just a presence. When we first see the Lord as He is, highly exalted; attended by seraphim, the guardians of the holiness of God who are in such awe of the Lord that they dare not look at Him, we are totally humbled and brought down in repentance and an acknowledgement of our guilt before Him.

The statement of the seraphim of the holiness of God is not a hymn or a song of joy, but rather the pronouncement of a fact. The “Three-in-One” Godhead is perfect and spotlessly pure in character and counsel. In power and glory God acts, and the foundations of everything are moved when that happens. This is in contrast to the dishonor done to Him by His people.

Our attitude toward God needs to be right before we can represent Him, and before He allows us to speak His word to others. Confession of our sin is needed first. Then comes personal cleansing from sin; then the cleansing of the whole person in relation to life, both in word and deed. After this cleansing power is effective, then the chosen servant can be used by the Lord. The Lord Himself prepares the hearts of the ones He chooses to serve Him and use to reach other people. When we first present the Gospel, we may not understand a whole lot of all the Gospel message entails. Early in our public presentation of the Gospel message, we are quite limited, but the more we prepare for speaking and testifying, the more we understand of the message and the reasons we must go out and proclaim it to others.

Full occupation with the Lord opens the door of understanding of who we are as well as who God is and of the truth of His word, and how it applies to everyone. When we realize how unworthy and corrupt we are, then we are able and willing to respond to the Lord and what He wants from us. The grace of God makes the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ clear to us, and that brings cleansing to us. Redemption and purification from sin comes as a result of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us when He suffered for our sins to bring us to God. The call from God to tell His truth to mankind, came to men, not angels. The word preached may harden the hearts of some who hear the Gospel, but in spite of that we must preach the word of God faithfully, not socially acceptable or seeker friendly. God is honored when His truth is proclaimed in the way He wants, and it will not return void to Him but will do what He intends. We do not save people nor do they save themselves from their sins. God saves any and all who will come to Him in repentance for sin and faith in the sacrifice of Christ alone as payment for our sin.

Isaiah's message to the people of Jerusalem and Judah was a solemn message to people of “unclean lips,” as a warning. God was going to destroy His people as an entity because of their disobedience to Him and failure to keep covenant with Him. When people have a wrong view of God, that concept has serious consequences. The holiness of God has never been clearly understood by sinful people, even though believers have been called to be holy because our God is holy. Holiness is to be morally perfect and pure. It means to be set apart from sin. Because of living in a sinful society, we become used to sin, and our view of the seriousness of sin fades. The reality of what it means to be holy is also diminished to the extent we may find ourselves overlooking sin and accepting what society accepts as

“normal life.” The Bible view of God is high and lofty, morally perfect and pure, so if we can glimpse even some of that purity, it will cleanse our thinking and practices. It is then we can worship and serve our Lord as He intends us to.

Personal cleansing starts when we are saved by God’s grace. The cleansing power of Christ’s blood, the sacrifice He made on our behalf when He was on the cross, changes our nature. But we still need continual cleansing by the word of God from the effects of sin around us in order for us to be able to serve Him acceptably. The more we are conscious of our own inadequacy, the more God is able to use a sanctified, willing person. People will hear the message of warnings and of the Gospel, but few will listen. Because hard hearts choose to not pay heed to warnings with divine authority behind them, they will be left to reap the effects of their hard hearts and rebellion against God’s will. A nation that chooses to do that, will not survive the righteous justice of God’s judgment.

Isaiah’s solemn message to Israel pointed to Christ, but also to the final doom of Israel at that time. They had perverted their way so much that they were beyond conversion and healing. However, there would be a remnant, a few, who would remain, and someday, from that remnant there will come a recovery to the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah and the Great Deliverer of Israel. Some have followed the Lord, perhaps a tenth is suggested here, in spite of what everyone else will do. God will revive the nation to fulfill the promises of the covenant He made with them in ancient times. God will be glorified in Israel, and also in all the nations of the earth who will be blessed because of His grace to them. We are encouraged by knowing that God will keep His promise to preserve His own.

Isaiah 6:1. *“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.”*

“I SAW ALSO...”

When Uzziah died of that awful disease of leprosy, everyone would’ve been talking about that death. He had usurped the position of the priest and had imposed himself into a place and an act that was not his to be. The head of even a good man can be swelled to such an extent that he will not listen to the voice of reason. When that happens, there is not much we can do except pray to the Lord that the effects of such an arrogant act will not create a tidal wave of divine retribution upon the whole land. Uzziah must’ve rushed out of that place in terror when he realized he had been struck with that isolating disease and there was nothing he could do about it.

The word would’ve spread through the whole land. “The king has leprosy; the king has leprosy!” It would have been the talk of the nation. The king would have taken all his meals alone; he would have had a cover over his mouth; he would have slept alone; he would have walked alone. For the remainder of his life, he would not have felt the comfort of human touch, nor have been close enough to look into another person’s eyes. The dreadfulness of distance from all other people would have reminded him of the separation of sinners from God.

The year of his death would have been remembered like we remember 1963 when John F. Kennedy was assassinated; or 9/11/01 when 3000 people died from terrorist attacks. “The year that king Uzziah died” would be remembered by almost everyone. Isaiah had more than the death of a king that affected him for the rest of his life. That was the year he “saw also the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up.” The word “also” changed his whole perspective on the world news. He saw more than the death of a monarch; he saw the Lord “sitting on a throne.” Uzziah’s throne was empty, but the Lord’s throne was filled. Uzziah had died a tragic death, but the Lord’s train (the tail of his robe) filled the temple. Uzziah would have been alone, but the Lord had seraphim hastening to do His bidding. Uzziah would have been remembered for going where he shouldn’t have been and doing what he shouldn’t have done. The Lord was known by the words, “Holy, holy, holy.” Uzziah’s passing would have left Isaiah with a sense of loss; but when he saw also the Lord, he knew a sense of his own uncleanness and unworthiness.

The whole picture of the world scene today is changed when we add the word “also.” There is war in the Middle East, genocide in Africa, tragedy because of natural disasters in the Far East and the United States, poverty in many of the world’s countries, AIDS and other incurable diseases world-wide. If that is all that we could see, we would be dismayed and despairing of any hope for the future of mankind. But we too have seen “also the Lord.” He is still God; He is still Lord; He is still the Almighty and for His own purposes, is letting things run out their own natural course of sin. When the right time comes, there will be the Messenger of God who will clearly address the situation and correct all that has been running its sinful route.

“O Righteous Father: my eyes sometimes look too long on what is going on around and wondering “where will it all end.” But I am thankful to Thee that I can lift my eyes above all the turmoil and see there, seated above, the One who has everything under control - and I can rest easy. Thanks so much for heavenly “eye-salve.” In the name of the One who sits on the Throne of God. Amen.”

Isaiah 7

IMMANUEL IS THE SIGN

The next five chapters of Isaiah are prophetic messages about the promised Messiah who was coming in God's time. It is plainly stated that the Messiah who would come is God and would be an Israelite. He would be truly human and yet would be a miracle person who would be born without sin. He would be born of a virgin, and we know that conception was by the Holy Spirit of God. He existed eternally but "was found in fashion as a man." Even though He came to bless His own people, He was not received, but was despised and rejected of men, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Apparently, Isaiah had no written prophecy for Jotham the son of Uzziah. He was a good king who sought to lead the nation in the way the Lord wanted, but the people enjoyed their sin and didn't respond well to his rule morally and spiritually. When evil is in a nation, it is very difficult to remove both the evil and the desire for it. There are unavoidable consequences that will have to be faced. Ahaz lived in defiance to God, so the prophecies of Isaiah to him were straightforward warnings of coming judgment.

There was an alliance between Syria and the northern tribes of Israel that was directed toward Jerusalem and Judah which created fear in Ahaz. The grandfather and father of Ahaz were basically good men, but because those before us fear God and give honor to Him, doesn't mean our generation will, nor the generation that follows them. The threat from the united countries to the north moved Ahaz to seek out Assyria and bribe them to assist him. He and all Judah were afraid of what would happen if they were attacked. He was exhorted by Isaiah to be calm and put his trust in the Lord, because in a few years, the threat would be removed.

He was promised deliverance from God if he would put his faith in the Lord was Isaiah's message. Within a few years the northern kingdom was broken up and dispersed through the Assyrian empire and Syria was defeated as well. To assure Ahaz, Isaiah told him to ask for a miraculous sign from God as to the reality of God's promise. Along with the assurance of the promise was a warning that Judah would suffer the same fate as Israel if they did not turn to the Lord and put their faith in Him. But Ahaz had no faith in God. Under the guise of piety and false humility, in full-blown hypocrisy he refused to ask anything of the Lord.

Those who only respond to worldly wisdom will find themselves losers in the end. Human plans, and ingenuity; ideas people have that are not consistent with God's will and word, will find they have no power to control events nor lead others in a good path to a safe place. In spite of Ahaz's lack of faith in God, the will and word of God would be fulfilled anyway – only afterward, Ahaz was forever a lost soul. God's promise of a miracle sign was rejected by Ahaz with a pious hypocritical pretext, but that did not interfere in the slightest with God's promise of a Deliverer.

The promise of the "seed of the woman" was again given as a sign to confirm the prophecy Isaiah made. Ahaz likely was afraid of asking for a sign in case it wouldn't come to pass. Doubting God and His word is a soul-damning sin. It implies that what God says is not necessarily going to happen. When we refuse to believe God, we have made Him out to be a liar, "because [we] believe not the record God gave of His Son." No wonder unbelievers are going to be in hell. So, the Lord gave His own sign.

"A virgin shall conceive and bare a Son." Immanuel was made like us so He could represent us as our Redeemer. The false signs of the Apocrypha are only imaginations of men that have no basis or proof of ever happening. That is in great contrast to the "many infallible proofs" we have in the scriptures of truth regarding our Lord. Immanuel is the name associated with the *identity* of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," is the name of His *humanity*. Because of the rejection of the Lord by the nation of Israel, they would become a poverty-stricken country to the extent that all they could find to eat would be butter and honey. No crops would grow and no fruit would be produced. All that could be found to eat would be what could be scavenged from the barren fields grown up with bushes and weeds.

By the time Ahaz's son was twelve, Samaria and Syria had fallen to the Assyrians, and Judah was warned that the same thing would happen to them. Ahaz turned to foreign powers to aid him instead of turning in faith to God who had made a covenant with Israel long before. The attempt he made to stop Syria and the northern tribes was short-lived. The "hired razor," Sennachrib of Assyria, occupied Judah instead and Assyria and Egypt cleaned the whole nation from its produce and ruined many of the cities. Conflict between powerful nations has a way of decimating all the land over which opposing armies travel. The faithless kings of the past could not deliver the people, but in a day yet to come, the Son who was born of a virgin, will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Alliances between groups or persons, that form unequal yokes, may seem convenient and attractive at the time, but they will fail and leave people powerless and unhappy. The very ones Ahaz bribed to help him, would be the ones to ruin him. To attempt to guide God's people without God's guidance is an affront to God's wisdom and power. Leaders must seek God's will, apply the principles found in God's word in order to conclude a matter in a good way. Division follows defiance. Defeat follows self-will. Failure and humiliation follow pride. "Vain is man who trusts in man, and maketh flesh his arm."

Isaiah 7:10-11 *“Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, ‘Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.’”*

THE SIGN

He sounded so pious; this wicked king-
He feared what God was on his nation going to bring.
The enemies drew near; he had no place to run.
So, in that special place, he met the prophet and his son-
Who told him the word of the Lord in a special way-
A miraculous child would be born in a coming day.
That One Who will be born will finally set things right-
But before he comes you and your nation will be put to flight.

To pretend to be holy and pious in the presence of God-
Is not the thing to do when the evil you’ve done is known abroad.
To deceive and test your fellowmen is bad enough-
But to pretend and try to deceive God is just too much.
There is no way to fake piety before God Who knows all.
The place to begin is in true repentance you must fall-
And turn from the wickedness and evil you’ve done-
Then call on God for mercy before the grace-period is gone.

God has a plan He has followed down through the ages.
It was told first to Adam, and passed on through prophets and sages.
A miraculous thing will happen; the seed of the woman-
Will bring blessing to all, when God takes on human
Form, and from that place among men He chooses to take-
He becomes our perfect Substitute as atonement He makes.
Then we who were lost to God and sentenced to death-
Can be righteously accepted, forgiven and blessed.

The sign of the virgin birth to many is not real.
They will not accept what they do not experience, see or feel.
Rejecting the sign is to bring God down to no more than a man.
People turn away in unbelief and so no longer can-
Bring themselves to listen to God, let alone believe
That Jesus is God, nor accept as true that a virgin conceived
And the Child that was born to her was God in human flesh-
The sign that was given was that through Him, all men could be blessed.

“Gracious God, my Father, there is this young lady that I believe wants to be saved. If there is something I should tell her that I haven’t, please bring it clearly to my mind and help me express Thy grace in a suitable way. In thy Name, Amen.”

Isaiah 8

GOD STEPS IN

There is nothing about this prophecy Isaiah made that was secret. It was written in large letters on a scroll and was confirmed by faithful witnesses who were persons of authority and good reputation. When warnings are given ahead of time, it is a wise person or nation that gives heed. Coming events cast shadows ahead of them. The first verses of this chapter foreshadowed the downfall of Judah’s enemies from Damascus and Samaria. Unfortunately, Judah, under the rule of Ahaz didn’t pay attention to the warnings from God and the solution to the problem the Lord had arranged. Instead he and the nation sought help from others rather than God.

The names of Isaiah’s sons are quite remarkable and would likely have made them stand out among their peers. I can imagine some people would ask Isaiah, “What did you say his name is? And the other one’s name is – what? Shear-jashub?! – “The remnant shall return? Why did you name him that? And – Maher-shalal-hash-baz! The poor kid! He will be made fun of all the time! ‘Speed the spoil, hasten the booty?’ Are you trying to tell us something Isaiah?” Those names were prophetic warnings that would be telling the people what would be coming in the future. Every time they would see the boys, people would be reminded that God had planned for some event that could not be avoided.

Judah sought for help from another nation rather than the Lord. For that, they would be left for punishment themselves. Even though God is a God of love, He is also a God of righteous wrath against those who consider what He says to be lies. Our choices bring on us corresponding consequences. We have freedom to make them, and need to be sure we make the right ones because the wrong ones bring with them disaster. The choice of Ahaz and Judah

to turn to Assyria and bribe them into defending them from Syria and the northern ten tribes, ended in Judah itself being overcome by the Assyrians. Israel and Syria had rejected being associated with Judah and so were conquered by the Assyrians like a flood of water from a large river of overflowing banks. They didn't want the "calm waters of Shiloh" that were found in Judah.

The land of Israel is still "Immanuel's land" as far as God's promise to Israel is concerned, but it doesn't keep the people of God from being under the judging hand of God, even though He loves His own. When Assyria turned on Judah, Ahaz sought the help of Egypt but that could not stave off the coming judgment he and his people brought down on themselves. Like Judah seeking alliances with the ungodly nations in the past, so various churches and denominations today join together to "provide a united front," rather than yield to the word of God, and obey what God says. Groups seek to "cross pollinate" to try to form a strong force and influence the ungodly world. That was like Saul the king did when he kept the best sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord. He spared from the Amalekites that which God hated the most. It is all fleshly schemes and scams, and they do not work when dealing with sin and its consequences.

Sudden fear brings "shattered" courage. Because believers do not support national policies that are contrary to the word of God, and the standards of righteousness God has implanted in human consciences, they are often considered bigoted traitors. Standards of morality and the law of God and His justice are condemned because the majority of people think that is intolerance. As far as many in society are concerned, the changeable laws men make are more important than the unchangeable standards of law that God has established for the benefit and welfare of mankind. His laws have stood the test of time. Man's changing laws fail even the generation that makes them.

But in spite of all that happens, "God is with us." Grace will be the ultimate victor. Isaiah urged the righteous people who listened to his message, not to be afraid or intimidated by the conspiracy of Ahaz with the Assyrians. True believers "sanctify the Lord God of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear." We learn to trust the sovereignty of God and accept gratefully His supremacy in all human affairs. Those who turn away from the Lord as apostates will stumble and fall into destruction and damnation. He will be the stumbling stone and the rock of offense to those who want to do things their own way.

Fear is the enemy of faith and can take away our peace of mind if we give place to it. God is our source of strength and trust. He can deal with our fears when we trust in Him. The "law and the testimony" need to be preserved in believers and passed on to the generations following us. Apostasy will come, but those who "wait upon the Lord," will look to Him and find He never fails. The prophecy Isaiah wrote is sealed and sure. God will bring it all to pass in His time. Isaiah and his children are a type of our Lord Jesus Christ and those He has bought with His own blood. They are the signs and wonders God has given to the world. The transforming power of God in the lives of those who have been born again by the Spirit of God and the word of God, can't be denied. We need to encourage those of the generations who follow us to read the Bible, and love its truth. They need to learn what it says, keep it in their hearts, and then pass it on to those who follow them.

The sure word of God stands out against all the counterfeit spiritism and religious forms that will be exposed for what they really are. Those who obey the Lord will find blessing and understanding even in the troublesome times in which we live. Those who are blind leaders and those who follow them will go into everlasting darkness. Those who respond to the law and the testimony find in the Bible absolute truth by which can live and learn, and it has been tried and proven by millions of faithful believers. Those who trust in something else will be disillusioned and will despair because they have no hope of deliverance from the consequences of their sin. They will go into perdition in bitterness and hopelessness with curses on their lips.

Those who trust in the Lord will find testing times and waiting times difficult, but God knows what is best and when to do what is needed. We don't need to consult those who compromise truth and find biblical Christianity too restrictive in order to be effective in our testimony. To challenge what God says with our own opinions is to fail in the walk of faith. To not walk in the light of faith is to walk in the uncertainty and fear of darkness,

Isaiah 8:17. *"And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him."*

I WILL WAIT.

The "waters of Shiloh" have brought us blessing for years.
The gentleness and kindness of God gave full evidence He cares.
But when they first are taken for granted and God is then ignored-
The "waters of Shiloh" give way to righteous judgment that on us is outpoured.

To seek unholy alliances and compromise God's truth-
Is a freedom that we have to choose, but is of useless worth.
Man; who trusts in man is involved in something vain.

The results of such compromises are of empty gain.

Like a flood pouring in from overflowing banks
Once the forces of evil are embraced-
The blessings of God that were received with no thanks-
May be withheld, and evil advances a pace.

When all around the darkness descends spreading over the land-
What are the righteous supposed to do-where will we take our stand?
We will wait right where God has placed us where He gave us this task.
And by His grace and power will wait until this time is past.

If, perchance, there is no repentance and moral darkness goes on and on-
It is incumbent on us who love the Lord to wait where light once shone.
We must maintain a testimony even though our light is small.
It is important that we stand and quietly wait 'til our Lord does call.

We cannot walk away when perilous times do come.
That is when and where we're needed to represent God's Son.
Most look for a more comfortable way to live their life on earth-
Not realizing they are rapidly moving toward times of spiritual dearth.

Here I will wait 'til it is plain God wants me to go elsewhere.
Here I will wait and do what I can for a witness of God to bear.
Here I will wait upon the Lord and trust in His mercy and grace.
Here I will wait in simple faith, 'til God moves me to a different place.

“O Father. Today I believe I am where You want me to be. If it is Thy will for us to go someplace different, I am confident it will be made unmistakably clear. These three or four people who are attending these meetings with interest, are on my heart. Should I speak to them more, or let them come to me? I pray for wisdom for this day. In His Name, Amen.”

Isaiah 9

COMING DELIVERANCE – COMING DOOM

The first verses of this chapter continue the subject of the previous chapter when darkness and trouble was predicted for those who reject the warnings of God through His servant. Darkness was over the land and the people were longing for the light of hope. The promise of Christ coming in grace as the Light of the world to Galilee was a message of prophetic hope. Isaiah could see forward, by the Spirit of God, to the time when our Lord Jesus Christ would come as “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.” He would be here “found in fashion as a man,” and would be “full of grace and truth.” Through Him and in Him, God would demonstrate His love to those who long for light.

Then Isaiah looked beyond this present age, to the revelation of the Lord in the future when all nations will be blessed by Him when He reigns. The invasion of the Assyrians led to Israel being scattered among the nations and the northern tribes have lost their identity completely. The northern tribes were the first to be brought into bondage when Assyria conquered them. It was to that area of the promised land to which God sent His Son. He lived in Galilee, taught in Galilee, and did many wonderful works in Galilee. His ministry there composes much of the written ministry our Lord gave publicly when He was here the first time. It was to that area of “great darkness “Great Light” came when Jesus came to live among them. The sad conditions described will be Israel's state until the Lord returns in power and glory. Israel rejected Him, but the Promised One will return again.

Verse three tells us that the coming of Christ added Gentiles to the blessing of the coming of the Messiah. The first and second coming of Christ are both seen in verses two through four, as well as the first and second invasions of Israel. The Assyrians invaded soon after Isaiah's prophecy, and the second invasion referred to is the invasion of Israel during the time of the tribulation which leads to Armageddon. It is then in Isaiah's poetic message that he indicates the character of Immanuel.

In each of the names of the Lord Jesus in this chapter, two words are used. “A *child* is born,” is a statement of the humanity of Immanuel. “A *Son* is given,” is a clear statement of His deity. The government upon one of His shoulders teaches us that it is no serious problem for our Lord to rule the nation, or all nations. They are to Him but a “drop in a bucket.” In contrast, when He goes after the lost sheep that He gave His life for when He was on the cross, when He brings that person back to the safety of the fold, He carries it on both of His shoulders. The cost of saving one soul is far greater to Him than governing a nation. One He controls with His word. The other, He gave His life for. “When He was on the cross, I was on His mind.” He will rule God's kingdom with God's authority.

That unique Person is a *Wonder*. He is above all and for all. His grace and His love are toward all. His redemption, His death, burial and His resurrection are all a wonder! He is a Wonder from God who has the words of eternal life. He is absolutely without any limitations as far as power, glory and purpose is concerned. The second word linked with this One who is "Wonderful (a Wonder)," is "*Counselor*." This Counselor knows every situation that can ever befall a human being. He was both God and Man and as such can bring infinite wisdom to every problem and issue of our lives. He is the Word of God who makes known the mind of God. The heart of every person is known by Him, and as a result of His work on our behalf and His present role on our behalf, He makes it possible for us to "come to the Father" by Him. He "suffered to bring us to God." Consequently, we are "accepted in the Beloved."

Two words, "Mighty God:" allow us to face the impact of His authority which would normally create fear in our souls but because of who He is, we get the big picture. "*Mighty*" indicates that He is irresistible as the champion of a battle. "All power in heaven and on earth" is His. He never set aside His supreme power when He came here found in fashion as a man. He maintained, and always will, power over creation. Even when here as a man, He created. He had power over darkness and evil. He had power over sin and power to forgive sins and sinners. He had power over life and death. He always was and always will be Mighty, even though He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

He is "God:" always was and always will be. He had to be God to forgive our sins because all sin is against God. He had to be God to satisfy divine claims against sin. He had to be God so He could be the perfect sacrifice for sin – "Once for all." He had to be God to lay down His life by His own volition in order to conquer death. He had to be God to take it again and be raised from "among the dead." He had to be God to be Lord of eternity and the Giver of eternal life to those who believe in Him and trust Him.

"*Everlasting*," assures us that He had no beginning and no end. He is the "Alpha and Omega." Nothing He does is in jeopardy of failing or not accomplishing all that He intends. He is the Lord of eternity. His attitude and actions have eternal purposes and consequences in view. Nothing about Him is temporary or less than He wants it to be. As "*Father*," He will always be our provider, protector and defender from all that would oppose His divine and sovereign will for us. His eternal Fatherhood is enduring and compassionate without any unknown events occurring that catches Him unaware of how it will affect us.

"The Prince of Peace:" "*Prince*" is His position and His work of authority and leadership that initiates "*Peace*" that is needed in so many ways by so many people. He made "peace by the blood of His cross." We "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." He gives peace to the troubled souls of those who trust Him as their personal Savior. Through the peace He gives He makes enemies to be at peace. He will bring a universal reign of peace on earth for a thousand years. He gives eternal peace to those who love Him because He is our peace. When He establishes His peaceful government on earth, even the earth itself will produce in places that have been deserts. Peace will be evident on earth and in effect here as it is in heaven. Presently He sits on a throne in heaven because of peace He has made for us with God, and He will sit on a throne on earth when He comes again, making peace between people.

However, in spite of such promises and prophecies, the northern tribes of Israel remained haughty and proud in spite of all that was happening to them. They were boasting about all they would do when they made all that was ruined better than it was before. The prophecy of the Lord directed toward them, was no longer a warning, but a statement of fact. "Yet for all this, His anger is not turned away, His hand is still upraised." There was no repentance nor was there a return to the Lord after warnings. There was no change of attitude because of the chastening of God on them. There was no lessening of pride and arrogance. There was no stopping their boasting against God and His servants who came to instruct them in the ways of the Lord. There was no change in the guilt of the leaders of the nation. There was no escaping the just judgment that was coming upon them.

Samaria and all the northern tribes of Israel were doomed to exile and dispersion in spite of all their boasting. To boast of rebuilding better than before was of no more value than a dog howling at the moon to turn off its light. To ignore God's warning is to pronounce doom upon oneself. The leaders did not repent and turn to the Lord. They were unfaithful to God and to the people they led, and they would be destroyed and their children who followed them. Sin has its own seeds of destruction and payback. There would not only be famine in the land but there would be civil war between Manasseh and Ephraim.

For some reason, people think lightly of sin and its consequences in spite of warnings. The result of rebellion against God will be that their own wickedness will burn them, and the wicked will suffer for what they have brought on themselves. True, God is longsuffering and not willing that any should perish, but His holiness will not condone sin or allow it to go on forever. Wickedness in individuals and nations will bring retribution down on those who commit sins and remain in them.

In times of gloom and distress, the Lord is there to take us through those dark valleys that seem hopeless. Faith in Him leads us to "Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your mind." The Great Light of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our conscious awareness of Him with us, takes us through dark times. We won't go around them, but He will be with us through them. The message of hope strengthens our faith as we look ahead to the future. We see what will be, but we are also assured that He is with us now in all of the dark times. It is in the dark times, that the light seems to shine brighter.

Isaiah 9:2. *"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."*

A GREAT LIGHT.

All is gloom and despair, will it never end?
What else can happen? What more will God send
To stop His people from this rebellious and downward course?
He has called them through His servants; coming near is an enemy force
That God will allow to cut them off, both head and tail -
Until the people acknowledge God's promises, good and bad, will not fail.
Then those walking in darkness peering fearfully through the gloom -
Will see the Great Light dawning when Messiah comes.

The Child has been born, and the Son has been given.
On earth has been seen the Light of Life from heaven.
God has a timetable of events; He has appointed to fulfill -
Some have been completed; others wait for there are things still
To be accomplished before the Great Light, Messiah comes to reign.
The day of God's grace continues; it is still the day of Israel's pain.
When the last person has finally been added to His bride
And Israel truly returns in repentance, then Messiah will come to abide.

The Great Light was here, but His own people would not receive Him.
He offered Himself to the nation, but was publicly rejected by them.
In marvelous grace the Great Light all around this world shines.
Any person in any nation who seeks Him now will find
When they search with all their heart; by the new covenant they are blessed.
The Great Light that shines into dark hearts, will establish righteousness.
Individuals who trust Him, by virtue of His mercy do rejoice -
And yet His chosen nation still waits in darkness to hear His voice.

To us now and Israel in the future He is a Wonderful Counselor.
The Great Light in Israel's future is the One we have known before -
Who is exceptional, without peer; His advice is always right;
He is the Mighty God Himself, He is the One who is that Great Light.
He is timeless as the Father of eternity, without a beginning or an end.
The Prince of Peace will establish His government with a righteousness that will not bend.
The Great Light is shining from place to place, someday it will shine everywhere.
The whole world will live in this light when He is finally reigning here.

"O Holy, Righteous God: I am rejoicing in the Great Light this morning. I see its light in some of those around me. I see evidence of its morning rays as the Gospel light reaches into dark hearts. I see it in the dawn of this morning and pray that it will shine out in this day's activities. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 10

TOOLS IN GOD'S HAND

It is of vital importance that we are conscious of the presence of the Lord among us as His people. Even though it may create in us a godly fear, reverence and respect, it is probably the greatest privilege we have as an assembly of those who gather together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of His promise to be in our midst, there is strength and power against the enemies of God and His word. If for some reason we forget the fact that He is there when we meet, we are in grave danger of departure, and of substituting forms and traditions of men for the truth of God. That will lead to either a mere form of godliness, or outright ungodliness. Then our gatherings are no more than that of a social club because the light of a "lampstand" of truth has been removed.

That is what happened to Israel and why the prophecies of Isaiah were so important, even though the people of Israel didn't realize that. Because of their attitude toward the things of God, they were soon taken away captives, and have been a spiritual nonissue in the world until now. They have become a recognized nation in the world, but there is no moral or spiritual authority in their influence. That can be the result of an assembly of God's people who turn to that

which pleases people and is accepted as suitable to the tolerant and comfortable lifestyle of this ungodly age. The desire for the work of God and the assemblies of God's people to be "relevant" can be taken way too far, to where we have nothing spiritual and lasting to offer people in the name of the Lord.

The unrighteous, boastful people of Israel were facing judgment because of their failure and unwillingness to repent of their sin and turn in humility to the Lord. The leaders would not repent of their abuse of power and oppression. They were passing sentences on people for their own personal gain. Consequently, they were facing personal judgment from God in which there would be no way to escape. Those in leadership roles would lose everything they had and would be led away as captives into bondage. To ignore the needs of a nation by passing unjust laws that are oppressive for those who labor, and are beneficial for those selfish leaders, will ultimately bring oppression and judgments on "law-makers." Those who are supposed to uphold existing laws that find their origin in God, are held responsible to do that. They are supposed to be "ministers of righteousness."

Israel passed through times of material success and favorable circumstances in which they compromised not only with those people around them but had idols scattered all over the promised land. The kings of Judah were faced with the power of Assyria that had conquered Syria and the northern tribes of Israel. The Assyrian army was poised to come against Judah, so Isaiah prophesied regarding what would happen to them at that time, and it will be repeated in the times of the tribulation that will yet come upon the Jews. The internal condition of a nation cannot be hidden forever.

We need to always be aware that our God knows everything about us, from our attitude and motivation, to our actions and the results. What we are within as individuals, assemblies and nations cannot be considered hidden from God. He has unchanging spiritual principles and stated laws that He will uphold. It is our responsibility to know the word of God well enough to conduct ourselves by them and help others who are younger in the faith to learn and practice them. The assemblies of God are designed by God to function as a living organisms with each person who forms a part of the testimony, gifted to meet the cooperative needs of the whole body of believers.

An anti-God, prideful, self-centered nation that thinks all their blessings have come from their own schemes and ingenuity, is due to fall. A great economy that disregards the condition of the poor and is dependent on the unfortunate conditions imposed on the rank and file of the population, will come to ruin. The luxuries of the leaders and their willful, covetous attitude, will condemn them before the people and leave them all destitute before a just God. Israel is an example of that. Even though there were faithful prophets and some who were God-fearing people, the majority was content to continue their worldly lifestyle and spiritual hypocrisy, and did not pay attention to the warnings of those ancient preachers.

God allowed the Assyrians to be the tool in His hand to bring justice and judgment upon the Jews. The Assyrians also thought they had been successful in conquering other nations by their own power, skill in warfare and cruelty. They had their own agenda and did not accept the fact that they were no more than an axe in the hands of a lumberjack or a saw in the hand of a carpenter. Through His prophet Isaiah, God warned them they would be brought down in defeat by His power through another great power He would use against them.

The haughty attitude of people who do not recognize divine sovereignty over the affairs of men, will doom them to their own destruction. God's chosen instrument for judgment one time, who credits themselves for their successes which they think they have done it on their own, will be themselves judged in God's own time and by whom He chooses. Those who God uses to maintain law and order and may be called upon to carry out deserved judgment on evildoers, are not immune from God's justice when they do not acknowledge His power and authority.

To the conquering Assyrians, those they conquered were in their eyes, no more than a bunch of eggs to be stolen from a nest. They didn't realize all they were was a tool to be used by God for a short period of time. God was the One who was using them to execute justice upon the guilty, and the same God would use others to execute justice upon them for their arrogance and pride. There is a day coming when the judgments of God will be felt worldwide. During the tribulation, there will be a remnant of Jews who will repent of their sin and turn to the Lord in faith.

It is then God will show them mercy and will protect them when they turn to Him for protection. Most of the Israelis today are in the same frame of mind and reference to the Lord as those Jews were in Isaiah's time. But the true Israel will be people of faith. They will begin as a small remnant of people which will become a powerful nation and the supreme world power under the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Like the Assyrian army in the past that came within two miles of Jerusalem at a place called Nob, before Sennacherib could take Jerusalem, he was called back to defend the Assyrians themselves. It will be like that in the future at the end of the tribulation. There will be a concerted effort to overthrow and annihilate the Jews, and then the Lord will

step in and bring an end to the plans of men and nations. When God moves in defense of His own people, no military power or arrogant leaders of an invading army will be able to touch "the apple of His eye."

God is always ready to work on behalf of those who put their unreserved faith in Him. When our confidence is in the Lord and not in ourselves or other people, He acts in grace to meet our need. Faith in God will be the key to survival of the remnant of the Jews in the future as it was to those in the past to whom Isaiah prophesied. That same faith is the key to God working on our behalf today. When we take the eyes of our faith off of the Lord and direct our expectations of success to material gain or other means of physical, material and spiritual things, we will lose everything.

When our faith is in God, and our trust in the Lord is real to me and to others, the outcome will be right. It will be just what God wants and will be to our greatest blessing. Lasting benefits are not always material things. That is probably the greatest deception many people have. They think "things" and "success," are evidence of God's favor and are "blessings." They may be, but by nature they are only temporary benefits. When God has His way with me and I commit myself to pleasing and obeying Him, the blessings are spiritual and lasting. The purposes of God make no room for the pride of man to usurp authority and claim success for himself. God has, does, and always will, use who He chooses and for the purposes He has. Those will ultimately be the best possible blessings for us, even though at the present time it may seem like they are unsurmountable difficulties.

Isaiah 10:20-21. *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the Mighty God."*

CONSEQUENCES OF PRIDE.

Only a small group come straggling back amidst the desolation.
They are the few who remain after pride had exalted the nation.
Idols had taken the place of God; men's hearts were lifted up in pride.
When the enemy came in like a flood upon them, pride was why so many died.

The people had taken to exalting themselves, like foolish tools in the hands of the Master.
Pride left unchecked by a nation of people, can only lead to disaster.
The lessons of history are left there for us so we don't make their mistake.
Unfortunately, now it seems we're doing the same, not considering the way that we take.

How strange that we can't seem to learn; what is wrong with us?
We are more and more lifting up ourselves; less and less in God we trust.
Pride by its nature is a soul-damning sin to a nation or an individual.
The effects it leaves in its arrogant path are fatal, not just residual.

By its nature pride thinks it is first and foremost of every characteristic.
It claims for itself the position of honor no matter what are the statistics
It looks down its nose at humility, quite sure it has nothing to offer -
Not realizing that God uses humility to reveal what His grace does proffer.

As pride raises its gaudy head higher and higher, God prepares to bring it down.
In a nation of people, the consequences of pride, moves quickly from town to town -
As more turn away from God and seek their own, angels brace themselves to fear -
Knowing God is going to deal in justice; the judgment of God draws near.

It is inevitable that those who ignore faith and God will find pride brought down in flames.
The consequences they brought upon themselves, leaves only themselves to blame.
God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but there comes a time when He must
For the sake of generations yet to come, carry out a judgment that is just.

So, when the tools start to say that they are the ones in control -
And ignore the Master Craftsman who made man a living soul -
Then face this fact - there is a time soon to come when God stops this downward spiral.
And know that in a very short time, there will come on pride a fiery trial.

"O Righteous God, I can see the rapid deterioration of righteousness in the people, and the rapid rise of human pride in the affairs of men on earth. I know judgment is coming. Help me to do this day, what I can to urge those who will listen to "flee from the wrath to come." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 11

MESSIAH'S KINGDOM

In Isaiah's day, Judah was threatened by enemies from the north. Later Assyria, and then Babylon would be used by the Lord to deal with the departure and idolatry of the chosen people of God. In his prophecy it is clear that Assyria would come and conquer, but not completely. A remnant would survive and God would restore His people to Himself and the promised land. The Assyrian empire would be like a tree cut down to a stump that would never grow again.

Chapter eleven looks ahead to the future day of blessing when Israel will be restored, not only to their promised land, but to the Lord. The Messiah of Israel will establish a true and righteous kingdom that will be the fulfillment of the covenant promises. David's throne will be filled when our Lord Jesus Christ, the promised One of David's lineage, sits on it and will rule in peace and righteousness.

The whole of Israel and Judah was cut down and all that is left is like a stump. The "stumps" of other empires are dead, but the rod that comes from the "stem of Jesse," comes from life left in the stump. It will spring up as "The Branch" which is one of the titles of our Lord Jesus, and that relates to Him as being the Messiah of Israel. The fact that that "Branch" comes as a "rod" from the "stem of Jesse," takes the coming kingdom back before any and all failure by Israel's past kings, to the promise of God to the Jews. The first of these was to Abraham, then to Isaac and Jacob, and from there to the covenant with the nation and David. The inflexible rod that comes from the root of Jesse will be perfectly righteous in Messiah's peaceful rule and reign.

There are seven holy characteristics of the Messiah, indicating completeness. The Spirit of the Lord (Jehovah) is upon Him. He is and will be perfect as a Man and immutable in His deity. The Spirit of wisdom that is in Him reminds us of our Lord's ability to decide a matter correctly that leaves no doubt in our mind. Wisdom is in the divine nature and it is an essential part of righteous rule. The Spirit of understanding leaves no question unanswered or answer misunderstood. His own knowledge of every matter is able to be successfully communicated so there is no question as to what is right or wrong. The Spirit of counsel goes beyond just understanding to doing something about every issue in view of bringing it to a conclusion. He will apply the solution to His decisions with intelligence and authority. The Spirit of might assures us of His limitless authority and power that cannot be defeated. The Spirit of knowledge is a reference to Messiah's unique ability to know what is right and to carry out the action that is required. It is a comfort to us to know that nothing is hid from Him, and that His knowledge takes care of any confusion we might have. The Spirit of the fear of the Lord is that reverence, respect and holiness are in Him inherently. All that the Messiah will do will be in perfect harmony with the will of God and in perfect fellowship with divine Persons. He who pleased the Father in all things when He was here the first time, will do the same when He reigns as King of kings.

In Messiah's reign, He will deal with wickedness in justice and swift judgment. The day of grace will have been replaced by the day of peace that deals quickly with those who disturb the peace and provoke the meek. Not only will the Lord exercise authority over sin and wickedness quickly and justly; He will also take over the course of His creation and bring life and fruitfulness from places that presently are barren. With His authority He will change the actions of animals back to what they were before the earth was cursed by man's sin. There will be a worldwide change in attitude toward the Lord when the "knowledge of the Lord" is in every place.

The world during the thousand years of the millennial reign of Christ will be a wonderful place to be. Blessings will abound, but the hearts of people will still be the same even though there will be a reign of peace. In each of the dispensations of God's dealings with humanity, from innocence to a peaceful millennium, individuals have the choice as to what they will do with the Lord Jesus. Even under the peaceful conditions of the millennium, there will be those who will "not want this Man" to reign over them. They will join with the powers of darkness that will be released for a time, and will rebel against the Lord at the battle of Gog and Magog.

A new heavens and earth will come after the wonderful years of the millennium have passed. The glories of the Lord during His reign on David's throne will magnify and exalt this "root of Jesse." All the Gentile nations will come to honor Him and from those nations, the dispersed Jews will gather back in Israel. For the second time a remnant will return; this time from the whole world, not just Babylon. His ensign (banner) will be raised and the Jews will know who they are, and will be glad to have the Lord Jesus Christ as their King.

Even the earth itself will be changed by His mighty power when great earthquakes and other results from the final days of the tribulation will have moved things around. The Mount of Olives will be divided; a highway for the returning Jews will lead to Israel. The sea between Egypt and Israel will be dried up and the Euphrates River will change to seven smaller streams rather than one large river. In view of all Isaiah prophesied, we wonder about how we, who are in the body of Christ today, will fit in. Actually, we will "live and reign with Him" and will see the glory that has been withheld by sinful people, finally be given to Him to whom it is due. To know that we are part of God's plans now and in the future, should motivate us to be faithful to Him and His kingdom right at this present time.

Isaiah 11:9. *"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."*

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD.

The evidence will be there for all the world to see -
Messiah's reign will finally bring peace to come to pass.
What God had intended to share with man will come to be -
When the Branch grows up from Jesse's root, earth will know at last
The blessings of justice from the Righteous One sitting on David's throne.
Everyone all over the world will know Jehovah reigns.
The time mankind has been searching for really will have come -
Young and old alike will know the power of Jesus' name.

Kings and rulers, rich and poor - every human being
Will have the knowledge of the Lord which presently is rejected.
In this future time all over the world people will be seeing -
Evidence of the Christ's power and glory which they had long neglected.
The animal creation will be turned back to God's original intention -
Every creature miraculously tamed and subject to man's control.
All aspects of human living will experience divine intervention -
And the knowledge of the Lord will reach to every human soul.

There never has been since Adam's fall such awareness of the Lord.
Man has gone his own way, only a few returned to find
The peace and knowledge of the Lord amidst the turmoil of the world -
But in the day that's coming, that knowledge will be in every mind.
Many will rejoice when they find the world so blessed -
They will honor and worship the Lord from open and true hearts.
Others will acquiesce when righteousness on them is passed -
But inwardly, in spite of such knowledge, their sinful souls will smart.

When the nations will finally have laid their arms down to live in peace
The world will prosper and earth will bring from its bounty all we need.
The conflicts that drain us so dry at present will finally cease -
And from the abundance the grace of God supplies, every soul will feed.
The knowledge of the Lord that God has already given, and the blessings it brings
Even now, though it is not universal, gives rest and joy to us who believe.
We have every day, a foretaste of the time when the world sings
The praises of Messiah, for the knowledge of Him we have received.

“O Lord God: I do identify with Paul when he said, ‘That I might know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death.’ I thank Thee for this knowledge I have at least in a little degree. Please give me this day the knowledge to know what to say to those who need to know the Lord as their personal Savior. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Isaiah 12

IN THAT DAY

I am not sure what makes other people break into song, but when I am happy or relieved, or reminisce about the past – and when I think positively about the present and future, it just seems to be the only way of heartfelt expression. “My chains are snapped; the bonds of sin are broken. And I am free;” comes easily to mind when I am thinking about God saving me from my sin. “Man of sorrows; what a name, for the Son of God who came; ruined sinners to reclaim: Hallelujah! What a Savior!” comes naturally when I think of my Lord Jesus in a personal way. Thoughts of Christ on the cross bearing my sins makes me think – or sing: “And when I think, that God His Son not sparing; sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in. That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing. He bled and died, to take away my sin!”

There are many “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,” that seem so suited to me in every situation in which I am found. That maybe was the reason the Holy Spirit moved Isaiah to write two beautiful short psalms of praise in Isaiah twelve. “In that Day,” is the title of both. He had been preaching to the people about all the bad things that were going on around and that were going to come on them soon. Then he prophesied about a future day of glory and blessing that will come for Israel. It hasn't happened yet, but it will in God's own time. I take those two little psalms personally as we are going through times that we have never been through before. What a comfort to have a glimpse of the outcome of unforeseen events through the eyes of the Holy Spirit!

The first psalm is of thanksgiving, and the second is a psalm of triumph. His expressions of joy are in view of the people of the Lord being completely yielded to God's will, and are finally content with His grace and His discipline. It is then the Lord will mean everything to them, and it is then He means everything to us now. He will truly be “The God

of my salvation” to the Jews. He is that to me now. So, I will trust Him, and be at peace. He will be the source of our strength and the reason for our joyful singing, even when it seems abnormal.

Israel will realize some day, that in spite of their disobedience and backsliding, God will show His divine favor toward them, and has been all along even though they didn’t acknowledge it. God always keeps His promises and fulfills the terms of the covenants He makes, whether it is in the Old or New Testament times. The redeemed of the Lord will sing a psalm of triumph “for He has done great things,” and this will be known all over the world.

When our hearts are fixed on our Lord, and we are reconciled to Him, we are able to sing a song of faith, of hope and of gladness, and truly mean every word. What joy we have when we experience the blessing of God’s saving grace! The Lord is with us; He satisfies us; He gives us joy and enthusiasm when we worship Him.

Isaiah 12:2-3. *“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.”*

THE WELLS OF SALVATION.

The wells are nearby, they have been there for years.
The clear, living water waits for all to draw near
And drink from its flow that gives everlasting life.
The Lord now lives among His own, they are done with the night.

From those wells come faith; a true and implicit trust.
God is there with His salvation freely giving it to us.
True faith in Him changes everything, we don’t trust in circumstances.
From the wells of salvation comes the truth that our thirst quenches.

No longer do we tremble and fear when trials come at length.
From the wells of salvation comes divinely imparted strength.
Though foes or difficulties come to attack or harass me -
The waters from the wells of salvation show me the Lord my strength will be.

From those springing waters, a song of God’s grace I learn -
That grace is greater than my sin, it is not something I can earn.
In the depths of those waters are found many attributes of God.
When I drink from the wells of salvation, I have fellowship with the Lord.

After drinking from those waters, and calling upon His name -
There is a joy that accompanies those who to those wells came.
Praise that starts within the heart, glorifies the Lord -
And my voice is raised to declare His grace to those yet in the world.

The wells tell of His Person and declare His works; identify His truth -
Speak of His name with holy awe; proclaim His matchless worth.
We point out to those who will listen and look at evidence on every hand -
Of the Lord’s greatness and His power that can be seen in every land.

From the wells of salvation there comes, flowing freely to all who will drink -
More than we could ever need; exceeding all we could ask or think -
Of the abundant supply of life-giving water, as full as God Himself.
The blessings that come from the wells of salvation are more than I can tell.

“O Gracious Father, I ask of Thee this morning that I can be prepared to pass on Thy Word in and understandable way to those young people who are coming to the Gospel meetings. For some reason they have not been able to lay hold on salvation. Is there something I have been overlooking or something I have said that has misled them? Help me to be ready this day for what will arise. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 13

JUDGMENT ON THE GENTILES

The next ten chapters are mainly concerning prophecies, or burdens, that relate to the nations around the Middle East. God is involved in the life of every nation even though to Him they are a mere “drop in a bucket.” The prophecies are called a “burden,” implying that the message Isaiah gave was not just to lift something up, as we would usually use the word, but that a burden was a judgment an offender must bear because of their actions. In this section of the book of Isaiah, Gentile nations were warned as to what was going to happen to them. The Lord had used them to discipline and punish the children of Israel because of their rebellion, idolatry and departure from Him.

The Jews didn't listen to the warnings the prophets gave them, nor would they obey the commands of the Lord. Consequently, foreign nations were the means God used to bring just judgment on them.

Nations have often been used as tools by God to bring correction in behavior on other nations. Some have brought judgment on others even though they are not subject as a people to the worship or even belief in God. Because God uses us to deal with others, either for good or bad, does not make us immune to the consequences of our own sins. To do what is right in some matters does not mean we get away with evil in others. God is just in all His dealings with us. If He chooses to use us in some way, that is a marvelous privilege, but that does not obligate Him to us in any way.

The Jews had set up idols across the land and they were worshipping false gods of the nations around them. Those nations were not excused from just judgment on them either, because of their continuing wicked ways. Some of the things we read they did in the name of religion are disgusting, degrading and damning. Some even sacrificed their own children for their own religious pleasure. But lest we get to haughty and say, "How could they do such things?" we need to remember the number one killer of human life in this country is abortion. Assyria brought judgment on Syria and the northern tribes of Israel. The Medes and Persians brought judgment on Assyria. Yet we read that "in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him."

Babylon was a major center under the reign of several empires. There were believers who lived there, and even some of the pagan kings who ruled, had the fear of God come on them as God dealt with them in various ways through the captive Jews who were there. Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius and other kings had a certain respectful fear of God about them because of God's dealings with the Jews who were captives there. Warnings were given by Isaiah about the fall of empires that relate to the ten different national powers he wrote about, beginning with Babylon in chapter thirteen to the destruction of Tyre in chapter twenty-three.

The Jews had become like all the nations around and Jerusalem was included as one of the places that would be totally razed to the ground because of the authority of divine justice. Sin does not go unpunished. "Be sure your sin will find you out," includes nations as well as individual. Those people and nations that have been highly privileged above others, face a more severe judgment because they know better than to do what they know is wrong, but go ahead with evil practices anyway.

How can we describe the human atrocities that have been, and still are, committed against others? In this whole section of Isaiah, we can learn about and see the results of sin that is prompted and carried out though men who are under the control of the devil. The powers of darkness are allowed to carry out judgments until the repentant sinner, or the repentant nation says, "That's enough! We must stop this! We have gone too far!" Obviously, there is more behind all of this evil that is going on around us than just some people wanting what other people have. Satan is at work.

What happened to those ancient people was an illustration of what is yet to come during "the day of the Lord." Other prophets beside Isaiah warned the people of Israel long after Isaiah's prophecies regarding the coming catastrophes that will happen during the tribulation. The sin-loving people of the earth will all fear, and multitudes will die because of the sinful choices they make. Just because we know that God is longsuffering and not willing that any should perish, and He is a God of love, doesn't mean that people will not reap what they sow.

The literal physical destruction of Babylon was prophesied by Isaiah long before it happened. The people must have laughed off his warnings the way people do today. In spite of the many lessons, history teaches few people take seriously the fact of national and personal destruction because of willful sin. Those people living at that time would have looked at the glory and beauty of the great city of Babylon and would think it would be there forever. All of those ancient cities experienced the judgment they deserved. Jerusalem has been leveled to the ground various times and the new city is built on top of the rubble of the old one.

The nations who conquered and took the people captive, will be conquered and taken captive themselves, Isaiah prophesied. Our Lord Jesus Christ when He was here, conquered those who had conquered us by His suffering, death, burial and resurrection. Satan, sin, hell and death have been defeated by the mighty victory He won for us when He was here and died on the cross in our place. In the day of the Lord yet to come, He will claim the prize of a restored Israel and will reign. The whole world will then know all He accomplished when He died on the cross and was the Mighty Conqueror.

World powers only have a limited time, and then because of pride and wickedness, they will fade into the dark pages of history. Nations like ours, often disintegrate from within and then disappear because of the moral pollution that is allowed to go unchecked and unjudged. One wonders how far into moral and spiritual degradation people can go before they pass the point of no return. Judah continued some time after Isaiah's prophecy was given, but the

captivity prophesied eventually came. Jews have survived as a recognizable people simply because the Lord God made a covenant with them when He chose them to be His earthly people with whom He would dwell on earth. Other identities in this prophecy are no longer recognized and we only know of their existence because of these ancient written records.

Isaiah 13:9. *“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners out of it.”*

VENGEANCE.

Israel has failed, of that there is no doubt -
But when the day of the Lord comes, things will turn about.
Like Babylon in the past when it rose up against God's people -
Cruelty abounded of which scarcely is known an equal.
Natural human reserve was abandoned by the cruelty of men -
Times of vengeance fell in force, of hatred there seemed no end.
We learn from the past of the awfulness of the day of the Lord -
And more is yet to come in the future according to God's Word.

How blessed it is to live in this present day of God's redeeming grace.
When people are able to seek the Lord, and He's found in every place.
When the vengeance of the day of the Lord comes, people seeking will not find
Those who refused to respond to His grace and love, vengeance will be right behind.
Across the lands, people in fear will flee, looking for some place to hide.
The only place will be where those who trust in God, in Him will abide.
The vengeance of judgment like that which fell in the past -
Will stalk those who refused to repent and for His mercy ask.

Some things we can never change, and the way of sin is one.
When people refuse God's message of salvation, they have refused to believe on His Son.
Grace is continued for this present time, but a day is sure to come -
When payday for sin must be faced, and guilt finds sinners undone.
Vengeance is God's prerogative; we cannot put our hand to it.
He will deal with the guilt of man, according as He sees fit.
The only response I can give when I think of what is ahead. -
Is, I am so glad God has saved me - I am safe because of what Christ did.

“O Righteous Holy God, I rest secure in the knowledge that I am accepted in Christ and will not have to suffer the vengeance of Thy righteous wrath. Help me to speak tonight in a compassionate, but faithful, way to those who still have Thy wrath abiding on them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 14

LUCIFER – KING OF BABYLON

In spite of all that will happen to Israel, there will be a time coming when the Lord will establish Israel in the promised land. People of other nations will be blessed because of the Lord's faithfulness to His own people in bringing them back in restoration to Himself. Israel's restoration will come out of the defeat and destruction of the future Babylon of which we read in the book of Revelation. There was a foreshadowing of the future restoration of Israel when Cyrus, king of Persia, permitted the Jews who wanted to return to their homeland, to do so. Fifty thousand or so went with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and later some more went with Ezra and then Nehemiah. The prophecy of Isaiah tells of the final restoration that will happen when Gentile powers no longer dominate world affairs.

The Lord Himself will gather His people, and the captivity of Israel will then be really over. The first verses of this chapter look ahead to the time when Israel will rejoice with a song of deliverance. That will be a song of triumph over Babylon. The previous chapter refers to ancient Babylon that is no more. This chapter has to do with the “Babylon” of the antichrist that is yet in the future. The song Isaiah wrote can be related to both. The kings and authorities that were failed subjects of the antichrist, will be maliciously satisfied when the “man of sin” is cast into “Sheol” where they will be already.

The same attitude that Satan has, the antichrist will have because he is “the son of perdition.” The rebellion of Satan and angels who followed him, will be repeated by the antichrist and those who follow him. The result will be the same. The five “I wills” of Satan's arrogance and pride will be those of the antichrist. His ambition will fail and he will go into “Sheol” without even being buried. This is a larger term than “hell” or “Hades.” “Sheol” includes the deepest hell and the “lake of fire” forever. All that is associated with the term “everlasting punishment” is connected to the word “Sheol.”

Lucifer, the king of Babylon of the future, is representative of Satan who is the power behind the authority the antichrist will claim for himself. The pride and evil ambition described are that of Satan himself. The defeat of the antichrist and the fact that his corpse will not even be buried, reflects on the failure of Satan to thwart the purposes of God. All the glory the future king of Babylon will claim for himself, will end in final failure and everlasting destruction. Pride and arrogance against God by anyone, will always bring consequences relating to everlasting destruction that cannot be avoided. That will not be annihilation, but is the result of choices people make that they will live with forever. "That is what you wanted! That is what you will get – forever!"

The nations who in the future join together to annihilate the Jews and the nation of Israel forever, will find the Lord is the One who will take the final action against them. Israel will be delivered. The Lord Jesus will reign in righteousness. His kingdom will be established, and all nations will be blessed because of the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Reference to future events in the last part of this chapter, refer to things that began to happen in the last year of Ahaz's life. The Lord would turn back the armies that opposed Judah before the conquest was complete. This account is again the ancient one and Isaiah's prophecy foretold the disaster that fell on the Assyrians when they were in Palestine and Sennacherib was recalled before he could conquer Jerusalem. "In vain doth earth and hell oppose, for God is stronger than His foes."

The relatively peaceful time when Hezekiah was king was short-lived. Judah did not repent nor did they carry out self-judgment for their rebellion and idolatry. It was during the short reign of Zedekiah that Nebuchadnezzar came and the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. Thousands of Jews died and thousands more were taken captive to Babylon. The prophecies of those long-ago days, seem to be unreal to people who live in our day; especially when they refer to things that haven't happened yet, and seem to be impossible to those who are not people of faith. Believers know that God is going to do what He said; we just don't know His timetable.

Isaiah 14:12-13. *"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:'"*

CAST DOWN.

Did it come from misguided intelligence or free-will - this mentality of "up with self?"
God certainly didn't promote it, and we all learned it without any help.
The dark side of our personality has in it a sense of inborn pride.
It was there in Lucifer before us, but it came into us the day humanity died.

It is seen easily in kings and powers who rise to the pinnacle of fame.
It is seen in those who insist that everyone remember their name.
It is seen in children in early years, anxious that everyone see
Some wonder they have produced or some action they want to be.

But there is a principle to remember; whatever goes up comes down.
Men who fight for supremacy, will someday lose their crown.
Satan himself attempted to take from God His throne -
And found out who was the stronger before that battle was done.

Kings in the ancient past, claimed victory's over nations -
Thinking they had the strength and control over every and all situations.
They didn't realize they were only tools allowed to carry out God's will.
They too were cast down in their pride when God's work they did not fulfill.

Leaders and nations in my day, have risen before the eyes of the world.
Both have been humbled and cast down, when the flag of "self" they unfurled.
All of humanity has suffered under the rule of such prideful men -
God has determined to bring down, those who will not submit to Him.

It also happens to individuals; pride is a soul-damning sin.
We think we have our own ideas and ways to get ourselves to heaven.
And then a divine intervention comes and we are in our pride, cast down
So that we stop and think about God's way, and we His holiness own.

Any who exalts self, will find out that God has the last say.
God gave to us intelligence, but did not intend us to use it the wrong way.
When men think we can do what we want without following God's revealed plan -
We all will learn that God has not turned, the running of the universe over to man.

“Father, I thank Thee for the little girl who was simple enough to believe on, and confess, the Lord Jesus Christ as her personal Savior. Please hear my prayer for the salvation of the other two older girls and move upon them even at this moment to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ - alone. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 15

THE DOWNFALL OF MOAB

For some reason there is a tendency for those who come from a checkered past, to feel they are not accepted by others because of what those before them have done, and the residual effect it has on them. They are not responsible for what happened and yet they seem to be on guard and sensitive to the extent of being openly touchy with a hint of bitterness thrown in the mix. It is quite common for people to look for someone or something to blame for the adverse of things that happen in life. Gideon was like that, and it seems like Moab and his half-brother Ammon were like that as well. That attitude carried down through the years and generations until it became a characteristic of the nation of Moab. Moab was a child of incest hundreds of years before but there was a belligerent pride, a haughtiness and a smoldering anger that still was in the people at the time of Isaiah.

Their location as a tribal nation was good for raising cattle and those who deal with range cattle are often independent people with an ability to quickly react to a problem. The Moabites responded with antagonism to the Israelites when they were on the way to Canaan after being forty years in the wilderness. Balak, the king at that time, was willing to pay big money to Balaam, a false prophet, to curse the children of Israel. That could not be done because God was with His own people at that time. Consequently, the Moabites became implacable enemies of Israel. Even David took his parents to Moab when he was being pursued by Saul, but he knew enough not to stay there. When Isaiah was called to prophesy against Moab, and realized what was ahead of them as we read in chapters fifteen and sixteen, he was quite grieved.

Elimelech, Naomi and their sons moved to Moab when the field crops of Bethlehem failed during a famine. People could live in Moab because they didn't really depend on grain harvests like those in Judah. Two young women of Moab certainly appealed to Mahlon and Chilion who married them. However, it seemed like Ruth had a special “something” about her that was unusual in Moab. The gods of the Moabites were seen by her for what they were – nothing, and the famous words spoken by her were not to the husband she loved, but to a straying believer whose faith could be seen in spite of being away from the place of God's choosing. Ruth could see the counterfeit religion of Moab for what it was in comparison to what Naomi knew of her God.

Professions of faith do not make faith real. Professions of people who say they are Christians does not make them children of God. Faith is nothing in itself. What faith is in is what matters. True Christians have put their personal faith in Christ, not their religion or in themselves. The easy “believism” that seems to satisfy so many professing Christians is not the faith that pleases God. “He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Professed conversions that don't change anything are not real. Claiming new birth but not having new life as a new creation is a false claim.

Through passing generations, the Moabites became more antagonistic toward Israel and allied themselves with the enemies of Israel and Judah. Isaiah's warning was given but the Moabites never responded to his emotional plea. Instead of repentance, there was resistance and antagonism. There was a hardness and coldness toward God's servant, and they refused to pay any heed to his call to repent and turn to God. People who claim to be believers but have never repented of their sin and turned to Christ for salvation are as lost to God as those who are openly defiant against Him.

Isaiah 15:6. *“For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing.”*

DESOLATION.

Where can they go to find what they need, even the necessities of life?
There are serious consequences when against God and His people you strive.
It is true His people don't always do right; they too are prone to sin -
But when you rise against the apple of His eye, you are taking your war to Him.

He is the One who makes the waters spring forth from deep within the earth.
He is the One who can stop their flow and bring on the land a dearth.
The waters in the seas and in the clouds above are subject to His plan.
He can give or withhold as He sees fit; He is the One in control, not man.

In the spring rain and the warming earth cause grass to spring into life.
It continues to grow and nourish and feed; and at times fall to the harvester's knife.
It may seem insignificant, but without grass, everything around would die.

When God stops grass from its normal cycle, judgment is very nigh.

The nutrients of the earth are brought together in plants our bodies to feed.
If they were to cease growing, where could we go to meet our fundamental need?
The desolation that would sweep the land if plants refused to grow -
Would stop humanity in its tracks, we would find there is no place to go.

God has arranged seasons, and times, and things to bless us in our need.
As a result of His careful design, there is everywhere evidence to heed
That God in His grace intends us humans to look around and learn of Him.
The reason desolation and troubles come is because of our proneness to sin.

The winds and the seas obey His voice, and it seems as the years go by
Even nature that obeys God is increasingly stronger; people are wondering why.
Men come up with explanations, that seem so complicated, but even they don't fit.
Our troubles are deeper than what they say; our sin is the cause of it.

It happened before when people turned away from God and fought with His chosen people.
God changed the weather, crops failed and died as God made everything equal.
Without food and water, a people at war, no matter how many or how strong -
Must stop to survive, consider what they've done, and repent for all their wrong.

Desolation has a way of bringing people down; of making the strong ones weak.
There is a reason behind desolation, God is calling on people to seek
The Lord Himself while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near.
People will find, whoever they are, that God is in control down here.

“Lord God of heaven and earth: the recent times of desolation in our country have made a lot of people wonder why there are so many natural disasters taking place. If Thou art speaking to our nation, give us ears to hear Thee and the will to obey Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 16

WHAT ABOUT THE REFUGEES?

Isaiah's prophecy warning of Assyrians attacking Moab, continues as they are told that Moabites fleeing the Assyrians will go the Sela, the capital of Edom, which was an ally of Moab. Other Moabite refugees, in desperation will send a lamb or lambs as a tribute to Jerusalem seeking refugee status and the protection of Judah. Isaiah told the people of Judah to accept the refugees because Jerusalem would be a safe place for a while. Compassion was a sign of concern of the Jews during that time of devastation brought on Moab by the Assyrians.

There is value in having a godly testimony and showing compassion. It was the Lord Himself who told Moab to turn away from their enmity against Judah and to show it. Compassion for the needy and suffering of the world is expected of those who know the Lord. The widows, orphans and poor are of special concern to our Lord and He expects it to be a concern of those who represent Him here in the world. There are certain expectations of those who need help, and unfortunately often those expectations are rejected. Gratitude and humility are both attitudes expected of those seeking help of others. Demands that are unrealistic, and an attitude of arrogance and national pride in a foreign country, are not expected nor should be accepted by those who help the needy.

For some reason, the refugees from Moab did not respond to the divine request to humble themselves, and turn away from their pride and conceit. Consequently, instead of turning to the Lord and finding the mercy He gives, and being able to accept what He alone can do for them, they rejected Him. What should have been a joyous time of harvest, was the time they lost everything. To rebel against God because of pride, will for those who are unbelievers like the Moabites who would not leave their gods and idolatry; bring lasting and eternal grief. Such self-interest and arrogance against Him, will result in those who knew the goodness of God, experiencing the severity of God.

When the Moabites experienced the righteous judgment of God against them because of the sin and rejection of Him, instead of turning to the Lord, they went to their own idols, shrines and false gods. If we try to escape the problems we have and deal with them in our own way, there is nothing or no one who can help us. Even if we call on them to help us but demand that help be on our terms, they are not very likely to show any desire to come and save us from the results of our own sin.

The God of yesterday is the same God today. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," is welcome news to the repentant sinner. Likewise, when a child of God calls upon the Lord, He is there to hear, to help and to do that which is best when we put all our hope, our faith and our trust completely in Him. He is the One who knows exactly what is needed and is there to meet that need as He sees fit.

The invasion of Moab happened just three years after Isaiah prophesied of the coming invasion of Assyrian. The predictions of a true prophet actually happen. They did not speculate, and the fulfillment of those prophecies will come to pass in the time God has arranged. Some happen soon, like in Moab; some later like in Judah, and some haven't happened yet – but what God says will come to pass. As we read through the scriptures and learn what has been prophesied regarding the future, we begin to look as the “signs of the times,” and can see that the warnings of second Peter and of Jude are evident in the religious world today. When we read second Thessalonians and second Timothy, we can see what is happening to individuals and nations right in our day and our country. It is a good thing for us to keep into the word of God so we can keep a clear understanding in our minds as to what is yet going to happen in our world. The promises of God are “Yea and Amen,”

Isaiah 16:5. *“And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hastening righteousness.”*

A THRONE OF MERCY.

All around hearts are failing for fear -
Where can we go when trouble is near?
Some seek to flee to adjoining nations -
Anything at all to escape the present situation!
But there is a throne established - it is already in place
Where justice is done and the Judge is full of grace!
His rule is in righteousness, He doesn't overlook sin -
Justice at a throne of mercy is at the place where David was king.

There is a difference at this throne from all the thrones around.:
Truth is a fundamental fact of judgment where this King is found.
There is no one who stands before that throne whose lie won't be found out.
The quietness of righteous justice speaks louder than a shout.
The eyes of the Throne-Sitter pierce deep into one's soul.
He can discern easily a part-truth from the whole.
Deception can find no place or voice at this throne of mercy.
The Judge will make sure justice is done - He isn't in a hurry.

The aim of the throne of mercy is for righteousness to be done.;
Not just in the present situation but always from now on.
The throne of mercy is established with the future in its sight.
In order for peace and righteousness to work, judgments must be right.
This Judge doesn't need law books to search, in order to reach a decision.
He is the One who made the laws and established its every provision.
His authority is unchallenged; His decisions are the final word.
The Judge who sits on David's throne, is Jesus Christ our Lord.

His interest is in the people; the law is but a tool.
The object of divine justice is that righteousness will rule.
The throne of mercy is established with love as its motivation.
The outcome of each case that is tried is the repentant one's salvation.
The Judge cannot overlook sin or leave it not condemned.
But in an act of mercy finds the payment; He has it charged to Him.
In an act of righteous justice, the price of sin was paid -
At the throne of mercy, we learn, on the Judge our guilt was laid.

“Father, I know I may not be interpreting this chapter in its context, but I find these words speaking peace to me today. May the fact of the throne of mercy move me to prepare myself for what is ahead in the week to come. I thank Thee for this throne to which I can come, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Isaiah 17

THE DOWNFALL OF DAMASCUS AND SAMARIA

There are lessons for us throughout the Bible that we do well to look for as we read through some passages that seem hard to grasp. The joining of “Ephraim” with Syria, their “off and on” enemy, gives us an idea of how serious an unequal yoke is, and how much damage can come from an unscriptural union. The usual result is often a bad experience in the short-run and a bad lifetime for both parties in the long-run. Momentary satisfaction does not bring lasting gratification. There are many hidden costs when the people of God join with those who promise great things by seeking to make the things of God appealing to an ungodly society.

This "burden," "oracle," "prophecy" of the downfall of Damascus and Samaria, capital cities of Syria and the northern tribes of Israel, took place around the events in chapter seven when Ahaz was reigning over Judah. Samaria had allied with Damascus and were going to be ruined by the invasion of Assyria. The prophecy indicated that the few who remained would be like a few heads of grain left in a wheat field after the harvest, or a few olives left hidden on a tree branch after the fruit had been picked.

When a few overlooked people who stand alone for God, it may seem life has been a failure. But we know that God knows the "two or three" who gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him they are not a failure and He will not abandon them even when they are going through severe trials. He goes with them through those times. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Like those last survivors in Israel who would repent and renounce the idolatry, the sinful "groves," and the cultic practices of the nation, those who turn to the "Holy One of Israel" will be saved.

The fact of a godly remnant remaining in Israel in spite of the great sins of the nation and consequences of sin, encourages us to look to when all Israel will be saved. This will be repeated in the tribulation when those who "endure to the end, shall be saved." God associates Himself with those who are committed to being separated unto Him. To forget the "God of thy salvation," is to place one's self in the path of coming judgment. To follow the leading of one's natural interests at the expense of following God's interests, means to reap a bitter harvest of grief and sorrow. To look good, does not make a thing good.

During the many times down through the centuries when Israel has been overcome and then ruled by a foreign power, the land of Israel has been devastated by the land being salted, trees cut down, orchards and vineyards ruined. But since the British Mandate was enforced after World War I, replanting of trees, restoring land, and returning the land to production has taken place. Since the State of Israel became an independent nation in 1948, it has begun to prosper. Sadly, this does not mean that the Jews are returning to the Lord. Consequently, devastation will happen again during the tribulation, and again there will be a small godly remnant in the future that will acknowledge "Jesus Christ is Lord."

People in the present time are trying to convince themselves that things are getting better and better. Those who accurately read the Bible know the prophecies of the scriptures assure us that "perilous times shall come." The prophetic warnings in second Timothy tell us that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. Peace will come someday, but there are still costs to be paid. Earthquakes, famines, fear bloody conflicts will happen again and again until our Lord Jesus Christ comes in glory. God will then take action for His earthly people to deliver them. When people forget God, they may do what they can, but barrenness and the lack of anything fruitful, accompanies self-reliance.

There may be short periods of time that seem successful, but the appearance of success does not bring fulfillment. In fact, things often leave us when we want and need them most. False security will bring grief and pain. To trust temporary things to give satisfaction is false hope. Things of the world, the flesh and the devil may bring a quick rush of pleasure, and a long life of regret. Self-gratification can quickly turn into self-mortification.

We don't need more "handwriting on the wall," but we do need to be cognizant of the warnings of the word of God. There are now foreshadowing of the times of which the prophets wrote. The word of God is open to us to read, understand and prepare us for what is ahead when we can see those times predicted by the light of the unailing word of God.

Isaiah 17:7. *"At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel."*

WHEN ALL IS GONE.

Wandering people - looking for a stray animal - anyone will do
They walk the barren fields looking for a head of grain
For anything that might have been overlooked - just anything
They are climbing trees to see if there is a single olive - a piece of fruit
One or two high in the tops - maybe unseen by previous searchers
Each tree is searched; each field walked; each hidden place searched
There is none to be found except one or two tantalizing pieces
The gods; the idols are ignored - they look to their Maker in desperation.

They walk the city streets and find them empty - abandoned
People have fled in fear - and then in acts of vain hope, into the earth, plant slips
And watch them grow and their hopes rise - but there is no fruit there.
Sounds of grief and hopelessness rise like a moaning wind -
And they try to find God to help them to survive - but not to worship
Their groans and cries for pity come from their stomachs, not their hearts

They say the words without the meaning; go through forms; not reality
Even when all is gone - without repentance - they look to their Maker in fear.

It still is the same: unconcerned, ungodly, unrepentant people
Live without thought or concern for God's will, until it happens -
Where their house stood, there is now a pile of broken boards and dreams
Others see cement foundations where a house was, now washed away in the current
And they ask, "Where is God? Why did He allow this to happen to me?"
Never considering God had been asking for a lifetime, "Where are you?"
Some confess without shame or guilt, "This is what I lived for!"
And they wonder at and accuse, God their Maker.

The God of grace and mercy gave them life and sustained them
In compassion and covering love for all these years maintained them
When outside forces of nature or evil arose, He contained them
When blessings abundant poured out on them, He arranged them
When things went well and pleasures abounded, they ignored their Maker
When education flourished and they thought they knew more, they abhorred their Maker
When sickness came and doctors could not help, they implored their Maker
Now when all is gone, all they can do is to humbly bow before their Maker.

"I marvel at Thy grace, O God, when the invitation to come and take the water of life is still extended to 'whosoever will,' I know I do not deserve the blessing of eternal life after knowing all my life, of its reality. I just didn't bother to seek. I am so grateful for Thy mercy. I thank Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 18

THE DOWNFALL OF ETHIOPIA

The boundaries of nations change as years and centuries pass. Even the names of countries are sometimes changed. In my lifetime, the country of Ethiopia was Abyssinia, but was changed back to the name it was known by in Bible times. Cush was an area of the upper reaches of the Nile where the Blue Nile joins the White Nile. Empire building was a big part of Middle East history, with each new empire wanting to expand farther than the one they conquered. When Assyria was expanding to the south, Ethiopia and Egypt were in its sights. The Ethiopians were seeking to make alliances with other nations to join together and stop the Assyrian advance. Judah was asked to help them by joining an alliance with them. This likely happened when Hezekiah was king. Isaiah told the messengers to return home, because Judah was committed to the Lord only for protection.

The principles of separation from unequal yokes apply to many areas of life in nations as well as in individuals. Alliances are a form of yoke, and when entered into, are to be kept in the same way we are to keep promises and vows. Nations form alliances with each other for economic reasons, security from foreign domination and to maintain a cultural benefit that is often associated with similar languages. English Common Law with its basis being the biblical commandments, formed the basis of the legal standards of this country. However, morality can't really be legislated by the government. It begins in the hearts of the people and what they base their fundamental beliefs on. Christians know God's word is the authority and basis of belief and practice of moral living. Unfortunately, in this nation we have come to the place where we look to the government, and especially to the body of legislators to protect the morality of the nation.

Water only rises to its own level, and the same is true of people. It doesn't make any difference to the next generation as a whole, if the past generation has been immoral, and society adapted to the low standards of human opinion and practice. Those who follow will be like them or worse. Immoral legislators who do not have enough respect for God's word to base the laws they pass on basic Bible principles; will not lead the people they represent to higher moral standards. In reality, it works just the opposite. Immoral people lower moral standards because the laws of governments do not change the hearts of people. And yet, God's word tells us they are "ministers of righteousness," and we are to obey them as long as they do not contradict the will of God for us.

The education of our young people is another form of an alliance. Parents turn their children over to other people, many who are unknown to them, to teach them what the parents don't feel they can, or don't have time to. Seventy years ago, a local community of people who knew each other, set the standard of education for the school and those children living in that area. A teacher was hired to teach what their parents wanted taught to their children. But that was taken away by "Consolidated School Districts" and they put the alliance of education into the hands of a few people, most of whom were unknown to the parents. Then came the "Amalgamated School Districts" run by local governments, and soon followed by the state governments who took control of not only the school system, but the accepted curriculum according to secular leadership that was "suitable to the majority." Now there is interest in the federal government controlling education so that our children are "more adaptable to the national interests." The

problem with this alliance is that those who teach, and those who control the educational system do not want God, and what He stands for and His standards to be the foundation of education. They want our children to look at everything only through human eyes and a humanist frame of reference.

A medical alliance is set up so that we can live as long as possible. In this alliance, we submit our life and its length into the hands of skilled intelligent people who are capable of doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We are responsible to ourselves, our family and the Lord, to commit to moral living including what we eat and drink, and the lifestyle we choose. There are consequences if we don't do that, for which we need the medical professionals to do what we should have done if it was possible. The Christian lifestyle of faith in God who heals and answers prayer, is consistent with the fact that there are those people He uses to do His will for us. However, He holds the keys of life and death, and that overrides any medical decisions or alliance that we make.

When it comes to finances; this present day is far different than a few years ago. In the past it took all of our finances plus much of our spare time to simply provide for the needs of our families. Now, many form alliances with financial groups like banks and investment companies and trust them to use what we have in a way to bring the most profit to us. Alliances are a form of contract between two parties in which each has to trust the other with enough confidence to enable a specific need to be met. When such yokes are unequal, especially in a moral sense, there is a fundamental problem regarding what is right and wrong.

A lesson we can learn from the prophecy of Isaiah is that our trust and our basic alliance-yoke, should be with our Lord. He knows the end from the beginning of everything that goes on in our lives. If we put our trust in mere mortal man, we need to be sure it is under the direction of divine guidance, not personal preference. In quietness and patience, with confidence in God, we need to learn of Him by taking His yoke upon us. In that way our trials and difficulties are shared by Him upon whom we can cast all our cares with full confidence. Simple trust and unwavering dependence upon the Lord will give us the rest of soul we need when the dark waters of life are deep. He promises to be with us even there.

The end of chapter eighteen gives us another look ahead when Israel, the land the "rivers" of foreign powers have spoiled, will be "the place of the name of the Lord of hosts" again. The promises of God will be fulfilled, but there is much left of prophecy to be fulfilled that will happen before that time comes.

Isaiah 18:4. *"For so the Lord said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."*

CALM IN A STORMY TIME.

All around us are the armies stirring, ready to claim the land.
But a word from the Lord calms the soul; everything is in His hand.
Rest at ease: don't hasten or run - God is still on His throne.
Those that threaten seem mighty it's true, but God remembers His own.

Much that men do is like a mirage; things are not what they appear.
When outward threats come, remember the Lord God is near.
Do not rush from where God has placed you; remain calm.
Faith in the Lord, and quietness of soul is like a healing balm.

In the times of tension that surround us, God provides relief.
The refreshing work of His Spirit and the Word, strengthen my belief.
There is the comfort of the scriptures that brings calm when under stress.
Like the cool of the morning on a hot day; God my spirit does bless.

So, I will rest in the Lord, and leave my worries to Him.
After all: I am in His family, and He is stronger than them.
He may not stop the storms men cause, but He can give me calm.
When attacks come or threaten to stop me; by His power I will overcome.

I will find that warmth He gives; and not worry about the heat.
By His grace I will find the cool refreshment of God, when His face I seek.
And when all of these perilous times are past, I will be able to look back and see -
The Lord was near me all the time, so those opposed couldn't get to me.

"Father, this beautiful morning gives me the illustration of the peace and calm You give in difficult times. How great and kind of Thee to give me this visible evidence of what I have been reading. I praise Thee here and pray this day will be one of grace and glory for Thy honor. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 19

NOW IT'S EGYPT'S TURN

Egypt, the nation where Jews had been slaves for four hundred years, was hated by the Israelis and the feeling was mutual. When Judah was considering making an alliance with Egypt, Isaiah warned against that because God would deal with Assyria according to His timetable. Egypt, like all nations was under the eye of God and His sovereign control of events, nations and people, must yield to Him ultimately. This "burden," "oracle," or prophecy concerning Egypt, opens with the Lord Himself coming in judgment on that nation. God is pictured coming from heaven on a chariot to deal with the guilty nation of Egypt that was going to reap what they had sown.

At the time of Isaiah's prophecy, Egypt and Israel were outwardly allies, but when Ahaz and Hezekiah called for help against the Assyrians, Egypt did not come to their aid. Isaiah had warned them about that and it happened just as he had prophesied. God lost patience with Egypt and stepped in to deal with their deception, idolatry, evil spiritism, and superstition. To ignore the Lord God of Israel, was a serious sin. Every nation, every assembly of God's people and every person should remember that God is the One to whom we are responsible. Unholy alliances between those who fear God and those who hate God will always lead to divine intervention and holy justice carried out.

God initiated civil war as a means of getting the attention of the Egyptians to look away from their false deities like the bull, the crocodile, the cat and other animals and even the sun. Open fighting between the Libyans and Ethiopians weakened the nation. The whole nation of Egypt was affected as not only ethnic groups turned on each other, but families, neighbors, communities and authorities turned against each other all over the country. It was a civil war that engulfed everyone. They looked to their false gods and evil spirits for help, but of course they are powerless. The Assyrians though, were not powerless and took rule over the nation for nineteen years.

To treat the teaching of a holy God who rules over the affairs of men as if He doesn't even exist, will end in divine justice being carried out, even if there is a period of grace offered so that repentance can take place. "God is longsuffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Self-will in leaders leads to the same in those they lead. Hardness of heart is often transmitted by attitude towards those who are under the leadership or authority of the austere father, elder or government leader.

There was also a drought in Egypt to the extent the Nile River didn't overflow and water the land where crops are grown that sustained the people. Agriculture production stopped. The fish that was in the river were gone. Businesses that depended on the water of the river, like the production of linen from flax and whatever other industries there were, stopped also. Economic ruin followed and devastation of both business and confusion in government left the whole nation floundering and helpless. Internally they were without wisdom and guidance, and externally they were being threatened by the Assyrians.

Instead of wise counsel and understanding from people who were noted for their wisdom, the Egyptian leadership was foolish and deceived. True wisdom is from above. God is the source of all we need to lead, counsel and instruct the people of God. The entrance of God's word into our hearts and minds gives understanding to us that is beyond human intelligence and understanding. When we are uncertain as to how to proceed with a matter, or are confused as to the methodology we need to use, we are able to ask God for the wisdom we need. "If any man lack wisdom, let Him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Education and wisdom are two different things.

There was a bright future predicted for Egypt, but before that would come Nebuchadnezzar would invade Egypt to get the Jews who had taken refuge there. There was no way out of the national problems that could be found, but the Egyptians still refused to turn to the Lord God of Israel who they had despised and rejected. A godless system with no fear of God or respect for God, will not survive. Unbelief and no righteous moral standards of conduct, undermine integrity. Without integrity, justice cannot prevail. When chaos develops, civil war follows. Civil war brings devastation and annihilation.

The Lord used Alexander the great and the Greeks to deliver them from Persian aggression temporarily. At the last of this chapter we look into the future and can see that there will be a time when Egypt will recognize divine intervention. The attitude of the Egyptians to Israel will change and they will even worship the Lord in the city of the sun, Heliopolis. Whether the altar spoken of is an actual altar or a reference to the worship of the Lord, I don't know, but the fact of the nation having such a change toward the Lord is nothing short of miraculous. The state of nations and their citizens will continue to get worse until the Lord returns. Even now since Israel became a recognized nation, and many Jews are returning to the land of their forefathers, Egypt and other Middle East nations are united in opposition against Israel, but are weak as individual nations.

There are some religious groups that consider the pyramids of Egypt as an altar erected toward God. The Jehovah's Witnesses are one such group, but all of that is only vain conjecture. All those great piles of stone are fantastic feats

of ancient engineering, but they are only impressive tombs of past leaders and nothing more. There is much I don't understand about these prophecies of Isaiah, but we do know the day will come when Egypt with all its past anti-Semitic bias, will be blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior. There was a real move of God in Egypt during the time of the early church, and that nation will be again be in harmony with Israel, and the Middle East conflicts will cease when Christ reigns. Egyptians and Assyrians will have friendly relations with Israel. Jews and Gentiles will both be blessed by the God in the kingdom yet in the future.

Isaiah 19:24-25. *"In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."*

STRANGE ALLIANCES.

We want the government to act, and by their legislation
Make people respond to lawmakers' moral decisions.
But men's hearts are not changed by a legal decree -
It is only personal change within each one that brings morality.

We read of great scientific findings; new information that should change
All that we know and do; it comes from great men's brains.
Technology and science claim to have all the answers we need -
But life from a test tube isn't more happy or peaceful, until the Bible we read.

Learning and skill are supposed to guarantee us future success.
And it is hard to convince people it is only God who can bless.
When we consider His plans for us and what is His will;
Then education can aid us in the purpose of life to fulfill.

People are living longer in many parts of the world.
Doctors and medicine, people with strange diseases have healed.
To prolong life is one thing, but to have a quality of life without faith -
May give a temporary and short-lived respite, but it doesn't take the place of grace.

Most people now-a-days when talking about security, mean money
They place their hopes on what they can buy and fear they won't have any
When they get old, then who will assist them, who for them will care -
Forgetting God who sustains them, all along had wanted life with them to share.

These strange alliances people make are made without God.
They are based on expediency; not on principles in His Word.
In the future they will see how foolishly they acted -
And then before God's holy throne they will be rejected.

Whoever would think in countries of the Middle East -
There would be an alliance of nations arranged by the Prince of Peace
That would bring an end to centuries of warring and strife -
And the Lord Almighty will bless them with a peaceful life.

We need to be sure in all the alliances we make -
The Lord Himself is guiding us in the way which we take.
We need to be sure we are in fellowship with Him -
When our alliance is with God, real life can then begin.

"Heavenly Father, that one young woman seemed so angry last night that I felt I should not speak to her. The other one seemed to be kind of indifferent. Help me today, to be what I should be in Thy service. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 20

PREDICTIONS FULFILLED

The prophecy regarding Egypt in chapter nineteen ends with a look into the future to a time of peace in the Middle East when our Lord reigns in righteousness. The predictions earlier in the chapter as to the Assyrian invasion happened forty years later. Judah had not entered into the alliance to which they were inclined because of the warning from Isaiah regarding alliances with idolatrous nations. In chapter twenty the prophecy against Egypt picks up again but is looking back at what happened. Those events should have been a wake-up call to Judah regarding making alliances with those nations and people who have not time or interest in God.

When self-will enters into a matter, it seems that people will never learn that there are some things to which there are no exceptions. An unequal yoke is always an unequal yoke. It doesn't change with the passing of time. What does usually change is the one party in the yoke who has experienced the grace of God in their life, will gradually acquiesce to the pressure applied to conform to the ways of the world. "In order to see him/her saved, I do what he/she wants, not because I want to." But the outcome is the same. The believer gets farther away from God, and the unbeliever gets no closer to God. One may think the inevitable will never happen to them, but it always does.

In the sovereign will of God, Isaiah himself was to be the sign of the coming overthrow of Egypt and Ethiopia. The prophecy of the defeat and disgrace of those nations, happened. Isaiah foretold what it would be like after the invasion of Assyria by visible example, when he was told by God to remove his outer clothing and go barefoot in public. Whether he had to do that for three full years, or for three years did that for periods of time, is not the point. The objective of the visible prophecy was to remind the Lord's people in Judah of the wrong of unholy alliances, and that God's people should not put their trust in foreign governments. The humiliation of Isaiah kept before the people of Judah what was going to happen to Egypt and Cush who had wanted to form an alliance with Judah. But it would also remind them of what happens to those people who ignore God, and put their confidence in man and false gods.

Human plans, human arrangements and human governments should never take the place of God in human affairs. God is not at a distance from all that is going on around us, with us and in us. A conscious awareness of the presence of God will keep us from putting our trust in the wrong people and things. There are times in our lives when we are responsible to do something that seems to defy logic. We do not want to do it or even associate with others who also may be involved because it would be humiliating to us. When we know it is what God wants, we must act in faith and go forward even if our natural bent and desire is to not do such a thing. Our only recourse at such times is to turn to the Lord in faith, and trust Him to do through us, that which we cannot understand.

In the life of faith of a believer, we don't have to have the answers to a matter before we start. We don't need to know the result before we take the first step of faith. In fact, we may never know the reason for things we do, but we know God. We know our Lord will never ask us or expect us to do what is wrong. We know He knows the desired outcome of each matter and/or event. We know He has the right to expect us to obey Him and trust Him. So, it is incumbent on us to trust in God, be obedient to His word and will, and step into the unknown, placing all confidence in Him.

Sargon was the king of Assyria, and for a short time had great power in the Middle East. He sent Sennacherib, who in turn sent his general, Tartan to Philistia, and the Philistines found out that neither Egypt nor Ethiopia would come to their aid. When Sennacherib became king of Assyria, the invasion of Egypt and Ethiopia took place. Both of these countries learned that their alliance could not protect them from the righteous justice and judgments of God against those who deny His existence, belittle His power and authority, ignore His provision for the very life and survival of mankind. False gods and idols deceive people into thinking that they are in control of their own destiny.

Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ should remember that "vain is man that trusts in man." It is most unwise for us to put any confidence in the schemes and plans of men as the way to fulfillment of life or the way to deal with disasters over which we have no control. We trust in our God to give us the capacity to fulfill any work or calling we have been given by Him. It is our responsibility and wisdom to do what we do in God's way with all our might, and then leave the results of the matter to Him.

Isaiah 20:6. *"And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?"*

A WARNING.

A man of God was put to shame,
To warn the people in Jehovah's name,
That the time was coming not too far away;
Because they had chosen from God to stray.

They as a people that God had blessed,
Would be exposed in great distress -
And would be taken away barefoot and openly exposed;
Those that capture them will take away their clothes.

Who can they turn to for help when God they did forget?
Payday always comes when our Maker we do neglect.
Humiliation will come, but God gives warnings first -
People are on their own when for worldly sins they thirst.

It is not enough to know what is right -

Just because it seems like God is out of sight -
There is an appropriate action to perform:
It is a mercy of God that He sinners will warn.

The ultimate reward of sin is very painful -
There is no one but self that you can put blame for.
Though for a time life may seem very pleasant -
The fear will come when the future is the present.

To think by putting off repentance, sin will not find one out,
Is foolish thinking in every way; the tables will be turned about.
What you thought would never come, suddenly does appear.
The days of reckoning you chose to ignore, now have come right here.

Now there is no one to help; God's judging time has come -
Those you had put your trust in, all have left you alone.
God has for years long-suffering been; that someday will come to an end.
And you will be left alone to face the consequences of a life of sin.

“Holy God, may I this night by Thy great power, be able to present the Gospel in a way that will please Thee. May unbelievers be able to understand me. May I be able, by Thy Spirit, to reach their consciences. May they fear to put Thy salvation off any longer. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 21

THREE ENEMY NATIONS

Babylon, Edom and Arabia were all long-time enemies of Israel and Judah in the days of Isaiah. Babylon was the place of origin of idolatry; it was an ancient commercial center; and it was a place to be visibly admired for all its grandeur - and yet it all has come to nothing. Even archaeologists had a hard time finding where it was because there is nothing there now but desert. It had a great appeal in the past to the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”

Dumah (Edom), was made up of the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, who was named Israel by the Lord. There was a bitterness between Esau and Jacob while they lived, and that same antagonism existed between the Jews and the Edomites as nations. So, there was a prophecy regarding Babylon as a type of the world, that is, and always will be, an enemy of the people of God. Also, there is the enmity of the flesh, natural ties, that hinders the development of spiritual life in the children of God.

Arabia and Philistia alliance is the third nation that was an enemy of the Jews, and those people were descendants of Ishmael, the half-brother of Isaac, who was sent away from the home of Abraham. The animosity between Arabs and Jews continues today, dividing them, creating deep-seated bitterness, and bringing war between them often, that have settled none of the problems between the nations of the Middle East. This has all the characteristics of the devil. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Those ancient enemies of the people of Israel and Judah are not dead in our day. The nations may be, but the spiritual enemies are still actively opposed to us as the people of God. The world, the flesh and the devil have not, and will not cease their antagonism against us until this life is over, and/or the Lord comes to take us to Himself at the rapture. The opposition of those ancient enemies will be allied against the Jews in the tribulation, but will surrender all vestiges of power to the Lord Jesus Christ, “The Lion of the Tribe of Judah,” when He comes to earth again.

As Isaiah looked ahead prophetically, the Lord showed him what would happen to Babylon. The area in which Babylon was located was where the Garden of Eden likely was when humans were created. That area had become like a wilderness of swampy ground until it was drained. When the drainage ditches were neglected it would return to the state of neglect instead of being a fruitful place. Now it is desert. The city of Babylon was an ancient wonder, and the power of Nebuchadnezzar was feared all over the Middle East in years following Isaiah's prophecy. Isaiah had likely passed away before the time of Daniel's interpretation of Belshazzar's dream.

The Medes and Persians came with chariots and horsemen in pairs as a safety precaution so they could look around and deal with any opposition. When they got to Babylon during the great feast, they were able to gain entrance to the city, slay Belshazzar, and conquer the whole empire. As Isaiah looked ahead prophetically through the years to the disastrous results, it troubled him so much in his compassionate soul that he found it hard to sleep. John, in the book of Revelation, was also greatly disturbed by what he saw as the end of the coming Babylon. It gives no pleasure to prophets, preachers and the people of God when we see the suffering and consequences that sin will bring on those

who ignore God and will not repent of their sins and turn in faith to the Lord. The “Come” of divine invitation will not always be heard.

The mounted army of the Medes and Persians was a formidable foe. They were fast and fearful on horses and camels as they would rush upon an unmounted group of defenders with lances and would wield their swords and weapons like a sickle mowing wheat. The defenders could roar like a lion to the people for a defense warning, but the lion of war would overcome them. Isaiah saw Babylon as a flat plain where, like wheat being beaten on a threshing floor, they were pounded into subjection. There was a watchman for Babylon who could see what was coming before it arrived. Isaiah saw ahead to the time of Daniel, and could see “the handwriting on the wall.”

The work of the watchman is to be able to tell what is happening at the present time. A watchman for God learns the counsels of God regarding what is coming, and watches and waits for those events to take place. A true watchman doesn’t speculate but applies himself to the scriptures and accepts what God says to be true, and warns, exhorts and teaches others those truths. It is his responsibility to tell others what they do not know, either because they don’t take time to find out for themselves from the word of God, or they don’t want to face the reality of the truth.

People who are dead in trespasses and sins, cause grief to those who read and believe the Bible. We know the word of God to be true. It tells of the present state of those who do not believe God’s word, do not believe the words of prophecy, and some do not even believe there is a God. We look not only at the present state of unbelievers, but we look ahead through the word of God to the future destiny of those who are forever lost to God. The eternal state of those who die in their sins is a fearful knowledge to have, and it deeply troubles our souls to know the future of those we know and love. That is why we are so concerned about going forth with the Gospel.

Isaiah also so saw what was going to happen to Edom. He responded to the watchman regarding the future of the descendants of Esau, and could see there was a morning coming for some and a night for others. There will be a “morning” of recovery for Israel when light will again come into the nation and the whole world will recognize the uniqueness of that nation to the Lord. That morning of deliverance has not yet really come. Isaiah also saw the night of Edom’s total demise from history. Present day Jordan is there now and is called the Hashemite kingdom. The warning was to the Arabs and the Philistines who had joined in ransacking Jerusalem when Jehoram was king. Later Uzziah the king defeated them, but this warning against them was regarding the Assyrians and Chaldeans who would crush them completely. The watchman in this part of the chapter gave his message to Isaiah who could tell him what was coming in the future.

Arabia as well would be overcome by the Assyrians at the precise time of “the years of a hireling.” Whether that is one or three years, isn’t so much the point of the warning as is that fact that God knows not only the place of prophetic fulfillment, but the time. We have clear testimony in the scriptures as to what is going to take place in relation to Israel and the church in the future. We do not know all the events as to the whole unfolding of the prophetic warnings and entreaties, but we do know that Israel has a future; other nations have and will yet experience divine justice and judgment, and the fact that whatever we sow we will reap is not only in regard to individuals, but nations too will experience similar responses to their actions.

As the watchmen asked the prophet what was to be expected in the future, so we watchmen in our day go to the word of God and get from our Divine Prophet understanding of the times and events yet to take place. Our work is to call to those of our generation and the one behind us, to look ahead and prepare. That begins with repentance. Repentance begins with an earnest desire for change. Then there is the requirement to turn from sin to God. Following that is the invitation to act in faith on what God tells us by putting full faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. These are all offered to anyone who wants deliverance from the wrath to come.

Isaiah 21:11-12. *“The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir; ‘Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?’ The watchman said, ‘The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.’”*

DON’T LAUGH!

You thought it was great when Israel fell, did you Edom? Perhaps you thought the children of Israel got what was coming to them after all these years. Because of the “stillness” and “silence” of your hill country, you thought maybe the God of Israel wasn’t concerned about what was happening when you mocked and rejoiced at the downfall and captivity of your historic enemy. Think back; he is your brother. It’s true, Jacob was nothing to write home about, but he was your brother. He did your ancient father a great deception; he ran like a frightened kid of the goats to the distant land of your common ancestor and stayed there for years. But he did come back. And he did bring back gifts that made you rich. And he did make it a point of facing up to his wrong-doing. Yes, all was not sweetness and light even after that, but your antagonism is that of wounded pride and an unforgiving spirit. Watch out. Pay day is coming. You shouldn’t laugh because by laughing at those who are being carried away in chains to Assyria, you are sealing your doom.

Keep your watchman on the walls at all times, Dumah, because your turn is coming soon! Make sure they keep their eyes open because the God of the valleys is also God of your hills. He heard when you laughed at His chosen ones. He knows your heart is rejoicing at the judgment He has allowed to be carried out on the sinning ones of His family. But remember, He's not done with you yet. You may think a new day has arrived for you, but the night is coming right behind it. You didn't help your beleaguered brethren but gloated over their downfall. You went there like jackals and looted their land. Remember, your cowardice, pride and treachery has condemned you. There is none of your high cliffs and mountains that will be able to hide you when that day comes.

You are a reminder to all of us of a divine principle: God says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We may not be a perfect people but we are God's people. We may be weak and scorned but that isn't the end of the story. It really doesn't matter much what people think of us who are looking on and finding so much wrong. God knows all that and in His own way and time, deals with His erring children. The real scary part is, what is going to happen to the mockers; and the gainsayers; and those who are always looking to find fault.

"O God of justice and vengeance: I fear for those around who seem to delight in putting down these children of Thine who are much less than perfect. I know we should all remember who we are and live and act accordingly. As an intercessor for those who are anxious to see the failure of Thy people, and rejoice at their imperfections: please be merciful to them and spare them to repent and believe the Gospel that they may be delivered from certain coming judgment. In the name of Him who is the Mediator between God and men, Amen."

Isaiah 22

NUMBERED WITH THE UNGODLY

It is not uncommon for some people to think because they have been associated with believers in some way, family connections, church attendance, etc.; that they are immune from the judgment that will fall on those without that link to God's people. What an awakening it will be when they find they are not only under the same condemnation, but are more responsible than those who did not have any real understanding of God's way of salvation. Privileged people are as liable to be dealt with because of their sin, as any other people.

The people of Jerusalem may have thought they were above God's judgment because of the covenant the Lord had with the Jews. The worldly-minded people of Jerusalem were warned by Isaiah who actually wept as he looked ahead to when the city would be destroyed and all that would happen to those people. The Assyrian army under Sennacherib had come right to Jerusalem when Hezekiah earnestly and urgently called on the Lord for deliverance and they Assyrians were recalled to their own country. Instead of rejoicing and praising the Lord for what He had done on their behalf, they went up on their rooftops and partied, indulging themselves in self-congratulation and wild parties.

Unfortunately, some who claim to be Christians often respond in similar ways when God in mercy and grace has removed some serious matter confronting us. Instead of going in humility and sincere repentance and thanksgiving to the Lord, the response is a bunch of "high-fives" and "going out" to celebrate. Whenever God in His sovereign will, acts on our behalf, it is incumbent on us to make sure we are back in good fellowship with the Lord, and there is nothing in our lives and attitude that would cause the necessity of righteous judgment to come upon us. Even though we may plan, scheme, prepare defenses and do what we can in our own strength, it will fail when divine justice is carried out. Unless we are directed by the Lord and work under His divine authority and guidance, we cannot stop the leaven of evil from spreading. When people forget God, and ignore Him as insignificant; failure and misery will follow.

With the wisdom and understanding God gave to him, Isaiah warned of what was going to happen, not just at that time, but also in the near future. Instead of repentance, there was wild unrestrained pleasure-seeking. Instead of humility and gratefulness, there was sinful self-indulgence. Isaiah saw it all through the spiritual vision of a prophet. He could see what was yet to take place and "wept bitterly" and could not be comforted. He could see the resulting tragedy yet to come upon those people. For some things such as the sin of deliberately rejecting Christ, deliberately ignoring the word of God as our source of information given by the Holy Spirit, and for deliberately not "taking everything to God in prayer;" there is no place of repentance as Esau found out long before Isaiah's day.

This historical account of Judah being attacked by the Assyrians, illustrates what will happen in the future. When our Lord Jesus was here, He wept over the city of Jerusalem because they "knew not the time of their visitation." God intervened and the Assyrians turned away for a time when Hezekiah was king. The descriptions of the siege include reinforcing the walls; guarding the water supply and making a way for water to be in the city even when surrounded

by enemies. But all of this was useless because the Jews refused to look to the Lord for their deliverance and defense.

Human ingenuity, weapons of war and large armies are limited, even when they seem unbeatable. Wise people know that victory is in the hands of the Lord. We don't know all the reasons why God allows wars and atrocities, but we do know He must deal with sin, and punish sin, or there would be no way for mankind to survive its attacks against itself. In all of these uncertain times and terrible actions of humanity, real Christians still care for the unsaved people and want them rescued from the wrath to come. We mourn their loss when they die without Christ. It is not wrong for us to do that because grief is a way of expressing concern. We can't help being concerned when we are involved in the lives of people. We may have to suffer with them for awhile like Isaiah did with the people of his day, but that is to be expected.

Isaiah also looked ahead and saw that even though the Assyrians were turned away, the time was coming when the Babylonians would come. Nebuchadnezzar would conquer both the Assyrians and Judah. The call for repentance was ignored, treated with cynicism and blatant disregard. The Jews refused to repent of their sins, and they refused the call to return to the Lord and renew their commitment to Him. Their response was rather, "eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Even for us, it is possible after an obvious, divine rescue, for us to take credit to ourselves for the outcome.

An illustration of what was happening in Jerusalem, is the story of two men. One was selfish, greedy and ambitious. He exalted himself and wanted his name preserved in perpetuity by making an extravagant tomb for himself. Shebna was an obviously self-exalting person like the antichrist will be. Instead of being entombed in his private mausoleum, he died in captivity in a far country. He was exposed for who he was, and Hezekiah replaced him with Eliakim, who followed the Lord and became Hezekiah's prime minister. He was a loyal man who could be trusted by the king. He was a statesman, not a mere politician. He was an example of what our Lord Jesus Christ is like - "A nail in a sure place." All that is hung on a nail in a sure place will not fall. Our Lord is the same yesterday, and today, and forever - like a nail in a sure place. He is the One who will take open authority over everything when He comes to take the throne on earth.

When we are called upon to stand up for the truth and step out with the Gospel, like Isaiah did. We have to tell the bad with the good. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." We need to be sure we are working as faithful servants of God; not as independent contractors who think they can do what they want. When difficulties arise that we must face, we need to go forward in faith in the Lord, and take action as we know God would want.

Isaiah 22:4. *"Therefore said I, 'Look away from me: I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.'"*

DESPAIR.

What should we do when all else seems hopeless?
When the handwriting is on the wall?
How can we help those around us who seem blind;
And refuse on God to call?
When we have tried to warn the people and they turn a deaf ear -
What shall I say to them?
Is there anything more God wants me to do -
When they choose to totally ignore Him?

There have been times when all I could do,
Is turn away and cry.
Sin has its consequences, this I know -
I can't stop them - there's no use to try.
It is just that it seems so bad to know
Whatever has been sown will be reaped.
When people have sowed the awful seed of sin -
About all I can do is weep.

I look at some and see bitterness on their faces -
They seem to think the fault is with me.
The warnings we give and the entreaties from God -
They ignore and refuse to see -
The way they are going is taking them farther away
From the real joy they are hoping to find.
And with darkened countenance, and scowling faces
They turn away and darken their minds.

It is not hard to see that inevitably
They will eat the bitter fruit of sin.
I search myself to see if I've been faithful -
As through the Gospel, we have sought to win
Their confidence and trust so they will believe the message
God has given me to preach.
But it seems like the doors to their hearts have been closed -
I no longer their conscience can reach.

“O Lord God, I watched that young lady as she pulled at her hair, and I wondered at the scowl on her face. Is there no way to reach her, O God? Is there something I should say or do that will change her and bring her to the place of repentance and faith? Guide me, O Lord I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 23

THE FAILURE OF MATERIALISM

Many cities and countries of the Mediterranean area depended on the ships of Tyre to move goods and people from place to place. The national interests were influenced and affected positively or negatively by the materialism of Tyre that supported many city/states by the commercial enterprises of those seafaring people. Some cities like Carthage in North Africa and Tarshish in Europe were founded by the “old, old city.” There was a city of Tyre on an island or two just offshore from the city of Tyre on the mainland, so there was a certain degree of safety for those on the island portion of the city that was unique.

In the eyes of the Lord, the commercial gains of Tyre and their awareness of the impact they had on so many people and nations had made them a proud people. Widespread influence had made them worshippers of materialism and prosperity. Self-gratification was then, and still is today, the real motivation behind materialism that has become a form of idolatry. Such ruthless materialism affected the Lord’s people in Israel and Judah. Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre who married Ahab came from Tyre. Her mind-set was likely quite typical of those who controlled the commerce and worldly, immoral religion of the people of Tyre.

The dangers of materialism cannot be overstressed. Its attraction is in every person and it can never be satisfied by the accumulation of “things.” Some people are so addicted to materialism, that they cannot bring themselves to get rid of useless things they don’t need and never use. The “hoarding” addiction is a form of materialism, and the dissatisfaction that permeates a materialistic society can lead to all kind of trouble in a society and country, let alone in a person or family.

By its very nature, the religion of materialism is a failure because everything one gains can be lost in a short time, including peace of mind, happiness, a good conscience – and some even take their own life when the covetousness of materialism overtakes a person’s mind. When we put our hopes and labors in life on the “treasures of earth” instead of “treasure in heaven,” we have put everything into a basket without a bottom. Where can people go, and what can they do when all they have worked for is gone in a recession or the fall of the stock-market? To whom can they go to find some relief when their financial advisors have no more options to present? Sadly, material prosperity to most people is a source of pride. There is the pride of accomplishment, the pride of skill, the pride of intellect, the pride of overcoming obstacles, the pride of out-doing others, the pride of self-congratulation.

It was likely unthinkable to people living when Isaiah prophesied that Tyre would be thrown down. But Isaiah wasn’t the only preacher to warn of the downfall of Tyre. Jeremiah rebuked Tyre because of its evil and ill-gotten wealth. Ezekiel, Joel, Amos and Zechariah all warned of the dangers of alliances with Tyre and the unstable worldly systems that surrounded Israel and Judah. Egypt depended on Tyre to move its products around the world. The pride of Tyre as the link between nations created a sense of pride in the people of Tyre. But pride separates people from God. “Vain man would be wise, though he be born like a wild ass’s colt.” It is certainly one of the main reasons people today ignore and reject the Gospel. Humility and acknowledgement of sin, and guilt because of sin stains the pride of all men.

When everything is gone that a person has set their heart on, and all they had spent a lifetime working for has come to nothing, a thinking person hopefully will say and mean, “The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.” This last prophecy of Isaiah regarding the nations surrounding Israel and Judah should be a warning to us all. Egypt is a type of the world. Babylon is a type of the religious systems of man’s making. Tyre is the commercial system. The antichrist will use every one of them against the Jews, and we are experiencing the foreshadowing of those things today. The religious systems of this age are burying the consciences of people by cooperating with the world and with business in terrible ways. Many so-called

religious leaders are extremely wealthy and spend millions of dollars on lavish homes and the accouterments of this world.

Luxury is what people seem to crave now, whether they actually have it or not. The influence of materialism has spread worldwide even though the poor have so little. Instead of bringing satisfaction, materialism mainly brings discontent. Materialism and pride go together, but "God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble." Materialism and prestige go together also, as long as a person has the money needed to maintain a luxurious lifestyle to impress people. Pride and influence go together as long as there are sufficient funds to buy what one wants, and they are willing to spend money on other people without expecting anything back.

The mainland part of Tyre was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, and then when Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians, Cyrus, the Persian king, made Tyre and Sidon contribute to the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem seventy years later when Ezra brought a group of Jews back to Judah from exile. The people of Tyre were so committed to commercialism that they were compared by the prophet to those who made gain from prostitution. Self-gratification was and is the overriding motive behind materialism. In the time of Nehemiah, people of Tyre came to Jerusalem to live and make money by selling fish and other products on the Sabbath when the Jews were supposed to close all their businesses. Even that simple act for the purpose of material gain, was a bad influence on the Lord's people at that time. A similar attitude toward the things of the Lord today has taken the attention of believers to the extent that many want to do everything related to the practices of the Lord's Day in the morning, so they have the rest of the day to pursue pleasure and business.

It was three hundred years after the time of Nebuchadnezzar that Alexander the great made a causeway to the island city of Tyre and totally destroyed it as was prophesied. The downfall of Tyre reminds us that commercialism, materialism and the pursuit of self-gratification is a major practice of many in this country, and is a sign of the last days. It will surely come to pass that the "pride of all glory" of man will be exposed for what it is, and the "honor of the earth" in the eyes of men will be brought into contempt. The history of Tyre is a reminder that "pride goeth before a fall."

Isaiah 23:9. *"The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth."*

TO STAIN PRIDE.

The area of life where we think we are the strongest,
Is often our weakest point.
We think, of all the things we know, this one will last the longest -
And in our pride, we ourselves anoint.
But the Lord of hosts has the final say -
He knows just what to do -
To stain the pride of heart in His own way -
And bring us low before He is through.

Sometimes the pride of accomplishments
Brings an honor we didn't expect.
And in our heart, we know embellishments
Have covered over areas of neglect.
God knows the whole from beginning to end -
Nothing escapes His eyes.
He has at His disposal, the very thing to send -
To bring me all the way down to size.

Gushing flattery may come at times,
And we secretly hope it is true.
But underneath the facade, I know they are lies;
And reality is hidden from view.
So, I am wise if I refuse to accept the praise:
God knows - and so do I,
That if I persist in inappropriate ways -
God has His way of dealing with pride.

"All knowing God, my Father: I pray of Thee today to keep me aware of my limitations and help me to choose genuine humility. I know myself well enough, that I can often see the treachery of my own heart. There are other times when I am blinded by pride. Save me from myself. O Gracious Father. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 24

UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT FOR UNIVERSAL SIN

From Isaiah twenty-four through twenty-seven there are general rebukes and promises that include all of humanity, both in judgments and assurances. Because divine judgment doesn't happen immediately as far as human time is concerned, that does not mean God overlooks sin and open evil in people and nations. Isaiah can see ahead through prophetic vision as the Holy Spirit inspires him to write about God's righteous dealing with nations. The whole world scene comes under the judgment of God at the end of the age.

The nations of whom Isaiah wrote and warned of just judgments, are Babylon, as a reminder of judgment on corruption and oppression. Then there was Assyria noted for antagonism against the Lord's chosen people. Philistia was in a state of constant opposition and hostility toward Israel that was right next to them. Moab's pride was the cause of the demise of that tribal nation and Dumah was a self-reliant, self-centered tribe of people. Judgment came on Jerusalem and will again because of the counterfeit profession of being followers of God and instead copying the world around them. Tyre was judged, and all nations of similar characteristics of worldly glory and self-exaltation.

Isaiah saw in his prophecy the judgments of the last days on the nations of the whole world when evil is dealt with in justice and righteous judgment by the Supreme Sovereign. Governments, the people and even the land itself will suffer the effects of evil, lawlessness, pollution, crime and poverty. Sin affects every part of human life to the extent that even those who know and love the Lord will suffer. Human sin has brought human suffering. Believers must be separate from the world. They must openly reject sin and stand against immorality and the lawlessness of the world system. When we read and submit to the word of God, we will make a difference, even though it may seem like a very small and insignificant difference.

In this chapter the "earth" is the inhabited world of people that is composed of two classes of people: the wicked and corrupt, and the faithful people of God. Even though just judgment will be world-wide, there will be a remnant that will survive the destruction that will come. All the people of earth, no matter what their station in life is, will face divine judgment without any discrimination. Divine fairness and holiness will be seen in judgment and in grace also. That grace is extended to every single person in the world today without partiality who will turn by faith to the Lord in repentance and unreserved trust. "God is no respecter of persons." That just judgment because of human sin, will have an effect on the earth itself that has been cursed by human sin; on nations and on the whole human race.

Believers will rejoice at the righteous judgment of God even though wickedness will seem to prevail, and they will be adversely affected to the extent that only those who endure to the end will be saved. Israel will turn away from God to the antichrist, and the antichrist will turn away from Israel with the objective of annihilating them completely. Everything the unbelieving people of Israel trust in will be broken up as the results of sin bringing catastrophic ruin to the world. Justice and judgment that is righteously carried out, will bring misery to those who reject the Lord.

The present hopes of the Israelis will be only dreams because they consider only themselves and their history, not the blessings of the covenant made with God so long ago. Not until they actually see the Lord and will wonder "who is this that cometh from Edom," and will ask "What are those wounds in Thy hands?" will they be able to avoid the terrible opposition against them by the nations that surround them. They have ignored the law of God, and their own efforts have taken the place of the blessings which the Lord wanted to bestow on them. They broke the terms of the covenant and have openly rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel, like all the other nations, refuses to be subject to the Sovereign God. Consequently, the tribulation will turn the whole world into a place of disaster, and unless the Lord would "shorten the days," no human being would survive.

A few were left in the land when the Lord judged Judah, and a few are still left on the earth who have faith, and can sing in such times of trouble, "Glory to the Righteous One." Justice and righteous judgment bring misery to those who reject the Lord, and songs of praise to the Lord in the midst of suffering by those who read and believe the prophetic words of the Bible. A few people will be found enduring, and finding reason to praise the Lord as they live in the fulfillment of God's infallible word. No one escapes the consequences of just judgment that comes from divine authority with absolute, untainted divine power and justice. Evil authorities will be in hell waiting for the judgment of the great white throne.

Then the Lord Jesus Christ returns! Isaiah saw the glory ahead, but he also saw the terrible "leanness" (misery) sin would bring when everything that was considered stable will be shaken – even the physical earth. God is at work in current events which Bible prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah wrote about long ago. Bible prophecy is not given to us as a time-table of events, but to stimulate the people of God to sincere open obedience to our Lord. Those who have faith in God and read His word, see all the terrible things that are happening and will yet happen, and recognize, "The coming of the Lord draws near."

The final words of this chapter reveal the glory that will follow as the promises of God are fulfilled and the Lord of hosts reigns in His glory. The light of the sun and moon will seem insignificant to the splendor of our Lord when He reigns. When He appears, He will govern in righteousness, and human pride will be as nothing when every knee will

bow to the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though we may find ourselves occasionally depressed because of the evil all around now, we can read of God's promises for the future, and find our faith real, and our joy in the Lord real as well.

Isaiah 24:14-16a. *"They shall raise up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea. From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous..."*

THE SOUND I HEAR.

There's music coming from somewhere to my ears.
There are voices raised from far away with praise and the sound of excitement of the heart.
They are talking of the wonders of the Lord Himself.
They have learned or heard of One they never knew.
It is those from the western sea who acclaim the majesty of the Lord!

The name of the Lord is given glory.
The name of the Lord, the God of Israel is being exalted where it never was before.
From the "fires", the valleys of the east, comes the sound of glory to my ears.
From the isles, those places of obscurity, comes His name wafting across the distances.
It is those from the eastern sea who exalt the name of the Lord!

From the far and distant points of earth, those places so exotic.
From the ends of far and distant roads that end in narrow paths so steep and rocky.
From the deserts; roadless sands that have no real beginning or end.
From the leafy islands, where sounds so unfamiliar to my ears, come the sound of singing voices;
It is from those distant ends of earth, we hear, "Glory to the Righteous One."

So, what is this I hear amidst the noise of commerce going on so loudly?
So, what is this I can almost feel when the noise of transport and of money is so loud?
So, what is this that sets my feet to tapping and my fingers moving to its time midst all the fuss?
So, what is this that turns my head, my heart, my mind towards this place so insignificant?
It is from here I hear clear voices singing, honoring, acclaiming, exalting - praising right here - the Lord!

"I would praise Thee here, my Father and God; I would honor and extol Thy name in this place. I would lift up before Thee the glory of Thy Son and allow the warmth of this praising people to fill my heart with joy, my eyes with tears both shed and unshed. It is in this hallowed spot with saints so precious, I bow in humility and adoration; and sing with voice subdued, "My richest gains, I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride." Even so, I do this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 24:14-15. *"They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea."*

VOICES IN THE NIGHT.

Deterioration is on every had.
Desolation is throughout the land.
The Lord is bringing judgment on sinful man.
But there is a song in the night!

The earth lies empty, producing no food.
There is barrenness where fields of corn once stood.
Doors and windows are barred in the neighborhood.
But there is praise to God in the night!

People are wandering here and there.
The rich and the poor alike now share
The same bitter losses - it is everywhere -
But a few believers raise their song in the night!

There still is time to slow the march of sin.
Living daily for God is where we begin.
Preaching the Gospel that some souls we may win.
So they too will sing praises to God!

I know there is no real turning back - it will get worse.
The whole earth will soon feel the full effects of the curse.
Sin will continue, and like a bubble, it will burst.
But a few in faith will sing glory to God!

The tide of evil over the whole world has swept.
The laws of God in the hearts of men they no longer have kept.
From the blessings of righteousness, the world is now bereft.
Here and there a voice is praising the Lord!

Rather than surrender to pressure, the few that remain -
Still bear a testimony to the glory of God's name.
Though sin is rampant, they are consistently the same.
And they acclaim the majesty of the Lord!

“Father God, I thank Thee today for Thy faithful people all over the world. There are so few on the narrow road, but their voices are heard in the gathering darkness. Give Thy people courage to go against the tide of sin; the grace to live to please Thee; faith in Thee during these days of departure. Remember the young couple facing school officials this evening. Give them wisdom and full trust in Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 25

PRAISE TO GOD – JOY IN THE CITY

As he looks ahead to the fulfillment of the prophecies God gave him, Isaiah is the spokesman for God's people in praise to the Lord for His grace to all, His righteousness in dealing in justice with the ungodly, and His kindness to His people over all the centuries. He praises and honors God for fulfilling His promises to His people. He begins with adoration for the Lord's dealing with men by enforcing the laws and justly bringing an end to the subversion of those who have no faith in God. Not only does He enforce the law on those who break it, but He preserves and defends those who are faithful and obedient to Him.

God's goodness and faithfulness should never be doubted. His provision and security for the poor is assured. There have been, and will yet be, trials, testing and misfortunes that come on the people of God, but Mt. Zion will be preserved. The faithfulness of God and His truth remains unchanged, and always will. When our Lord returns and appears in His glory, those who rejected and despised Him will recognize Him for who He is – the Prince of Peace. Gentile believers will be included in the blessings that come from Him to “all people.”

The nations that defied God will be destroyed. The suffering of the Jews under Gentile domination and persecution will end. The Jews as a nation “received Him not,” but there have been many individuals of that people who have been saved by God's grace when they “repented and believed the Gospel.” By the grace of God, Jews and Gentiles who have received Christ as their own personal Savior, are blessed and rejoice because “He made peace through the blood of His cross.”

In this prophecy/sermon of Isaiah, He praises God for who He is, and then praises Him for the fact that He is “my God.” That surely is a cause for gratitude and rejoicing on our part when we praise Him for what He has done for us and the close fellowship and relationship with Him into which we have been brought. To have the word of God and been given the provisions of God freely, moves our souls to praise Him. He has been victorious over our enemies and He protects us constantly as our Deliverer, Redeemer and Savior. No wonder we praise Him! God has given us peace and He reveals Himself to us in His word, in the circumstances of life, in answered prayers and in ways unexpected that are uniquely personal. As we look ahead to the final chapter of life here and then the victory and glory yet to be revealed in the future, it is most appropriate that we give Him “the sacrifice of praise; the fruit of our lips giving thanks unto His name.”

The feast Isaiah described is like a table spread with all spiritual blessings that will be there from which all believers will partake. Those “fat things,” and “wine upon the lees,” will be provided at that great feast. Perhaps it is, or at least is like, the marriage supper of the Lamb. Jews and Gentiles will rejoice as one people. At Mt. Zion all believers will eat of the choice foods that come as benefits and blessings of the Gospel. They will bring delight and satisfaction to all who have come to Him by faith. We trusted in Him and He has saved us. What God says, He will do. He knows us and answers our prayers even today in ways which are appropriate to the need he knows we have. The cross-work of our Lord defeated all His foes, and ours – including death. The final victory of our Lord over those who turn against His people will happen at His appearing, and it will be complete.

Darkness and spiritual blindness of Jews and Gentiles alike, will be lifted and the millennial kingdom will be a time of unprecedented blessings. People will say with grateful hearts: “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Counterfeit religion; false peace because of religious pride will be done with. The Lord Himself will deal in both judgment and grace. Victory and the triumph of heaven will be forever. The veil of spiritual blindness will be removed and joy will resound in the city of God. He will dwell with His people in holy happy fellowship.

Hostile unbelievers will be brought down like mowed grass and will be powerless before the Lord. The pride and arrogance of those who oppose God will not prevail over the righteousness of a just and mighty King. How good it is for those who know the Lord today, and can look ahead into the future through these prophecies, to be able to be glad and rejoice in God's salvation now. That leads us to be able to sing the song of joy that is in the next chapter.

Isaiah 25:6. *“And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine upon the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”*

THE FEAST.

The battles are over - the terrible times are past.
The Lord reigns with His people - there is peace at last.
Gathered unto Him are believers from every place -
They have been brought to Mt. Zion to share with Him the feast.
The Lord has dealt righteously as He chose with sinful men.
He has established His rule according to His prophetic plan.
Now His name is being praised as people gather to adore Him -
Recognizing His grace in bringing blessing to them.

He has spread a feast of the choicest of the food.
Every dish speaks to us of the blessings of the Lord.
The sweetness of the meat tells of blessings that sustain -
And the strength we get from God, forever will remain.
The “wines on the lees;” new wine that renews -
The joys of God's grace as on His Person we muse.
The wine is clear, there is nothing to dim the light -
Of the delights of the Gospel that will forever shine so bright.

The covering of spiritual blindness will forever be removed.
The darkness of the nations gives way to the brightness of a noon.
All the foes that bound us once, even death shall lose its chains.
And the victory He won for us will forevermore remain.
O, haste the day Lord Jesus, when every voice shall sing -
And we gather as one great company united to praise our glorious King.
Until that time does come, help us to be faithful unto Thee.
Willing to continue in Thy Word, and serve Thee faithfully.

“O Lord God, it seemed like the right thing to continue on this week in Gospel meetings. If there are those to be saved at this time, give to Thy servant the right message to pass on to them, and the right words to present it well - and to Thy glory. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 26

THE SONG OF THE RIGHTEOUS

At the end of the age Judah (and Israel) will be a righteous nation finally at peace. The redeemed people will testify of their trust in the Lord, and the poor and needy who have been ignored and persecuted by those who crushed them, will see them come under the justice and judgment of God. This chapter is a song of praise and joy to the Lord on the part of the righteous and is contrasted with the judgment of the wicked. Isaiah was looking ahead to the time the Lord will establish His kingdom, when after the turmoil and terrors of the tribulation, peace will come.

Israel will be as a “strong city” after having been defeated and destroyed many times. Not only will the city be the capital of the world under the rule of the Great Sovereign, the Lord Jesus Christ, but the people will be secure in a city whose moral strength will be stronger than the stones that form the walls. The walls had fallen before, but in the reign of Christ, the blessings of righteousness, justice and peace will bring stability, and the people of God will sing songs of praise, security and contentment because of Him, not stone walls.

Their testimony will be that God is trustworthy, and peace and joy come from Him. God's truth and His glory will be seen openly when His “kingdom comes” and His will is done on earth as it is in heaven. The wicked who reject the Lord and put no faith in Him and the word of the Gospel, will be rejected. The redeemed will confess their righteousness is from the Lord Himself. “The lofty city” seems to refer to all the proud, the high and mighty of earth who will be humbled before the great King, Jesus. When God's judgments come on the earth, people will repent and turn to Him. God will bring deliverance to Judah and punishment to their oppressors. God's name alone will endure among all rulers because he alone can bring the “increase.”

The song describes the people of the “strong city” who are “just.” The way of life in that day will be without the things that make people stumble because God’s path is clear and comforting to those who set their mind on Him. He provides, gives wisdom and makes plain the path of life believers of all ages are to take. The character of the Lord is imparted to all those who believe on Him. They in turn will give honor to Him who deserves all honor and glory as they remember His past patience with them and His blessing on them.

Their worship in prayer and thanksgiving will be from “my soul” and “my spirit” as they sing to the praise of His glory. They even sing of God’s grace to the wicked who reject righteousness and the Lord Himself. The “other lords” are false gods who have no life and those who worship such things will find their attitudes and actions toward such evil will overwhelm them and devour them. The false gods of today may not be made as visible idols before which people burn incense, but anything that takes the place of God as supreme in our lives, is a false god. Believers of any age, including us, live because of His blessings and under the banner of His authority in contrast to those who “had dominion” in the past of our lives. Any person or things that had conquered us previous to our day of salvation, have been conquered by the One who “conquered them who had conquered us.”

We too sing of the glories of our Lord and His kingdom. Isaiah writes of those who will sing of the glories of the coming kingdom that will increase in size of numbers and territory as the promised land extends in that day to the boundaries described by the Lord long ago. What He promised, will actually take place. However, the next part of the song goes back to describe what will happen to Israel before the kingdom blessings are fulfilled. The tribulation will be a time of chastening and anguish for the Jews. There will be an urgency in their prayer for deliverance as they admit their need of correction. The people of Israel will feel the pain of disappointment, frustration and helplessness at their inability to deliver themselves. It is then they will turn to the Lord for His deliverance.

Then there will come deliverance as God intervenes, and the nation that was as good as dead, will be revived, and instead of hopelessness, hope comes again. Finally, they turn to the Lord in faith, and He comes to bring the deliverance they could not achieve. That nation that was as good as dead and buried, will be reborn. God turns to His people and calls them to “come” into the place of refuge He provides for them. It is there they hide until the punishment of the wicked living on earth who have sought to eradicate the Jews from the world, are dealt with by the iron hand of divine justice. That righteous judgment that exposes all evil and what is behind it, will make possible a reign of peace and moral order on earth.

When God gives to us benefits that enrich us in some way and helps us to get through the hard times because of His goodness and grace, our response should be thankfulness, gratitude and devotion to Him. When God allows difficulties to come upon us, we need to remember He has the right to do, or allow to happen, that which is for His sovereign purposes, not necessarily our comfort or well-being. It is incumbent on us to be patient in trials; to wait quietly with grace and acceptance; to put our hope in Him even when we have questions; and to seek Him and serve Him with all our hearts in spite of what our human desires are.

Isaiah 26:3-4. *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever: for the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”*

PERFECT PEACE.

By its very nature, peace is there, or it is not.
It can't be a “half-way” peace like a passing thought.
It is a matter of a promise that is made by the Lord -
When the mind and heart are truly fixed on God.

The Lord gave His peace to those who had followed Him.
That kind of peace is inward when there's a work of God within.
That “peace with God” was made by the highest price,
When the Lord Jesus made peace by the blood of His cross.

There is an outward peace that is often seen in the faces
Of those who the path of God's dealing with us, our mind retraces.
We consider where we came from and now where we are -
The on-going “peace of God” strengthens us in each trying hour.

When the conscience is at peace, there is spiritual rest.
We find our comfort in the Lord who has continually blessed
Us with much from the storehouse of His boundless grace -
And gives us His peace in this turbulent place.

The mind is at peace when it is focused on God.
In times of potential unrest, we consider the path He trod.
Though crowds gathered around Him; some to mock and to scorn -

He never retaliated, even when wearing the crown of thorns.

His eyes and His heart were fixed on what pleased His Father.
Our peace comes from Him too; not what the world has to offer.
Simple trust in the Lord is the practice of a precept that works.
There is a lasting peace from the Lord Jehovah of everlasting worth.

So even though the perilous times long predicted are now here -
I don't lose my peace because I know the Lord is always near.
His strength is unabated, and His promises still stand.
My mind is at peace; and my times are in His hands.

"I thank Thee, O God, for peace that has been given as a give of Thy love. It is real to me, even though these are troublesome times and many seem to be in a state of turmoil. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 27

GOD IS THE DEFENDER

Concluding with chapter twenty-seven, fifteen chapters have been prophecies relating to the world around in a general way, and to some nations specifically. Judgments locally, and the tribulation at the end of the age give descriptions as to what was coming. The last two verses of this chapter give us the end of the story when Israel as a recovered nation worships the Lord at Jerusalem where He reigns as the Sovereign seated on David's throne. Leviathan, the seven-headed monster of Canaanite mythology, represents the seven successive world empires. The illustration of evil, and the chaos and confusion of sin under the influence of the devil, will be dealt with by the power of God Himself. The enemies of God's people will be destroyed. Israel will be defended but scattered during the "time of Jacob's trouble." Then at the end of the tribulation that serpent will be bound, and the Lord will rejoice over His own delivered people.

The Lord does rejoice, when in repentance and self-judgment, His people return to Him. He rejoices over the fruitfulness of His people like a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. God desires to protect His people and to bless them even though they are ungrateful, unthankful and are self-centered, self-serving people who think they are independent of God. Like Israel, God's people cannot escape the punishment of sin, but that is to bring about change in behavior that is needed in order to be who God intends us to be.

God protects His people but allows enemies opportunity to bring about the judgment need to recover them to the place where they call upon Him. He will protect them from being overwhelmed, and He even gives Israel's enemies opportunity to respond to His grace and offered forgiveness. Those who reject, deny and defy God will be forever lost. Israel will survive through the trials that will come on those "who received Him not." The Gospel began with the message of personal salvation taking "root" in Jacob, "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." It has spread world-wide as branches of the wild olive have been "grafted in" to the good olive tree. Now no longer are we divided but have been made "one in Christ."

God will gather His earthly people from wherever they are and have been scattered. He permits opposition against Jews for as long as He chooses, but they will be chastened with the view of them becoming a fruitful people. The deliberate ignorance and faithlessness that accompanies rebellion and disobedience toward God by any person or nation, will bring appropriate consequences. The objective behind such chastening and "pruning" is to bring back fruitfulness. When Israel will abandon all forms of idolatry in the same way we must "seek first the kingdom of God," then they will bring forth "fruit that will remain."

Fruitless branches are only fit to be burned. Whether deadness comes from external winds of pressure from without, or from the deadness of internal corruption, a dead branch is cut off. It has no value. Neither is any person who is fruitless for God. Many seek to defeat the work of God and replace faith with existentialism in one form or another. We can be comforted though with the confidence that what God begins, He completes. "He that began a good work in you, will perform it..." A chastened person or nation can again be useful to God.

Israel will return from their long exile which was foreshadowed by the return of some of the Jews from Babylon to the promised land. Nothing like what will happen has even been done before, but in the case of Israel it will be because of God's covenant promises with them as a nation. Israel will become fruitful to God again, and the whole world will come to know God through the blessings that come to the Jews. Israel will yet have to face the fact that by ignoring the law of God and seeking to be independent of Him, they will only fail. God has and will permit chastisement of them by other nations and powers, but when repentance is real and restoration to God, not just to be an independent nation, is accomplished, then God will deal with those who hated Jews. When people defy divine authority, just vengeance will come in God's appointed time.

Sin in every way is opposition to the character of God and cannot be allowed to escape justice and judgment. Israel's temporary regathering after the prophecy of Isaiah was given, and during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah did not bring in the fulfillment of his prophecy. God will chasten Israel, His chosen people. He will destroy forever those who came against Israel. The Assyrians, the Babylonians, and all the way to the empire of the antichrist will be defeated and destroyed.

The peace man "makes with Me" mentioned in verse five, is not salvation but submission to government. Peace with God comes from God to us through Him who "made peace through the blood of His cross." He gives us His peace and our peace with Him is totally His doing, not ours. When that time of peace comes, the purpose of a vineyard will become a reality in the case of Israel. A vineyard is to produce joy and satisfaction from the fruit it brings forth. It will be between individuals in the coming day in the same way repentance and faith is needed by individuals today.

Isaiah 27:6. *"He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."*

GOOD FRUIT.

The vineyard was trampled; the vines were broken down.
There was no fruit to gather, none was anywhere to be found.
The empires of the world had conquered and taken away -
God's chosen people: since then it has been a fruitless day.
But God has kept His eye on that vineyard so there still are the roots -
And when the right time comes, there will come forth good shoots.
The true Israel of God will be the channel through which the world is blessed.
Good fruit will be found when the world is finally at rest.

Through trials and suffering God's people have survived.
In the time yet to come when the vineyard is revived -
The spread of righteousness will bring an end to sin's awful power.
God will in righteousness and justice, on the whole world shower
The benefits of His vineyard, though for centuries it has been hid.
People will marvel at the grace of the Lord in spite of what His people did -
When they rejected the Savior, His covenant and His Word -
They then will be able share in the blessings of the Lord.

The first world-wide blessing that came from the vineyard was when -
The Savior was here, and though He was despised and rejected of men,
He did fulfill the plan of redemption which He paid for by His death -
And made it possible for His Gospel to be spread over all the earth.
Now there are Christians to be found on every continent and clime -
The root of Jacob brought good fruit through Christ at that special time.
Now there are millions who have tasted and seen that it is good.
In the future, as at present, the world is blessed by that fruit.

"O God, I know all over the world there are Jews waiting for Messiah to come. I am thankful that I learned early in life that He has come to save me and will come again to receive me to Himself. In view of that wonderful blessing, I pray that in the conversations before us this day, we will be able to help people appreciate the blessings we already have. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 28

JUDGMENT ON SAMARIA

The next six chapters of Isaiah are a series of five prophecies concerning woes that were going to come on the unbelieving people of Israel. The decline of the moral and spiritual condition of the northern tribes is used as a warning to the people of Judah. When the Assyrians were about to conquer and destroy the northern ten tribes as a nation (Ephraim), strangely the people continued to live as if their ungodliness, excessive, licentious lifestyle would never be disrupted. Prosperity was as dangerous a deception then as it is today. When all seems so good and favorable without the interference of God in life, people can get very used to sin.

The Assyrians would not keep the covenant they made with Ephraim and Judah, Isaiah prophesied. The time would come when the Assyrians would turn on them and conquer the northern kingdom and subjugate the southern kingdom. The "bed" that was "too short" was Egypt whose aid could not stand against the violence of the Assyrians. In spite of Isaiah's preaching the people of Judah paid not attention to the moral standards of God's law or even what a common-sense kind of life should be.

Even the prophets and priests, the religious leaders, joined the population in excessive drinking. It is still a deception when those today who take the place as religious leaders, join the people of their congregations in wild parties, sexual immorality even to same-sex partners and other perversions that have been made legal by ungodly government members. The laws of men that are made to suit the lifestyle of wicked people do not excuse people from the ultimate consequences of sin.

The carnal prosperity and self-glory of the northern Jews; was in contrast to the “Lord of hosts” standing in His moral glory. He would be recognized by a few true believers who did not join in with the attitudes and actions of the majority of the population. Those few people would be given power by God to remain righteous and true to the Lord. They would be victorious when the battle for the souls of men was waged. It was not, and will never be, popular to stand out from the people as one who is committed to righteousness and morality when others want us to join them. A child of God who has the desire to please the Lord Jesus Christ, will have to stand up for their convictions and not yield to the pressure to conform to the secular norms that do not please their Lord.

The king of Judah mocked Isaiah’s warning as if it were coming from someone who was like a child. To Ahaz and those with him in leadership, Isaiah’s warning was of no account. They considered themselves to have grown up and were real men who knew all that was needed to run the nation. As far as those leaders were concerned, “precept upon precept; line upon line; here a little and there a little” was the way children who know nothing learn. But by the disaster that would come upon them which Isaiah predicted in his prophecy, they would learn their bitter lessons. Pride, complacency, pleasure seeking and apathy in the face of danger, have consequences that cannot be avoided. When that mindset is allowed in us, we are far away from God and inevitable results over which we have no control, will come. Then it is too late to change and avoid the consequences of their sins.

When they finally realized the alliance, they made with Assyrian wasn’t worth the paper it was written on, it was too late to make any changes. When people make an agreement with “hell,” there is no reason to think it will be honored. The devil is a deceiver and a liar. Those who follow him are the same. Deception and lies characterize the interests of hell, and one who makes “lies” their refuge, will find themselves conquered by that which Satan sends upon them. The Lord’s people are not immune from falling for such deceptions when they are made by false teachers and prophets who make claims that are not scriptural.

God’s foundation, and the basis of Israel’s safety was the Person and work of the Messiah. True Israel and the true church are built upon that “tried Stone,” that “precious Cornerstone,” that “sure Foundation.” There are no cracks or faults in that Precious Cornerstone that is of far greater value than the whole world. It is He who makes the difference between heaven and hell for sinners. To believe on Him preserves a person from being “put to shame” and from being excited or alarmed when the foes of God’s people attack. The false foundation of the worldly wise will be swept away, and the alliances men make with deceptive men is a false refuge. Such agreements are a “covenant with death.”

David defeated the Philistines at Mount Perizim and that is where the Lord would defeat His own covenant children who ignored, rejected and despised Him. That “strange act,” that unusual act, was caused by the disobedience of the people to their own Lord. How sad but necessary is the chastening hand of the Lord upon His own people. For those who are believers who are away in heart from Him, that action is a blessing that can lead to recovery. Those who know what is right but reject divine authority, will be punished and lost to God forever.

This sermon/prophecy contains certain principles of life that any farmer knows. A farmer plows his ground, but not just for the sake of plowing. He does that so he can have a prepared seed bed for the seed to be planted. But planting is not an end in itself, any more than plowing. The farmer is plowing and planting in view of a harvest that will meet needs and satisfy hunger. He uses whatever tool is suitable and needed to produce the desired results. That is why God had to use the “plow” of the Assyrians to break up the smug complacency and fallow ground of Israel. Let us never think we are immune from the chastening hand of God, who uses whatever means He chooses to correct us and change our misbehavior into obedience and righteousness. “Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.” The pruning process of the orchardist is to produce more, and better, fruit. It is a blessing in the end when the “peaceable fruits of righteousness” follow the times of testing and trial.

Isaiah 28:16. *“Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.”*

PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE.

God’s people had placed their confidence in men who had no fear of God.
They should have known better, these same were defeated when Israel followed the Lord.
But Israel had turned and measured their strength in a way similar to others.
The result was predictable, they would surrender in defeat, not following the way of their fathers.

What was one time their strength, now has gone, giving way to debilitating weakness.
Where once they were honorable and sensitive, now they are given to excesses.
Even the spiritual leaders are following the people down the path of open shame.
What they once taught now has been despised; they have brought dishonor upon God's name.

Those who teach are making a mockery of it, teaching like children to do and do.
In foolish simplicity that makes scorners laugh, they add rule on rule on rule.
The people would not be taught, they had the attitude, "We'll make up our own minds."
The end of such a mind-set is some other power will teach you: no deliverance will you find.

So, if God's people refuse, He carries out His will through others.
Those from foreign places are available to Him; God uses them to further His causes.
God is in no way limited to use those just like us - His plans will be done in His way.
Those He has favored and blessed are by-passed for those who will do what He says.

God is the Sovereign and His kingdom will last, of that fact there is no doubt.
There is a Cornerstone, a firm foundation that is laid before there is a redoubt.
The Precious Cornerstone is a sure foundation, there is no room for man's feeble plans.
God is building His kingdom - not on dreams or human success: on a tested Stone, not on sand.

That Precious Cornerstone is the Lord Jesus Himself, He is the Messiah of Israel to come.
On the firm foundation of His Person and work, there is established a people for His name.
That kingdom is a kingdom of priests, each one able to worship and praise.
Because of that Cornerstone, when they meet, glory to God they raise.

"Father God, I may not have gotten every word right, but You know I can see the need of Thy people getting back to the Lord and building their lives on the Precious Cornerstone. All the human interferences in Thy revealed plans must grieve Thee. I ask Thee to keep me today from misrepresenting Thee or Thy Word in any way. May my mind be clear and open to the directing of Thy Holy Spirit as I prepared for tomorrow and days yet to come. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 29

JUDGED, BUT NOT FORSAKEN

The second of the woes in this part of Isaiah's prophecy is on the city of Ariel, another name for Jerusalem. Likely the name change was because the city would be razed and not be much more than a hearth before the altar. However, as "the hearth of God," as "the lion of God," it would rise again to take a place of prominence in relation to Israel's enemies. That position has been forfeited because of sin. False formality had taken the place of holy worship. They were offering valueless sacrifices instead of true worship and an acknowledgement of the power of the Almighty Lord of Hosts. The Jews had entered into valueless military alliances which they thought would preserve them rather than basing their faith of the promises of God.

Such practices are going on today as the people of God who once had rested their faith and practice on the word of God alone, now enter into ecumenical alliances which are of no value to the furtherance of the kingdom of God. Such alliances perhaps have an objective of making Christianity popular, but biblical Christianity is based on faith in Christ and His word, not numbers of people who attend churches. In order to have a form of unity among different beliefs, compromise of truth is necessary and that is abhorrent to the Lord. Such formalism was what Isaiah was warning the people of his day about.

The careless Jews had to be humbled before the Lord, because they had lost their unique character as the people of God. The same happens today when the Lord's people try to adapt to the people around whose lifestyle and fads change to suit the will of the people and what is acceptable to the attractions of our fleshly nature. We should rather seek to bring people to faith in the Lord through the scriptures of truth. It is then they will understand the importance of the people of God being unique by living "quiet and peaceful lives in all godliness and honesty." It is our difference, not our "sameness" that makes true Christianity attractive to the sincere seeker after God.

In Isaiah's day neither the people nor the religious leaders represented what God intended to be a visible expression of Himself and His people before the ungodly world. Spiritual poverty was cause for great concern for the prophet Isaiah. How much more of a concern would it have been for the Lord. When religious practice becomes routine instead of real, people are satisfied to go through the motions on the Lord's day and do what they want at other times, even to the extent of disobedience to God and His word. All of us can practice hypocrisy when we are willing to just go through rituals and the appearance of worship.

Warnings given ahead of time provide opportunity for genuine repentance and recovery. In the case of the people of Israel, repentance didn't happen so understandable consequences were coming. The Assyrians laid siege to Jerusalem, but the Lord intervened. In verses five through eight we read the Lord arranged things for the siege to be lifted miraculously in one night. It is a sad commentary on the human mindset, that when such things happen, they give themselves "high-fives" and self-congratulation because they have no understanding and no desire to know the truth. Often blind "spiritual advisers" who do not know the Lord personally, lead congregations of people in "worship" that has no reality to it because it is based on their own definition of worship. There is no consciousness of God's knowledge and what He desires from His people.

God's people are expected to be obedient to Him and to love Him. That will lead to sincere and honest worship of the Lord in ways that please Him, rather than the programs of a "ministry" that pleases people who want to be entertained. People who live without the consciousness of God with them, don't really know much about God, or they may not know Him at all. God knows every thought and intent of our hearts. There is nothing hid from Him. Such lack of "God consciousness" has permeated into the minds and lives of God's people so that they are more concerned with being "people conscious," "seeker friendly," "committed to relevance" than commitment to divine Persons and divine truth. Some people who are blinded by their own skepticism, cynicism and unbelief, even though they are highly educated religious people, cannot understand grace, faith, truth and spiritual light. Willful blindness leads to a strong delusion. The spiritual blindness of the spiritual leaders and some of the false prophets who should have guided the people of Israel in the ways of God, was going to bring down judgment on them.

Rebellion toward God brings with it, spiritual insensitivity because people are deliberately blinded and deaf to the word and will of God. The false prophets of Judah were blind guides to them. The word of God was sealed to them even though it was plain and clear to faithful prophets. To those counterfeit believers the truth of God was incomprehensible and irrelevant to those who were more "up to date." They were of the opinion they knew much more than their forefathers and those who were "bound" to the Bible. They couldn't make head nor tail of what was the plain truth of God because it didn't agree with their preconceived notions and the narrative they had planned.

Those who draw near to God with "their mouths," and "with their lips they honor [God]," are far from Him in their hearts. Artificial religious forms without sincere love for God are denounced. Even their "fear of God" is artificial. Their professed love for God is not sincere; their counsel was without wisdom and understanding. They turned things around to be mere humanism without true values and put man at the top. Even though God created them, in their minds they believed they knew better than God. But that is not the end of the prophecy.

Isaiah looked ahead and beyond the present distress the people of Judah were in and in his prophesy brought hope. When Messiah comes to deliver His people, man in his pride, like the Assyrians (Lebanon) will be brought down. In its place there will be fruitfulness and blessing. Even believers today who are fruitful for the Lord, may become careless and indifferent, willingly blind, deaf and spiritually poverty stricken. God will arrange for those who are humble among God's people, to rise to a place where their joy in the Lord, and their joyous hymns will give honor to the One whose name is above every name. The materialists and those who have dominated because of their position will be cut off. Those were the people who were strict and made a "man an offender for a word," but they will find no place as they are bypassed by divine authority.

The millennium will unveil what has not been seen or understood by Israel and God's people for centuries. It is the acceptance of God's word as truth that removes vain imaginations from the minds of people. Israel will not be ashamed when they finally put their hope in God, honor His name, submit to His leadership and recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as the Holy One of God. Even though they failed and fell, God's steadfast love for them will not be withheld forever. They will open their hearts to the truth of the Lord Jesus being their Messiah and will become a godly and reverent people who will bring glory to their Redeemer.

In the day when Messiah comes to Israel and our Lord Jesus Christ reigns and rules in righteousness, life will be much different than it is today. God's people will be recovered to the Lord. They will be enlightened to the truth and reality of God's promises and covenant. They will be restored to reality in divine things. There will be full recognition on the part of all people that the Lord has all power and authority in heaven and on earth. His wisdom and His authority will bring the peace and fullness of life on earth as God originally intended it to be.

Isaiah 29:13. *"Wherefore the Lord said, forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:"*

THE MOTIONS.

The spoken words flow from the speaker's lips, well thought out, but without power.
The words seem right, the songs and hymns seem appropriate to the hour.
To look on from a distance you would think all is well; this is the way it should be.

However, if I could look through God's eyes, what exactly would I see?

When they approach the place where God meets with them together, is their appearance what really counts?

As they join their voices to worship and praise, is it from the heart or just their mouths?
In demeanor when sitting and listening to others; are they as one when bowed in prayer?
Is the focus on God and the purpose of gathering, or are they wondering why some are not there?

As the Bible is opened and the words of truth are read, do they follow along in their book?
Or are they distracted by what another is wearing and wonder how they themselves look?
As the explanations are given regarding truths contained in the reading and text -
Is there real desire to learn from God's Word, or are they wondering what's happening next?

Are the thoughts expressed taken personally, or do we try to fit them to another?
Do we accept the correction found there, or apply them to another sister or brother?
When the exhortations are made, do we accept them humbly, or is there something deep inside -
That steels itself against the admonition, and we feel they have injured our pride?

Do the children that watch their mothers and fathers, wonder with amazement at the change -
Of facial expressions and tone of voice - is it different here than at the home place?
Is there consistency here that is the same as at home, or are parents different when people are looking?
Does father use the same words when he speaks out loud; is mother's expression the same when she's cooking?

It is possible that we draw near to God in appearance but not in the heart.
If that is the case, then we must stop the sham, and resolve to make a new start.
Worship and service only have meaning if they are honest and true.
Those who look on, and God Himself; they are reading "The Gospel according to you!"

"O Gracious Father, please help me not to be a fake! In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 30

WHERE YOU PLACE YOUR CONFIDENCE

There are principles of Christian living that are not only common sense but are tried and proven by people of faith. And yet, many people will not accept as true or real anything they have not done themselves. Thousands of believers in Christ have passed on what they have learned and experienced, and we have the written word of God as our source of information, plus the Holy Spirit as our divine Teacher. But still, because of the independent of natural man, those people think they have to learn by themselves what they could learn from others. Consequently, the same mistakes and sins are done over and over again.

When we place our confidence on human counsel instead of divine wisdom and counsel, that is an affront to God. In this chapter a "woe" is pronounced on those people who are not willing to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Instead they turn to the wisdom of this world (Egypt). Such counsel and the worldly alliance they made was futile and deceptive. Those who promote that kind of attitude and action are condemned by the Lord.

Often in times of stress we look for human solutions rather than relying on our Lord. Because of its "shadowless" light, truth makes some people uncomfortable. We are better to be uncomfortable instead of deceived. God does things in His time and ways, and He will give us the needed grace to go through trials and testing times with dignity and faith. In grace, He is waiting for us to come to Him. In faithfulness, He is ready and willing to forgive and cleanse us when we confess our sins and forsake them.

The prophet Isaiah wrote that those who should be leading the people of God needed to be aware of the fact that the ways of the world are not only deceptive, but they are sinful, even though they may seem to be advantageous at the time. Often compromises are made by those who would rather do nothing instead of taking the responsibility God gave them to make wise and godly decisions. Such decisions may be unpopular at the time, but when we place our confidence in God, we can rest in faith that the outcome will be right.

Isaiah was charged by God to make it a matter of public record that he was displeased with the people of Judah who rejected God's word and willfully displeased the Lord. For that attitude and the fact that they put their confidence in the alliance they made with the Egyptians, divine justice would crush them. The writing on the tablet and on the scroll would record the fact they had brought justice down on themselves. The humiliation divine chastening would bring was because of the sinful actions of God's people. In this age of lawlessness and adapting national laws to the will of

the people, toleration of evil and open wickedness becomes the vogue. Resentment against the righteous standards of conduct leads to open rebellion and chaos because to many, sin is what they say it is rather than what God says.

The people of Judah did not want to hear “right things.” They did not want to hear about the God of the Bible. They did not want to admit to their own helplessness. They did not want to face the outcome of their failed alliance and schemes to deal with the ungodly around them. They did not want to be disturbed by the truth. They wanted an unrighteous love that made them feel good about themselves and did not condemn anything they did. The same attitude is prevalent today in modern society, and particularly in this country.

When we despise and reject God’s word, life will be shattered like a wall that breaks and falls, or a piece of pottery that is broken into small pieces that are impossible to be put together again. By nature, human beings want to do their own thing in their own way and in their own time. To repent of our own sin is not how people deal with the consequences of sin when it catches up with them. They blame their environment, their friends, their parents, their church, the Bible teaching they received when young – anything they can think of to excuse themselves from the consequences of their own choices. Real repentance faces personal sin and guilt before God, and deliberately turns away from it. When that happens and the sin and wrong actions are rejected, they will find it easy to put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. An easy “believism” has made many people think they are Christians because of the words that say, rather than the work of Christ on behalf of a guilty person who knows they deserve the just judgment of God.

The Lord called His people through the prophets to “return” to Him in repentance and they would be saved. Then the rest, quietness and confidence He gives would save them from defeat and disaster. But no, they put their trust in the Egyptians and the horses of the Egyptian army instead of in the Lord of hosts, the Holy One of Israel. Because of that choice, they would not be able to resist the enemy that would come even if the balance was one thousand to one in their favor. Very few would even survive the coming disaster that would befall them. How foolish it is to think that we can overcome the world, the flesh and the devil by our own strength. Our Lord is near unto all that call upon Him out of a pure heart.

In this chapter the prophecy changes from the futility of placing confidence in man and national alliances, to the faithfulness of God as He waits for the repentant remnant to return to Him. Our God is a God of justice, but He is also a God of all grace. The faithful remnant would experience His kindness and grace, even though they will be persecuted and afflicted. God will never fail and those who wait in faith. They will be blessed. When we look to God in child-like faith, and refuse to look to the world for strength to deal with trials, we, like the people of Judah, will find rest in our souls, quietness in our lives and confidence as we look ahead. Self-confidence and self-effort of any kind will fail to overcome enemies that are greater than us. When we “resist the devil,” the Lord gives the victory that makes him flee. When we live in faith, God gives “the victory that overcomes the world.” When we “crucify the flesh and the lusts thereof,” God empowers us to “live in the Spirit.” Disobedience on our part will only bring us to ruin. Anything that sidetracks us needs to be confessed as sin and forsaken permanently.

When God blesses His people in the future, the day of great slaughter will be passed, and the kingdom peace will be real. Zion will be a place of blessing, safety, security and peace. The teaching and learning times of trials and troubles will have done their work. Those who learned to wait on the Lord will be given guidance and instruction from the Lord who says, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” The false teachers and blind guides will never save them, nor will the worldly gods of idolatry. Millennial blessings will come to the Jews, and like them, we too will forever find our joy in God.

The rebellious nations of the world will experience the wrath of God poured out upon them to a far greater extent than even the Assyrians did to Israel in the north. The Lord stopped the Assyrians at the gates of Jerusalem in one night, and He will stop that united nations of the world that will be arrayed against the Jews, and the Lord, with a great and terrible victory. Blessings will come on the Jews and those who assisted them when the day of the Lord comes. The wicked will be cast into outer darkness (Tophet) and man’s day will be over.

Isaiah 30:21. *“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”*

THE RIGHT WAY.

The Lord is gracious, waiting for you to return unto Him and rest.
He has waited long and patiently for you to be blessed.
And He will bless you abundantly; in fact, He already has.
Further, if you will acknowledge Him, He promised to direct your path.

His mercy is upon you, it has been continually there; it endures forever.
Choose the right way and He will honor you, the bond of love He’ll not sever.
Mercy waits there though justice calls out; mercy holds justice at bay.

Return to the Holy One, rebel no longer, that is the true and right way.

God will be exalted when you trust Him completely; in wisdom He dispenses His judgment.
He sees beyond the externals mortal men see. His grace will provide a fulfillment.
In quietness of soul and confidence in God, you will find your needed strength.
If you return to the Lord, that very action will provide the essential link.

There are certain fundamental things that are needed; the first is to hear God's Word.
That becomes real to us when we set aside time to wait upon the Lord.
What we will hear is, "This is the way..." then God expects us to walk in its light.
When we are listening and heeding His voice, we will know the way is right.

Some things must go if we want the right way; idols must always be cast away.
Anything that takes the place of the Lord, will stumble and lead us astray.
There are choices to be made that I cannot avoid, it is my responsibility to take them in hand.
Consequences will arise but I must quickly act and take the results like a man.

When we return to the Lord and wait on Him there, we will find Him waiting for us.
The voice that is behind us that comes from God, is that of One we can totally trust.
The right way is the one He wants for each of us, but He gives us the right to choose.
I will take counsel from Him and act on His direction, lest the right way I may fatally loose.

"O Gracious God; speak to Thy servant here and now I pray, lest I make some mistake and get out of the way of Thy leading. Help me to know and act on that voice from Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 31

GOD, NOT EGYPT

The warnings of the Lord through Isaiah in chapter thirty didn't move the king of Judah and his advisors to repentance, so Isaiah was instructed by the Lord to repeat the same warning. A recapitulation of the previous chapter is given in this chapter in an abbreviated form. It is common to human beings to have to be told again and again things they do not want to hear. For some reason part of human nature resists what someone else tells them to do, especially if it is to act in faith rather than by sight. "The just shall live by faith." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." It is not only "the substance (realization) of things hoped for," but it is also "the evidence (confidence) of things not seen."

For the leaders of Judah to turn back to an alliance with the Egyptians, is like believers today turning back into the world to escape the pressure of holy living in an ungodly world, hoping to find what they think is significance in life. Disaster comes to those who trust human strength and compromising alliances rather than to put their trust in God. People of faith who are committed to God and His word, know that temporary worldly success does not last. Instead of being a blessing, it is bondage to an ungodly system and the sins that make it attractive to the carnal man.

God is faithful to us, but our attitudes and actions may make it necessary for Him to withhold what He had intended for us. There is no lasting profit to the works of the flesh and the attractions of the world. The devil uses both of them to attempt to keep us from "glorifying God in our bodies and spirits which are His." The power and value of that which is of the world is very short-lived and cannot be compared to the power of the Lord and the value of eternal things.

In Isaiah's day the power of the Assyrians seemed unstoppable until the Lord stepped in and destroyed the Assyrian army in one night. That will happen again to nations allied against the Jews. But God will defend Jerusalem without help from any man or nation. He is as bold and as invincible as a lion. He is as watchful over His own as a bird is over her young in the nest. The "flaming fire" of divine vengeance on those who don't know God, and don't want to know God, will take place in the future in a similar way as happened to the Assyrians.

When the Jews respond to the call to repentance of sin, the rejection of idolatry and a willing heart to turn to the Lord, He will act on their behalf. To put away all that is evil in practice and belief, involves discarding all competing spiritual counterfeits and committing without reservation to the Lord. When that action is genuine, we have the assurance that God will do what is needed. He will deal with our enemies. No army or nation of our choosing will defeat the enemy, but an act of divine intervention will leave no question to the people of God, whether they be us now, or the Jews in the future as to who the Deliverer is. He is the Lord God.

The "stronghold" of Assyria fled from their attempt to capture Jerusalem when the "ensign" or banner of the Lord was raised over His people. In the future day of His appearing all nations will recognize that the reason such a despised people as the children of Israel has survived while other empires have long since passed into oblivion, is because of the grace, mercy and power of God. He keeps His covenant. Covenants of men and nations like Egypt fail.

Isaiah 31:1. *“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not to the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!”*

MISPLACED TRUST.

There the leaders go again seeking an unholy alliance -
Not realizing arrogance can go both ways, and they will come back to defy us.
Why is the lesson of faith so hard to learn?
Why is the will of God so easy to spurn?
Why in trouble do we still, to weak men turn?
Stop! The ultimate ways of the world-alliances are to betray us.

A friend you've known for years has a wonderful plan.
He insists it is legitimate, not some kind of a scam.
If you loan him your money and follow his lead -
In a short time, you will be rich and have all you'll need -
Just take his advice and to his guidance give heed -
Stop! Don't give in to his plea; don't even think about it; he is a deceitful man.

Someone says there's a miraculous cure that has been found.
It is based on some common things that come from the ground.
For just a few dollars right at the start -
This cure starts to work right at the heart -
There are small monthly payments that won't even hurt -
Stop! Take time to research and see if this scheme is in any way sound.

If the words are, “I know it's not in the Bible, but I assure you it is true.”
Someone has decided to make a target out of you.
They come to you with some words from their book-
And tell you of the findings of this new way they took-
Just follow them and you will soon have a new out-look.
Stop! Do not forsake God for them and the truths you know.

When we turn away from the biblical ways of the Lord,
And neglect prayer and the regular reading of God's Word -
We are in danger of falling -
And of hearing strange voices calling -
And may end up foolishly following
Ungodly men instead of the known will of God.

“O All-Wise God: I know there are strange attractions that hold promises that are unfounded. Yet many of Thy people seem to think that they can trust in money, in human advice, in strange doctrines and forsake Thy truth for them. Help me this day to give biblical counsel regarding living the Christian life in an ungodly world. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 32

FINALLY DELIVERED – SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

In Judah, the same as in Israel to the north, the people had suffered from injustice from self-exalting rulers. This prophecy of Isaiah was to let them see ahead to when the True King in the future comes, and reveals the contrast between the drunken crooked rulers they knew and the King who will rule in righteousness and justice. In the kingdom of God, rulers will be known for who they really are, not the false pretense many put before the people hoping they do not see beyond the façade they have erected around themselves. In that day the wicked will not be praised and the righteous will not be considered fools.

When the Lord Jesus Christ reigns, righteousness will be established and maintained. Injustice, and the suffering it causes, will expose the fools for who they really are even if they were previously the nobles who were in the place of leadership. Deception and those who oppose the holy standards of God's law, will be revealed for what it is in the light of the holiness of our Savior/King. That “Light” which lightens every man, exposes a sinner in his moral and spiritual darkness, making sin become very real and abhorrent. That is when a lost soul faces himself in the light of God's holiness and comes to Christ for salvation. No longer does one who is saved walk in darkness, but has the light of life in his/her soul.

Those who accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their own Savior, find that the light of the word of God gives the knowledge and understanding that is needed for living for the Lord. There is divinely implanted a desire for the word

of God and a motivation to please God that is natural to the new nature God gives a new-born soul. The counterfeit and crafty deceivers will be exposed for who they really are and will be dealt with by divine justice. No longer will they be able to deceive, teach or control others.

The Perfect King will administer perfect righteousness on the earth. He will provide shelter for those who seek Him and the safety He gives from enemies. The spiritually thirsty souls will be satisfied with the water of life that He freely gives. Our Lord Jesus who protects us, provides spiritual nourishment for us through His word and preserves us from the powers of darkness now, will do the same for His people the Jews in a coming day. The fellowship we have with God and His people now, and their holy fellowship with each other, is a preserving and protecting power in these days of departure from divine truth. These are present blessings for those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each person who has been born again is in the kingdom of God now, and has been given spiritual eyesight to be able to understand divine things. The new life and new nature we have makes us want to live for God. Our King and Lord Jesus demonstrated His love for us, "in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The motive of love for Christ in a redeemed soul overpowers every other issue in the life of a true, born again child of God.

When the righteous government and authority of our Lord is world-wide, the deception of the devil will no longer manipulate the affairs of people. The world will be under new and righteous management, and "the fleshly lusts that war against the soul," will not run unchecked. God's holy standard of justice will be the rule by which life on earth will be guided. Just judgments will not be compromised, nor will unfair or partial decisions be the character of the government of the righteous King.

Isaiah issued a very stern, powerful and intimidating warning against those women in the high society of Jerusalem who were living for pleasure and only for the moment. They had become so used to the "good life," that they thought they were quite secure in the lifestyle they were enjoying. Pleasure, luxury and self-serving activities consume the lives of those who indulge themselves in carnal living and seeking to fulfill selfish desires. The time will come when all they lived for will be taken away. Then they will realize how foolish a life lived without God or the fear of God really is.

The warning from Isaiah was that all they had lived for was coming to an end. They would become poverty stricken with nothing to eat, and their fancy houses and great estates would be demolished. The fields would cover over the rubble and they would become barren wilderness covered with weeds, thorns and scrub brush. The defeat of Jerusalem under the power of Babylon as well as the terrible time of the tribulation are in this prophecy. But He also prophesied beyond the ruin of the land when the people God wanted to bless turned their backs on Him for pleasure and self-centered living.

The promises of God to His people include the two comings of the Holy Spirit. First, he came to baptize all true believers in Christ in our day into the body of Christ, the church. The power of the Holy Spirit indwelling God's people today has made possible the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. When the Jews are brought back as a people to their Messiah, the Holy Spirit will be poured out on them. The great spiritual awakening at the day of Pentecost has impacted the world for two thousand years and people are being brought into the family of God by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God. When our Lord reigns, and righteousness and peace are realities on earth, human pride and power will be dealt with by the righteous judgments of the Lord. Tranquility will be established and there will full and plenty for every man, woman and child in the kingdom of God on earth.

Isaiah 32:1-2. *"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."*

A STRONG KING.

Times may be tough for you now, but just wait for a coming day.

A king is coming to reign who will deal with evil in His own way.

His reign will be in righteousness, his judgments will always be fair.

There won't be pockets of good and bad, His justice will be everywhere.

There won't be permissive evil, or sin that is ignored or hid.

The Strong King, God's Son, knows everything you did.

When He reigns, there will finally be lasting peace such as has never been known.

The grace and truth He brought, will be under the jurisdiction of His royal throne.

Those He will designate to be rulers over various cities -

Will be under His authority and rule in justice and righteous pity.

Their role will be to carry out His wishes under the power of His name

Righteousness and justice will be recognized as beginning when the King came.

Citizens will find there is an ear to hear as these princes make decisions.

They will find a whole new kind of government that is carried out with precision.

The population will soon learn under this Strong King's reign -

This is what God intended when He first created man.

But between then and now; however long that will be -
There is evil going on in the world; there is not righteousness nor equity.
As the days go by, more and more men's hearts fail them for fear.
They are afraid of what is around them, and more afraid that God is near.
However, there are a few who want to please God and have Him reign over them.
They realize even in these days, we can have peace and fellowship with Him
Who is still being rejected by the world who wants its own way -
But when the Strong King comes, He will bring in a brand-new day.

“Father, help me to be faithful to Thee and Thy Word today. Please give Thy servant the understanding to be relevant to the needs of the people as You know them. May Thy Word be received in the spirit in which it is given, and may my spirit be in tune and fellowship with Thy Holy Spirit. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 33

JUDGE, LAWGIVER, KING

This last “woe” is directed toward Assyria as it relates to the coming invasion of Judah. The immediate circumstances in which Judah was found was called for in this warning from the prophet. It was also a warning to the Jews of what would come in a later time before the Lord Jesus Christ comes to establish His kingdom on earth. The principle of reaping what we sow is true in nations as well as in individuals. Assyria will reap what it sowed, and will reap more than it sowed. God will save His people because He is faithful to His word and the covenant, He made with them, even though they were not faithful to Him. The Assyrian empire was like a bully nation among nations, but they had never run up against a holy God who is just and judges both nations and people with strength and authority. His infinite strength far exceeds any power of any nation, or even all nations put together.

When the danger to the people of Judah was obvious, Isaiah told them they would make their appeal to the Lord to deliver them, and it happened like he said when Hezekiah was king. His humility and God-given knowledge and wisdom, brought the blessing of a short revival under his leadership. Assyria was turned back over-night. In this prophecy against Assyria, a covenant of peace had been made but they broke it. The consequences were such that ultimately nothing remained of Assyria but ashes.

Betrayal and unfaithfulness are characteristics of those who live for themselves without a thought for what pleases God or what He wants for us to do for Him and others. Trustworthiness, integrity and fairness should be characteristics that mark those who know the Lord. It is God's intention that we should live “holy, righteously and godly in this present world.” Integrity and honesty should be normal characteristics in believers who live for the Lord. Believers are to commit themselves to living by, and acting on, the promises of God, in faith and unreserved trust.

In this prophecy the unbelieving Jews were warned that they too will be afraid when God steps in to deal with those who profess to be the people of God but were not. Hypocrites would suffer the same fate as the Assyrians who would come against them. “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites.” They too would suffer the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings even though they were in a place of blessing in Zion. Those who are “sinners in Zion,” will realize they cannot survive in the presence of the Lord's holiness. Only those who know the Lord and “walk in the light as He is in the light,” can actually live with God.

Believers who live godly lives and follow the Lord will find themselves secure in spite of all that will go on around them. When a child of God is committed to doing His will, the Lord protects and defends that person. In spite of personal weakness and the futility of the help of vain man, God steps in with power and grace to do what we, nor anyone else, can do. Those who know the Lord, do put their trust in Him who is “our salvation” for the past, present and future. When His kingdom comes, righteousness, wisdom and knowledge will shine out to the world from Zion because He who is “the Light of the world,” and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, will be the Supreme Authority.

The last part of the prophecy in this chapter is a look ahead to the millennium when we will “see the King in His beauty.” The enemies of the Jews in the future, like the Assyrians in the past, will be totally removed. When “the times of the Gentiles” is passed, Zion – Jerusalem will be a peaceful place. It will be a safe and well protected city; not because of some mere man, but because the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will deliver and preserve them. Even though they are helpless in themselves, this security is in the strength of the Lord who is like a battleship guarding His people who have been forgiven of their sins, and granted spiritual healing from their Messiah.

We learn for ourselves that those God allowed to be used in chastening Israel, will find themselves brought into judgment for their own wickedness and unbelief. All the nations of the past, even the recent past, will suffer for their animosity and persecution of the Jews. The same thing will happen in the future to the antichrist and those who follow

his leadership. It is incumbent on us to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” in the same way the Lord indicated, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The remnant may be few in number, but in faith through the hard times, they will endure and be saved. They will worship with heartfelt thanksgiving when they see the fulfillment of the promises God made to them as a unique people. The Jews will again see Zion in its glory. Those who are mere professors of faith in the Lord will be afraid when their pretensions are exposed for what they really are. The holiness of God is like the everlasting burnings before which no unbeliever can survive. However, those who have been born again, will gladly submit to the authority and will of God and be forever blessed. The times of reproach and suffering will have “been worth it all, when we see Jesus.” Faithfulness to our Lord and His word will not have been in vain. “Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.”

Isaiah 33:14. *“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”*

WHERE HOLINESS IS.

In the presence of God there is joy in the saints -
But sinners look for some place to hide.
In the holy place of worship where in His glory God waits -
Those who are in their sins fear to abide.
A person still in their sins fears any light will them expose -
How much more, the light of God's holiness.
Fear that terrifies the sinners who know God sees deep into their souls,
Is because they refused the One who would have them blessed.

Some thought they were okay because they looked fine on the outside.
They were more concerned about what men saw than the Lord,
When they too are in God's presence, they will be terrified -
For God rules by what is real, not by deceitful men's words.
The hypocrites find out they are exposed through and through -
There is no way they can deceive God who knows all.
The same is true today for the Holy God knows me and you -
At the judgment is too late on Him for mercy to call.

In the presence of God there is righteousness exposing every sin -
The moral glory of the Lord contrasts the character of men.
Imputed righteousness makes God's child righteous from within -
The acceptance that allows us in, is in the great I AM.
To be able to call God “Father,” is a favor that overwhelms -
He is eternal in His being; absolute holiness is a divine feature.
Yet, fear has left my soul; in its place is a great calm -
In the presence of God, I am contented; this is a result of my new nature.

There still is a sense of awe when I speak of His holy name -
I do not come casually to Him as if He were a human friend.
He bids me come to His throne of grace; through life I often came -
And though I still come many times a day; my heart does always bend.
Because I am just a man, far away from divine perfection -
It is an unspeakable privilege to come before His holy throne.
I am grateful for my Great High Priest is always making intercession -
I don't fear the flame of His holiness; He has imputed a holiness of my own.

“O Holy God of Grace and Mercy: my heart is bowed but warmed by the great grace of divine acceptance in the Beloved. I love Thee and honor Thee here this morning in this quiet place, and I want to always, in every place. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 34

THE DESTRUCTION OF GENTILE POWER

Warnings regarding nations are given by the prophet Isaiah from chapter thirteen through chapter thirty-three. This chapter and the next one form a conclusion as to the day of vengeance and the day of blessings that will come upon the children of Israel. This prophecy describes the ultimate end of all who oppose the Lord and His people. To people of our day, it seems inconceivable that a just God would do to them what they do to each other and to their unborn children.

The Lord's fearful judgment will come on all the nations of the world that are against the Lord, of which Edom (Idumea) is the representative. We see today this attitude sweeping across nations that once had respect for God

and His word. Now our eyes “have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He hath loosed the fateful lightening of His terrible swift sword. His truth is marching on.” Now truths that once were sung in anthems, are mocked by people who have become tolerant and acceptant of open and blatant sin. Such people say that everyone has the right to believe and do what they want as long as it doesn't interfere with what other people do and want – except for Bible-believing Christians. They are considered intolerant bigots who want everyone to believe what they believe.

All the nations that will ally themselves against the Jews in a coming day, will be doomed and destroyed when the Lord goes forth to fight against them. He will return and come to the Mt. of Olives from which He left centuries ago. From there He will go forward with the plans He began with the nation of Israel before the church age. The judicial wrath of God will be poured out on all the nations that forget God and on whom the power of Satan has influenced the leadership to do what the people want, even to deny the existence of God.

The ruling powers of government and religion will fall until there is a desolation over the land that makes it impossible for them to avoid the righteous judgment of God. Nations really have no control over “the day of vengeance” which is a general term, I believe, in this passage. Nations turn their land into deserts by overgrazing. Over-fertilizing and over-spraying without giving the land a rest, and planting the same thing year after year will someday bring a lack of fruitfulness until the Lord restores it during the millennium. Even in that day nobles and leaders will not have the power to change the course of nature and events. That will be in the power of the Great Creator.

By the deception of sinful human nature, human beings are inclined to excuse themselves and blame others for all that befalls them because of their own wickedness. They blame God for not doing what they want, or for doing what they don't want as if they had the power and authority to get Him to do what they cannot. Such self-exaltation is a form of heathenism and idolatry, and it will be brought to a terrible final end. There were foreshadowing of the coming judgment when the land was laid waste by the Assyrians. It became useless property that returned to its natural state of thorns, thistles and weeds by a divine visitation of righteous judgment.

The “book of the Lord” is there for us to read and to understand by considering past prophecies that have been fulfilled. That gives to doubters the assurance that future prophecies will also be fulfilled. Divine prophecy is reliable. After the dark times pass, God's people will be restored to the Lord and to their land of promise. The prophecies of Isaiah and other true prophets that have been fulfilled makes it plain that prophecy and history are consistent with each other. We are profited greatly when after reading of prophecies like Isaiah made, our faith claims the promises of God that are like prophecies from which we learn. Even though we fail our Lord, He never fails us.

Isaiah 34:8. *“For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.”*

PROPHECY PREDICTS – HISTORY REVEALS.

The bitterness of the ancient feud between Jacob and his brother -
Is not over yet, there will be someday a final settling of the matter.
Israel has sinned, of that there's no doubt, but Edom turned from God -
Judgment that fell on Edom in the past, is a foretaste of what will fall on the world.

Whenever the warnings are given, there is a time to repent and return -
To ignore the words of the prophet, assures those words will someday burn
In the mind and heart of a nation that to the warnings would not listen.
The sword of divine justice will be raised; even now we can see it glisten.

The nations are uprising today; people within them turning to force -
Hoping their demands will be met, and history will change its course.
But principles remain the same whether applied to nations or men.
“Whatever we sow, we reap;” we can predict the final end.

The prophets gave their predictions, and many already came to pass.
Many have yet to be fulfilled; they will come upon men at last.
We are wise when we learn from prophetic predictions and the ones that have been fulfilled.
That will keep us from thinking it won't happen if all the prophets can be killed.

Prophets speak for the Lord; they have behind them divine authority.
What God told them to say, surely is going to come to be.
The historian's accounts and his study, let us know God is not done.
It is wise to listen to both accounts: to listen - pay heed - and learn.

There will be a day of vengeance for things are getting worse and worse.
The earth and its people are not better; both are still under the curse.

The blossoming of all the earth will not happen, until the curse is taken away.
The curse that passed down from Adam, is still on us all today.

When judgment is over and righteousness finally reigns on the earth -
And people who were rebellious and sinful, experience the joys of new birth -
God and His people will share in what God wanted at the beginning:
His people and God rejoicing together; in fellowship without any sinning.

“Lord God, I know there must be retribution and a cleansing of this earth that You made in perfection. I get a few glimpses of that perfection from time to time. Thanks for the prophets who gave us views of the future, and for the historians who help us learn from the past. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 35

REDEEMED

The God-defying world of chapter thirty-four is seen in stark contrast to the blessings of the redeemed of the Lord in the future in chapter thirty-five. The contrast between these two chapters is that of just vengeance against sin and divine blessing because of grace. The people of God and the people of the world are emphasized in these chapters like the difference between a dry desert and on that blossoms like a rose. It is true the millennium will be like that compared to the tribulation, but the contrast goes beyond the visible and natural to include the spiritual differences as well.

When there is a rainfall on the desert today, immediately flowers spring up all over as the seed in the sand is given life-giving water from God and His life-source. In the millennium animal behavior characteristics will be changed. Plant life will flourish. Full and plenty from earth's fullness will not be withheld because of human greed, but will supply what is needed by poor and rich alike. The earth hasn't lost its fullness. It is just being held back because of human sin. The power and provision of God will open the earth to release its fullness. More than that, the Holy Spirit's power will enable praises to be given from the hearts of people who were once closed to the sweet strains of divine blessings and promises.

Millennial blessings will not be just because of the change of the environment. More important is the change in the inhabitants of that coming golden age. The wonders of our Lord's ministry when He was here the first time, give us a preview of the coming millennial blessings. Grace hasn't lost its provision. It will be offered then as it is today to those who in faith believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Spirit of God works in the soul of a person, that spiritually dead person comes alive after conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment does the work of bringing repentance toward God. The heart of such a person is opened by faith through the word of God to respond to the grace of God. The Holy Spirit reveals the value of the sacrifice of Christ on behalf of the sinner in a personal way, and that person is born again by the Spirit of God and the word of God. They will then truly say, "Jesus died for me."

Inward changes in people are as real and different as the barren dry desert is to a fruitful field. The changes in the redeemed are the same as the contrast of life and death. "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Redeemed people reflect the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ who is "The Great Redeemer [who] became our Savior; and all God's fullness, dwelleth in Him." The helpless sinking feeling that fear brings, and the feebleness of a useless stumbling journey through life, is completely changed. Confidence and strength come when faith in God is real. Trust in the all-sufficiency of our Lord, instills courage and assurance when we know that God is for us and with us.

In the millennium our God will come and no longer is there any excuse for being discouraged. His righteousness is imparted to those who believe on Him in every age. He places us in a place of personal acceptance and His strength takes the place of our weakness. His truth, His voice, His ways give us reason to praise and give honor to Him. Spiritual refreshment and satisfaction take the place of a dry and thirsty soul where there is no water of life. In the millennium those who have previously overlooked will be made objects of Messiah's attention. The blind will see and the deaf will hear. The lame will walk and the silent ones will sing for joy.

The way of holiness for the redeemed people leads us to that special place of fellowship and joy with our Redeemer and with all of the redeemed of the Lord. Those who are not redeemed cannot walk on that "Highway of Holiness," no matter who they are, what religion they might adhere to or what their opinion regarding spiritual things might be. The Lord himself will share His holiness with His people who have experienced the blessing of redemption by the precious blood of Christ. Redemption hasn't lost its worth. They will travel with Him on the highway of holiness all through life enjoying the benefits of His grace all the way. Plain people or wise people; low status people or those in the high places – any who have put their personal faith in Christ, will walk on that path of holiness and light with the Lord.

The road to Zion will resound with millions of singing believers whose joy in the Lord is openly expressed. Sorrow and sighing because of losses on the road of life, will give way to gladness and joy because of God's abundant blessings. The gladness in the hearts of the redeemed will make all "the toils of the road [to] will seem nothing, when we get to the end of the way." Sorrows of the past will be so far removed, that they, and perhaps even the memories of fear, complaints and suffering, will be gone. Faith hasn't lost its power.

Believers today look forward to the rapture and heaven, when our Lord Jesus Christ and His church will be united as one in spirit and holy fellowship. We rejoice today in the assurance of our blessings that we experience day by day, but we also rejoice as we think of the coming blessings on earth of God's people the Jews. All the suffering they have gone through as God's chosen people will be past. The fulfillment of the covenant promises made with God will change, not only the demographics of nations and people on earth, but the minds and hearts of the people. People haven't lost their worth to God.

Isaiah 35:8. *"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."*

A NEW VISION.

Who are these coming in safety and with joy?
Everyone is singing; not even wild beasts annoy!
There are flowers in the desert; fields are, where none were -
People are striding along in confidence; there isn't any fear!
What a change has taken place; something new has come to pass -
God is waiting there in Zion; the darkness of dark days is gone at last.
God's highway is "The Way of Holiness;" He prepared it for His own.
He hasn't just pointed out the direction; He is taking us to His home.

Where there was weakness; now there is strength.
Where there was separation; now there is a permanent link.
Where there was fear; now there is confidence -
God has dealt with those fear-mongers with His holy vengeance.
The blind can now see and the lame can easily walk.
The tongues that were silent, now can sing, and praise, and talk.
Water flows where there was none; streams flow across the desert sands.
Springs come now to the surface, where once there was only barren land.

Even now as I journey homeward, much of this I can enjoy.
People around can't understand, and sometimes they try to toy
With my faith and say, "Wishful thinking," but I know all this is real.
It is not only emotion for the moment; scriptures back up what I feel.
I look out at a dark day, and I can see beyond the clouds -
There is light that is shining there that is not affected by the crowds.
There is for me a highway too - a "Way of Holiness."
On this road I travel, God walks with me to keep and bless!

"Heavenly Father, this road I travel does have some hills - the better to see holy vistas beyond normal sight. And valleys where the streams and food of refreshment I find. I thank Thee that Thou art with me. Father, may the visit of yesterday produce blessing for those people and glory for Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 36

THE CHALLENGE

Chapters thirty-six through thirty-nine are a historical account of the Assyrian invasion of Judah and the threat against the city of Jerusalem. Isaiah had prophesied of this and it came to pass as he had said. Forty-six cities of Judah had fallen to the Assyrians and then they came to within a day's journey of Jerusalem. A delegation of Assyrians under the leadership of a "Rabshakeh" (similar to a general of an army) met with a delegation of Jews from Jerusalem who were the representatives of king Hezekiah, to discuss terms and how to deal with the threat.

Isaiah had written of the necessity of trust in God even when danger comes and there seems to be no way of escape. He had stated that Jerusalem would not fall to the Assyrians but would be delivered by the hand of the Lord alone. Often when we read the scriptures, we get used to not taking them seriously when it comes to warnings against sin, the necessity of faith instead of human ideas when we are faced with difficulties, and disasters too big for our minds to grasp. Doctors and health-care people can help to a certain degree when it comes to sickness, but life and death are in the hand of our Lord. Our appeal must be to Him who has the last word. The same is true in economic trials, in family matters, when confronted with unfair laws of man and when dealing with unscriptural practices in church life. Our hope and trust are in the Lord who controls the outcome of every matter we will ever have to deal with.

The insolent and bold Assyrian commander laid down the challenge and the terms. He came to the very place where Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, had met with Isaiah and rejected God's offer. At that time, Isaiah gave him the sign of the virgin birth of Christ that would happen in the future. The Assyrian wanted the surrender of the city without any opposition. He mocked the alliance Judah had made with the Egyptians earlier as of no value. Promises are only as good as the person (in this case, the nation) who makes them. Pharaoh's word or God's word was the choice Hezekiah had to make. Unfortunately, he had made the wrong choice. Human advice is valueless if it in any way contradicts the word of God. God's promises are "Yea and Amen." They are eternal and can be counted on without question.

The Lord had warned the Jewish leadership of the same thing only His warning was from the perspective of one who knows the end from the beginning. The pagan Assyrian didn't understand how destroying idol worship in Judah was the intention behind his successes. The Lord was using the Assyrians for His purposes of dealing with idolatry and sin in His people. They had turned away from Him for many years and then when Hezekiah became king, he took away the high places and altars to false gods. The Assyrian leader thought God was against Judah because they had destroyed the altars to idols under the edict of Hezekiah. To the mind of a ruthless leader of a world power, the refusal of a feeble remnant of Jews to submit to him was absolute foolishness.

There are many accounts in scripture of how people who put their faith and full trust in the Lord, were vindicated by the power of God accomplishing for them what could not be done by human effort. God demonstrates His power and sovereign authority in ways that leave no question that divine intervention had taken place on behalf of His people. Deceit, arrogance, innuendo and scorn are often directed toward those who put their faith in God. Human inadequacy and inability open the way for divine power to be demonstrated over the plans, schemes and power of men and nations.

The Assyrians offered economic security if the king of Judah would surrender and submit to the will of the invaders. Things are offered to believers today if they are willing to cooperate with those who want to please people and accept the social changes that invade even religious groups. The idols of the Assyrians in which they trusted were different than the idols we have here, but the outcome is the same. To surrender truth and holiness to social acceptance and tolerance of sin is as great a defeat as a nation that is taken into slavery.

Crafty Rabshakeh right out in the open where everyone could hear, appealed to those in Judah he knew were idolatrous by saying Hezekiah had insulted God by tearing down idols and saying there was only one place to bring their offerings, and only one way to worship the Lord God. This attitude is still prevalent among those in Christendom who say there are many ways of looking at the same thing. To those people it doesn't matter what God plainly says. They believe you have the right to worship and serve God in a way that suits you rather than what He says in the Bible. That is really insulting to the Sovereign God of the universe who has made us to suit Him like a potter makes a vessel. It is not our right to add or take away from the word of God.

Like the Assyrian leader, such people want to make a bargain with those who live to serve the Lord by implying, "Look how small and inadequate you are compared to us who have large followings and a lot of money coming in to the church coffers. Think of how much we can do and how appealing we are. Join us. Don't separate and be so smug as to think you who only follow the Bible are the ones who please God." If we allow compromising suggestions to make us stop doing what we know is scriptural, we are in a dangerous place where sin waits to claim us. Some things people say are true. Those who follow the Lord are small in number compared to the many who follow the ways of the world. "Few there be that find it" is a fact. Our weakness is real, but the same Lord who told Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness," will do the same for us.

It was true the Lord was using the Assyrians to bring chastening and just judgment on His own people who had turned away from Him to idols and open wickedness. Enemies still try to undermine the Lord's people today with partial truths in order to justify their own sinful ways and to seek to demoralize believers who want to follow the Lord. Isaiah had already prophesied Assyria would come against Judah but would not take Jerusalem. Even so, in a loud voice the Assyrian commander called out to those who could hear him and told them Hezekiah was deceiving them. The world promises much, but there are always strings attached that are not evident when the compromise is presented. All the food that was offered to the hungry people, and the attractive offers of a place for their own with economic security, would have appealed to those who were unbelievers.

The arrogant commander told of the places they already conquered, and gave another warning that the city would fall. Wisely Hezekiah had commanded the people who listened to not reply. The Assyrian leader had openly challenged God by saying the defeat of Israel was the defeat of the God of Israel, and it would be the same in Judah. Hezekiah's advisors and Hezekiah himself took the bold insolence of Rabshakeh to heart and torn their clothes as a sign of fear. Hezekiah understood the gravity of the situation. There will be times in our lives when we have to

confess our weakness and frailty. Our inability to change the situation makes us face ourselves. "Where could I go but to the Lord."

Isaiah 36:21. *"But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not."*

RIGHT WORDS.

The challenge of the enemy is to always cast doubt
On the Word of the Lord that we know.
I say, I trust Him; is it really a fact?
Does my faith in God's promises show?
They can say what they want about God's Word to me -
I know it is proven and tried.
On His words I do trust, they are life to me -
I live by them and their truths I've applied.

The challenge of the enemy is to mock the Lord God -
They make Him out to be only a dream.
My trust is in the Lord God, not in frivolous words of men -
The enemies can't take my confidence in Him.
In faith I pray, His Word strengthens my faith -
There is absolutely no reason to doubt.
Then enemies can say what they want about God -
Someday they will truly find out.

The challenge of the enemy is to break fellowship with God
And place my allegiance with them.
But I know the deception, the false hopes and lies -
Will rise up and condemn them in the end.
Fellowship with God is a reality to me -
I am able to experience it each day.
I hear God's voice when I read His Word -
He hears mine each time I pray.

The challenge of the enemy fades away -
When on the Lord alone I place my trust.
The attacks may come from time to time -
But the Lord will deliver us.
So, as I journey on the "Way of Holiness"
I try to say the right words.
Actually, the words that work best are not my own -
The words I should use are the Lord's.

"Holy Father, keep me this day from vain applications of Thy Word. Help me to pass on carefully the words Thou dost give and apply them relevantly and biblically. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 37

ASSYRIA JUDGED

Hezekiah's distress and humiliation for disregarding the warnings God gave through Isaiah, was real. He knew he was responsible for what was happening to Judah. He had chosen to turn to Egypt for help instead of relying in faith on the Lord. The only thing he could do was, in open and since humility, go into the house of the Lord and make it plain that his repentance was real. He made it plain to Isaiah whose warning he had previously ignored, that his penitence was real. He knew Judah was in a hopeless situation like a child wanting to be born but there was no strength to make it happen.

Helplessness is an awful condition to be in. There are times in which we have to face the fact that unless God intervenes, we have absolutely no hope. That hopelessness is often experienced when conviction of sin is real after one admits to their own guilt and comes in confession of sin to God. It is then reality sets in, and we know we are totally shut up to God. The only place we can go is into the presence of the Lord, not with half-hearted remorse, but with real honest confession of sin. In that condition, all we have left is the mercy of God. It is then the promises of the God of all grace become real to us.

Wisely Hezekiah openly confessed his helplessness to Isaiah, and appealed to him to intercede for the people with God. The Lord is near unto all that call upon Him with a pure heart, and it was obvious the contrition of Hezekiah was real. Isaiah knew that and was able to give assurance to Hezekiah that God was in control of the whole situation.

When we get our eyes off the Lord and turn to men to meet our need, we are doing the wrong thing and looking in the wrong place.

To challenge the power of God is a guarantee that anyone who makes such a challenge will be a loser. God's first response was to arrange for the rumor that the Ethiopian army was on the way to fight against Assyria, would come to the Rabshakeh's ears. Sennacherib's response to that news was to lift the siege and return quickly to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. In a defiant threatening message to Hezekiah, he said in a blasphemous way that he would be back to finish what he had started. As far as that man, he never came back to finish what he had started and he was assassinated by his own two sons a number of years later.

To defy God and/or treat His people as if they are of no account, is to invite divine retribution to come down on a person's head. As far as Assyria was concerned, and the ignorance and arrogance of the leader; they had gone too far and God was going to treat them like a bull with a hook and ring in its nose. They would go where He said and do what He allowed whether they achieved their objectives or not. God didn't stop when the king went back to Nineveh, but in some way the whole Assyrian army died in one night. Sennacherib returned to Nineveh without his army of 185,000 men.

Hezekiah had learned his lesson. He took the message from Sennacherib into the house of the Lord himself, and laid it out before God. He was so concerned and grieved at the insult to God that was in the message, that he went to God himself instead of seeking the mediation of the prophet. He was giving honor to the holy character and supreme authority of God, and testifying to the uselessness of gods and idols made by human hands, and of man himself apart from God. His testimony was plain: "Thou art the Lord, even Thou only."

The basis of Hezekiah's petition in this prayer, was not for his own desires and needs to be met, nor was it for the people over whom he reigned as king. He realized they deserved nothing from the Lord because of the way they had strayed into sin and turned away from God. Rather, his prayer was for God's own glory and vindication over what the enemy had written in the message. It is a worthwhile exercise for the Lord's people now, to read out loud Hezekiah's prayer and think about all it contains regarding our knowledge and consciousness of the greatness of our God.

The response of the Lord came through Isaiah, and it was for both Hezekiah and Sennacherib from "The holy One of Israel." The omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of God is evident in the reply he gave to be passed on by Isaiah. God is sovereign over every ruler of every country. God is sovereign over all of His creation. God is sovereign over His own people. He is sovereign over those who do not even believe in Him or that He exists, because nothing or no one exists without Him giving life. He has the key of life and death.

As far as Judah and their reprieve were concerned: they people would be able to go back to their land and a normal life for a period of time. They would rebuild their homes and reestablish their communities. That generation and much of the next one would live more normally, but they didn't really learn much from that threat. Sadly, they would go back to following the ways of the world again. A lesson isn't really learned unless there are lasting changes that are consistent with the plans and purposes of God. Those who are wise will take the time to review and consider the past events of history, and take deliberate steps to not do those things that are wrong, but commit to doing what is right and obviously the will of God.

The order of events in these four chapters does not seem to be in chronological order, at least as far as the position of the chapters. Things written in thirty-eight and thirty-nine likely happened before the Assyrian defeat in thirty-six and thirty-seven.

Isaiah 37:6. *"And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words thou hast heard, wherewith the king of Assyria have blasphemed me."*

BE NOT AFRAID.

Be not afraid when the morning breaks with a sky so deep and red.
The God of grace will go before you; of the threats, they hold no dread.
Vain is the man who tries to stand against the authority of God.
The day will take care of itself; so, you start with the strength of God's Word.

Be not afraid when the dark clouds cover the light of the sun from your eyes.
God still remains faithful, though sometimes He allows dark days to cover blue skies.
The dark circumstances you may pass through will teach you to more fully trust
The Lord who has led you into this time, that you may learn God Himself is your rest.

Be not afraid when the enemy roars and his host seems to have made you their aim.
Bow the knee and then stand to resist his attack and call upon the Savior's name.
Be strong in your faith in spite of the threats; God's promises remain firm and true.

He will not leave you, He will succor you there, until that attack is through.

Be not afraid when you are forsaken by those who you had trusted the most.
Sometimes there is a sense of abandonment by those with whom you were very close.

Never allow bitterness into your soul to creep -
Who knows, maybe they are in a crisis too, or have other obligations to keep.

Be not afraid when health starts to go and no one has a cure to give.
God has a calendar of events for you; he chooses how long you will live.
The quality of life may not be the best, but often in trials we learn
Lessons that we would never have known until, we have no one but God to turn.

Be not afraid when the nations fail; when everything you worked for is gone.
We are at our strongest when faith is tested, and we learn to depend on God alone.
It may surprise you how content you can be when one looks to God for everything.
At times like that all the pressures are off; with empty hands and a full heart we can sing.

Be not afraid in the valley of death; you will find the Lord even there.
The nearest and dearest in life will have to step back; but at that time, never fear.
He who drew near and went with you at first, will stay with you through to the end -
Until you find yourself in the Father's house and then learn why the tests He did send.

This moment of fear is not a cause for worry, these are tests God allows on the way -
To measure our growth; to see what we've learned; what we under pressure will say.
It is a process that is used to make us strong; if everything was easy, we'd be weak.
In our weakness we find our God is near, and His is the strength we seek.

“Father God, the way ahead is, in a general way, quite plain.; but it is the small things today I am seeking guidance for. Would You please make plain to us today how we can best use these next few days in the way that is Thy will for us? Thank You! One of your weakest sons, Gaius.”

Isaiah 38

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS AND RECOVERY

When and why Hezekiah's sickness came on him so severely is not mentioned in this text. Perhaps it was the result of an emotional response to the threat of the invasion of the Assyrians, or for some other reason, but the result was a boil that was so septic that Isaiah told him he was going to die and not live. It seems like in the human condition, our emotions and physical well-being or lack of it, are linked. When one is told there is no hope of recovery; body, soul and spirit are all affected. Before that happens, we need to make sure that all the affairs of our lives are in good order so we can die in good conscience whenever death-day comes for us. A regular review of life including friendships, relationships, commitments made and vows left to be fulfilled needs to be a practice upon which we act.

Hezekiah made a good summation of the qualities of a holy life. One commits to walking in the truth. That would mean "walking in the light, as He is in the light" and would mean we have unbroken fellowship with the Lord and His people. To be loyal in our heart to the Lord, indicates a person is not going to follow every strange "wind of doctrine" or read every book that "gives new insight and perspective" to something that the scripture has already opened up to us if we will read it in context, and practice it as the Holy Spirit leads us. Doing what is right and good before the Lord is the way to live a full and meaningful life without confusion and constant questioning.

Hezekiah considered himself to be walking in the truth and loyalty of heart toward the Lord, but at the age of thirty-nine he may have felt that God was being unfair to him. So, he "wept bitterly." When people are comparatively young, as was the case of Hezekiah at thirty-nine, it seems like God is doing wrong to allow fatal sickness and death. Hezekiah was devastated that his life was going to end in the prime of life. That was one reason why his sorrow was so profound and his prayer so insistent. Mothers with young children, fathers who are the support of families are not considered expendable in the human mind when cancer, car accidents or even war take their lives. Resentment often takes the place of faith. As we get older, we are more conscious of the sovereign will of God being worked out in and through the lives of God's people.

Earnest fervent prayer is not just a casual stroll up to the throne of grace, or a habitual bowing of the knees before the Lord night and morning, but it is the humbling of our hearts and will before a just and holy God who knows what He is doing and allowing to be done by people. It should be the sincere expression of confession of sin, of our specific needs, of our faith in God and our confidence in Him. He knows us, He knows what is ahead, He knows what is right and He does what His sovereign choice is.

Fervent prayer to God may change things in our lives and the lives of other people. The prayer of Elijah and the prayer

of Hezekiah didn't only change their lives, but that of thousands of other people. In both cases, it changed the nation. When we ask in faith for changes to be made, we do not need to fear the results if the changes for which we ask will honor the Lord. The problem may come later if we think we made the change happen. The attitude of a person depends on whether a sign requested expresses doubt and unbelief, or faith and trust in God.

Hezekiah's request brought him fifteen more years of life. It may have been more of an appeal to the promise of God to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, than only a desire for a longer life himself. He had no heir at the time of his sickness and as the king, he would have been aware of the covenant promise of God to David that his throne would remain. Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, became king at twelve years old, and he was a very evil and wicked man. In the mercy and grace of God, when he was fifty years old, he came to his senses and faith in God.

When Isaiah brought the king God's reply, He said, "The Lord, the God of David," and so Hezekiah was assured that the covenant promise was still intact. The remarkable sign of the sundial, and the shadow going backward instead of forward, would have left no doubt in his mind that the answer was from God. The reverse of the shadow of the dial was unique in all of history. Hezekiah had appreciated the proverbs of Solomon, and had also instructed the Levites to worship the Lord with the psalms of David and Asaph. His song of praise following Isaiah's assurance of being heard and answered by God, is similar to the psalms.

Hezekiah understood the value of his prayer, and that deliverance and forgiveness came as good out of the bad of his bitter experience. When prayers are definitely answered, we will usually find ourselves closer to God than before the trial came. God's forgiveness comes to us because of God's love for us. Hezekiah realized that God had cast his sins behind His back. If a person dies unforgiven, they have no hope. But when we are conscious of divine forgiveness and love, and deliverance from hell, there is relief and praise to God. Those are things that we must tell to our children and to generations following us. The experience of God acting on our behalf in miraculous ways needs to be told over and over.

Hezekiah perhaps was not clear in his understanding of life after death, "the grave cannot praise Thee," but he did realize that there was great benefit that resulted from his troubles. That is the same for us. We may not know now why "Bad things happen to good people," but we know God does. Therefore, in faith we pass through the trials of life and recognize them as being allowed to happen to us by our God, who for His own reasons does what needs to be done. We have been blessed because of the heritage passed on to us from many generations of the past who lived and learned before us. Now it is our responsibility and privilege to pass on the blessings of our heritage to those coming behind us. Our relationship with the Lord, and all it means to us, is probably the best and greatest thing we can leave behind us.

The lump of figs forming the poultice and put on the infected boil on Hezekiah, was to give physical evidence of God's work on behalf of Hezekiah. Unfortunately, all of this experience may have been a partial cause of pride in Hezekiah later when he showed all the riches of his house and the house of the Lord to the Babylonians. The miracle God did in healing him and delivering the people of Judah from the Assyrians may have gone to his head. It was only after his pride and that of the people was humbled, that God put the judgment that would come from Babylon off for a few generations, and a later time. It is possible that the very things that have been a blessing can become a point of failure if we take any credit ourselves for what God has done.

Isaiah 38:19. *"The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth."*

THE LIVING.

¹⁵ more years the king was given by God to lead His people right.
All around was fear and departure, many were still in moral night.
But God gave His kingly servant more time to serve in that day;
He wanted to stem the tide of rejection and from national sin to turn away.
The king had a heart for his people, but it is not easy to turn sinning around.
The natural bent is for things to get worse, and the righteous are scarcely found.
But God in patience granted his request, he got another ¹⁵ years.
During that time things didn't get better; the king met with many fears.

¹⁵ years from now, I will be eighty-eight.
I am not sure if I'll live that long or the Lord, His coming will wait.
My prayer is that I will keep close to the Lord until life's journey is done.
At this present time my health is good, and by grace, God has kept me strong.
But more than that, I want to be able to praise the Lord and serve Him acceptably.
It would be wonderful if for the rest of my life, God could in some way use me

To bring a message of life and hope to the living and to my children's children.
Their living would be a time of blessing to them and glory for the God of heaven.

When I was 15, I was just getting started in my life of living with the Lord.
All the years before, though I enjoyed them all, were spent mainly conscious of the world.
In the years that followed, especially the next 15, my life took a whole new direction.
Who would have thought God would allow me to give others the message of salvation.
I met my wife; a child was born; God moved me to a different place.
Looking back in this time of living, it is not hard God's plan to trace.
He gave me children who came into God's family; living had a significant reason.
Bearing the yoke in youth was a privilege, those 15 years were a special season.

For the next 15 years as maturity grew, God allowed me to learn more of Him.
My understanding grew; He trusted me more, and "the big picture" became less dim.
God stretched my vision, the process of living expanded to include more people in my life.
For His own reasons God increased my fields and led me farther into His light.
Now spiritual children are living all across the land; they too, have joined the living -
Many of them in the place they were called, time and effort for God's kingdom are giving.
Those years seemed productive God entrusted me with a work far beyond my skill.
Many of those events at the time seemed small, but now I can trace God's will.

So, as the seasons of life are passing by and now, I am living in late fall -
I can rejoice in the living of year after year and see God's hand in it all.
There is the living of people: breathing God's air, and of person-hood that is good.
There is the living of lifestyle: the way we conduct ourselves - the things for which we have stood.
There is the living of joy: of fellowship, of love - often best expressed in families.
There is the living of time passing: of day after day enjoying God's fellowship with me.
For all the 15's past and the one yet to come, I will praise Him for His matchless grace.
My life has been all a man could ever want; and the new part starts when I see His face.

**"At the moment Father, I am almost speechless with joy. Please guide me with Thy eye today.
In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

Isaiah 39

A SHORT-SIGHTED VIEW

Assyria controlled Babylon in the time of Hezekiah, so perhaps that was the reason the prince from Babylon was willing to take a somewhat rebellious action against the Assyrians and make a connection with the king of Judah. The gift he brought, and the sympathetic words regarding Hezekiah's sickness seems quite innocent on the surface. Behind that gesture was likely the desire to form an alliance with the king of Judah. The fact that the Assyrian army of 185,000 men died, and that Sennacherib returned to Nineveh without taking Jerusalem, would have been headline news across the Middle East and maybe made those under Assyrian rule think their domination was now vulnerable.

When the worldly power of flattery and persuasion are shown, especially to a leader who appears successful, that person is in serious danger. The treachery of the human heart can quickly move us to take credit for that which seems like our action, but inwardly we know it is way beyond our ability to accomplish. Hezekiah never once mentioned the Lord acting in power and strength in the defeat of Assyria. The fact of a whole army dying overnight, was so far removed from human capability, that maybe Hezekiah didn't think it needed to be brought up. Perhaps there was underlying pride as he showed the Babylonian emissaries all the treasures of his house, the house of the Lord and the whole kingdom. They likely saw all of this treasure as a future benefit to themselves, which actually happened when they later turned on Judah and took everything of value including both the treasure and the best people.

Sympathy and a gift, or help from family and friends are one thing. It is quite different when such things come from people you do not know nor are you sure as to why they do what they do. Often there is the expectation of a reciprocal response of a different kind, or some strings attached that brings with the gift an unspoken obligation. When something is done that is out of character by those who are potential enemies, caution is needed because there may be a motive behind the action that is not good. Open enemies are one thing. You know where you stand with them. Potential enemies may be approachable with a measure of friendship and good-will. If a person is like Hezekiah: good-hearted, sensitive and tries to think the best about everyone in every situation no matter who they are, that lack of discernment of people and motives can very well be their own downfall.

Hezekiah apparently didn't see the Babylonian prince and emissaries as a threat like the Assyrians were. We need to remember that believers are "in the world" but are "not of the world." "This world is not my home; I'm just a' passing through. My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue." Hezekiah was not the only one who wanted to parade the trappings of his own power and success. That happens to many people – even children. It may not always be wrong, but it has dangerous potential. If a person recognizes, and makes sure that those who flatter and praise

them knows what we have is only loaned to us by God to use temporarily, then in some cases it is okay to graciously accept some honor.

Divine favor and assistance given to us by the Lord to meet certain circumstances when we do not deserve “the least of His mercies,” is reason for us to acknowledge God’s grace with our gratefulness. It is essential that we make sure people know our God is the source of our blessings, and the One who maintains all the good things He has allowed us to use. It is not possible to over-emphasize the importance of GIVING GOD ALL THE GLORY for any successful deed done, any benefit received, and anything of lasting value that will reflect on our blessed Lord. An honest and deliberate point must be made. “To God be the glory, great things He hath done... Praise the Lord!!”

The warning from Isaiah that Babylon would conquer Judah must have been amazing to Hezekiah, because the Assyrians controlled Babylon and were the present threat to all the Jews. Babylon was a more or less insignificant colony under the control of the iron boot of the Assyrians at that time. Hezekiah was a faithful king who did a lot of good for his people and for the Lord. He eliminated outward idol worship and established the worship of the Lord in the temple in a purified way. But like any leader who keeps his hand on the pulse of those who follow him, he would have known the nation was going through the motions, but it was only outward. There were undercurrents that didn’t break out until Manasseh his son led the nation back into idolatry.

When Hezekiah said the word of the Lord through Isaiah was “good,” it may have been he was referring to him admitting that he and those who followed him deserved the judgment that would come according to the prophecy. Or it may have been a personal selfish relief that it wouldn’t happen to him in his lifetime. Self-satisfaction because of our success and accomplishments bring serious consequences. A short-sighted view of life and the future, may seem on the surface like we are expressing gratitude. Temporary peace in this lifetime is one thing. But we do have a responsibility to those who come behind us. We need to be ready to help them understand who they are and why they are here. Also, they need to know that everything they do is important when it is done for the Lord and His glory.

A lesson for all of God’s children in every age is that all we have and claim as our own, is temporarily on loan from God as a trust to be used for His purposes. When such a trust is given, it is usually a training method to see how we will handle things that are really important in the future. Treasures, money and success are not of lasting importance. People and their future; the glory of God and furtherance of His kingdom; the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ – and the eternal future ahead of us is what is really important.

Isaiah 39:2. *“And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.”*

BIG MISTAKE.

Hold it! Stop! What are you doing?! That is a terrible mistake!
All those things you are showing those people -
Are the very things that someday they will come and take;
There is coming on this nation another sequel.
The very things that made this nation strong:
Faith in God; fairness and justice -
All these things that will soon be gone -
Came as blessings from God - to take credit for it is very wrong.

I know - you wanted those people to know you are grateful -
Gratitude to God does need to be shown.
God certainly has in every way been faithful -
But He is the One who all these things really own;
What God entrusts to us we must carefully use
In ways that bless and are consistent with Him.
These strangers to God’s grace will surely abuse
God’s things in order to bring profit to them.

Holy things are important no matter of what kind -
Whether vessels of gold, of silver or of clay.
As we serve God, it is up to us to find
Uses for what He gave in His service each day.
The value of the blessings that come from God -
Are measured differently when they are sanctified.
To us they are precious, but to people in the world -
They are trophies of materialism to be prized.

When God chooses to allow us to use a gift -
It is important that we always seek His will.

The One who gives can always from our hand lift -
The blessings that presently our closets fill.
It is a wise man who considers when God chooses to give -
There is a reason He has trusted me thus.
For His own purposes He wants me to have
These things, that through me He might others bless.

“O Loving Father, for Thine own reasons, I have been given health, strength, a good vehicle, a home and all I need for living. I know this has all come as gifts from Thee and I thank Thee for them. Please let me know in what ways I can best use all these blessings for Thy glory. There are complications arising from government demands. Give Linda and me the understanding as to how to satisfy these requests. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 40

THE COMFORT OF GOD

Judah had received a whole series of warnings from the Lord through His servant, the prophet Isaiah. And there was still trouble ahead for them for the next one hundred years and the seventy years of exile after that. In grace, God told Isaiah to comfort His people by telling them again who He is and what He allows to happen is for their restoration to Him. Up until this time in the book of Isaiah, the prophetic warnings were to change the outward practices and conduct of the Lord's people. Now the prophecy is an appeal to the inward response of God's people. It is given so they will look ahead in faith in spite of all that had happened and would yet happen to them.

Even though there are consequences to sin that have to be faced and endured, the Lord never fails in His desire to comfort His own. This chapter begins with a call to Isaiah to go and comfort the people of Judah with a view of encouraging and strengthening them. The “voices” in the first eleven verses are the voice of comfort that the warfare will not continue forever, and that “pardon,” generous forgiveness has been granted. “Double” indicates that complete payment for sin has been assured. Judah's punishment will be complete. The temporal punishment for the sin of the nation during the seventy years of captivity would settle that debt.

Of far greater value is the fact that eternal punishment has been laid on the Sin-Bearer on the cross of Calvary. Before God gives the comfort of knowing our sins are forgiven and we have been saved by God's grace; the lost condition of the sinner, the helplessness of not being able to save ourselves, and our own terrible sinfulness before a holy God must be acknowledged and honestly faced. A sense of guilt places us where repentance is real, confession is not half-hearted, and acknowledgement of guilt is genuine. That is when the voice of confidence opens our understanding to know that the promise of the Messiah has been given and there is every reason for us to be comforted. Babylon and the world are no match for God. He has promised to deliver His people. Then the voice of conquest assures us that our God will come with “a strong hand,” and deliver His own.

The Trinity of Divine Persons minister comfort to God's people who are redeemed. The Father is “the God of all comfort;” the Holy Spirit is the “Comforter,” and our Lord Jesus is the One who came to “comfort those that mourn,” and is our “Advocate (Comforter) with the Father.” Surely the “glory of the Lord” has been revealed. The prophecy regarding John the Baptist was to those who live in the dry wilderness of unbelievers where the hills of pride had to be flattened, and the valleys of hopelessness and self-pity had to be filled up to make a highway for us to go to our God. The unsaved had to hear a message from God, and that meant there was a work to be done by John. Obstacles had to be removed in order to bring down that which is high and lift up that which is low. We have to do that today in the presentation of the Gospel as we seek to lead people to the Lord Jesus. Such trials and suffering in life has the purpose of preparing the way of the Lord for when He returns.

So, what is the message a prophet/preacher is to “Cry aloud?” It is plain and simple. There is nothing in us for which we can take glory. We are just frail mortal men who are no more than dying grass in ourselves. We are utterly helpless in ourselves to survive the just judgment that our sin deserves. It is when we face that as our honest condition, that we become willing to turn to God for salvation. At first that does not seem to be a comforting message because by nature we are not honest, nor do we want to admit to and face the consequences of sin.

But then the infallible word of God changes all that to be a message of hope and joy. The Gospel news is good news and full of hope and optimism. The Good Shepherd has come and brought life, care and guidance to His people. He is tender and will deliver His own. He is powerful and gentle at the same time. He is mighty in Himself as Sovereign Lord, and at the same time is the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd and the Chief Shepherd of His people.

Following the voices that give comfort is the vision that gives strength and the challenge of the rebuilding of the broken nation. There is no question: God is beyond compare. He made everything according to His sovereign will. He needs no advice from anyone. The powerful nation of Israel that will remain in the future, will rely on divine strength

and power to survive, not on military might. He alone has the power and wisdom to sustain and maintain all that He has done, does now and will yet do in the future. In itself, a nation is only like a drop of water in a bucket of water to the Lord. It is the people who have been made in His image that places value on all that God does. Nations are insignificant to the Almighty Creator of the heavens and the earth. They come and go. All the trees and all the animals put together could not make a sacrifice worthy of God. It is people who have been made in the image of God that last forever.

The insignificance of nations; of humanity as a whole with their idols; human skills and plans; and the religious idols and sacrifices they make to meet their own criteria as to who God is and what he wants from people, is all worthless. No skilled craftsman can portray God who is too great to be described. If He could be described, He wouldn't be the One to worship. He would just be compared to something or someone. The foolishness and ignorance of those who form idols from the absurdity of their own imagination, raises a series of questions in this prophetic sermon. God describes Himself to those who have ignored the testimony of creation and history. Adam and Noah knew the Creator-God before the Jews were even identified as a tribe of people. Those early believers knew of the "circle" (sphere) of the earth and of the canopy that covers and protects the earth. The "temporariness" of world leaders and much of what we can know about God was nothing new to those who lived long before our day and age. All the great leaders – past, present and future who deny God, are vanity (worthless) like uprooted seeds that are blown away and forgotten.

So, who is God? To whom can He be compared? How can he be defined or described? It is impossible to explain Him with our finite minds, because God is infinite in every way! He is beyond description and comparison! No one can be compared to God who created all things, including the billions of stars to which He has given each a name from His infinite vocabulary of expressive words. Everything God does functions under the power of His orderly plans so there is obvious order in the universe under the guidance of One who has infinite power and wisdom. There is no chaos in any of His work unless he chooses to allow it for His own reasons. Pagans worshipped stars because of the consistency of their path and position in the stellar heavens. They guided their journeys on land and sea by the orderliness seen in the heavens. They planted crops and harvested by the orderliness of the seasons, and yet they worshipped that which was created rather than the Creator.

In this chapter of comfort, we are reminded again that God is faithful to us. He can be counted on. His promise to deliver His people will happen. He longs to deliver His people and is able to deliver His people. But He waits in longsuffering for them to return to Him. Therefore, we must wait on Him and not trust in self or any other man or thing to bring the final blessing of the kingdom of righteousness and peace. The limitless power of God is never drained away by use or tiredness. We cannot experience that limitlessness because of our frail humanity. Even strong young men get tired, and older people feel frustrated at their physical limitations. But when we wait on the Lord, we become like Him in the way we think, believe, love, hope and find our joy. So, whether young, middle-aged or old, we can "run" in our spirit to areas unreachable in our flesh. We can "walk" in faith and joy and peace without the weakness of trusting in ourselves.

Isaiah 40:31. *"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."*

A BRIGHT FUTURE.

The voice sounded across the nation as the herald gave his message.

Messiah was coming; The herald was marking out His passage.

As he made declaration of His appearing, and all that would mean:

The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator was coming to bear away the world's sin.

What was thought to be impossible will be easily done; barriers long in the way - removed.

Hindrances that confounded will be no more; what was hated shall then be loved.

Every eye shall see what once was hidden; every voice that was mute shall then praise.

From the place where He was despised and rejected; united voices will glory to God raise.

Those who once were hungry shall be fed; those who hurt so long will find relief.

Those who groaned because of injustice, will under the Lord's rule find rest and sleep.

What was once intended actually will come to pass; the Lord God will rule in benevolence and grace.

The governments of men that have been so belligerent, finally will be kept in their appointed place.

There seems to be no end to these troublesome times; young men come back from war in pain.

The laborers are diligent in working long hours, but for all their work there is no gain.

But the day is coming when all this will change; those who prayed will finally be strong.

The Lord God will come with His strong arm and hand, and then He who rules will right the wrongs.

Those who rise from their knees will find prayer works, and in God's strength, they rise.
The weariness and grief they have endured so long, is gone - a new day is before their eyes.
Wherever they look people are rising to their feet and again going forward in faith.
A new day has come; a new King reigns; God's people are responding to His grace.

For some of us today, we experience these things now - it's true, to a lesser degree -
But the Lord who will reign over the world in the future, is the prayer-answering God for me.
When I wait on the Lord, my strength is renewed; I can walk and do not faint.
He deals with my issues each and every day, and helps me to run life's race.

I don't have to wait until later to find my joy, I have joy in the Lord today.
It works just the way God said it would, when I wait on the Lord and pray.
He strengthens me each morning for the day ahead; He knows the way I will take.
The obstacles don't seem to be very big at all, and the crooked ways are really made straight.

“Gracious Father, I am already lifted up in my soul and spirit this morning and there isn't any light outside yet. I can sense in myself the confidence and assurance from Thee, that this day is going to be good. I pray that in every way this day, I will be able to glorify Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 41

GOD IS IN TOTAL CONTROL

In this prophecy, there is a call from God to the whole earth as He challenges the idols of Babylon to the test, and tells the Jews in captivity that they are proof that He only is God. There is no other God. He is over the nations and reasons with them by the moral law He has placed in every person. Intelligence and conscience enable us to respond in faith to His grace no matter where a person may live or what their cultural background is. God's ability and man's futility are obvious in contrast in this unfolding challenge of the Lord God to the idols of man's making in which so many then, and now, trust.

Great leaders like Cyrus the Persian, were under the control of divine authority even to showing favor to the small exiled group of captives – the Jews in Babylon. God uses even pagan power to protect and defend His people. He also can use them to correct and punish His people for their sins. He is in control of empires and governments, and uses them with His eternal purposes in view. It was with His controlled power He used the Medes and Persians to bring down Babylon. The idols of Babylon were designed to give some sense of security to those people in the face of things that were supposed to have more power than humans. But an idol is an empty carnal device that is useless when it comes to answering the need of the human soul and spirit. The idol/gods of Babylon were helpless to protect them. All an idol is, is a form of human imagination often made to look like a powerful animal, person or thing. A money bill is only paper even though it has a human picture, name, amount etc. and is only useful to give a sense of value. It is valueless in itself.

Even though Israel was in captivity and exile because of the sins of the people, God did not abandon them. He had established a relationship with them long before and was committed to it. His care did not allow them to be exterminated because they are a unique people. Israel was chosen by God and is called God's servant in contrast to unbelieving Gentiles. Abraham, the friend of God, and the father of the Jews, made his descendants heirs of the promises made in a covenant between him and the Lord. He left “the ends of the earth,” Ur of the Chaldees, in a response of faith to the call of God.

No other exiled, captive nation in history has ever been brought back to their homeland to start life over again as a recognizable nation. But God had promised to do this, and it will be done. Other nations have become great earthly powers, but have only been comparatively short-lived with a temporary influence on the nations around them. The feeble “worm Jacob,” has been despised and stepped on all over the world. It will finally triumph under the authority of the Lord when all the rest of the world is in ruins. Without any “self-help” capacity, God promised to give the Jews the needed strength in times of anxiety and trouble, and will help them regain and maintain their identity. In view of the coming kingdom, Israel is still the tool God will use to prepare the way of the Lord. God will save His people even though at present, all seems hopeless and defeated.

God has promised to bring spiritual Israel a whole new life. In times of stress and peril, He will provide what they need to survive as an identity. It can be theirs when they take it for themselves because God's provision by grace can be personally claimed by faith. Joy follows when one realizes God is faithful to all to whom He has made promises. Idols of any kind can do nothing of lasting value for anyone. The Babylonian idols couldn't do anything for the people of Babylon because they were nothing. They are only forms of the imagination. People today make idols of sports and entertainment figure hoping to get some vicarious pleasure or satisfaction from winning a game or making a lot of money. That produces nothing because it is nothing but only a fleeting vision of the imagination.

In the prophecy to the idol worshippers, the Lord challenges them to prove the reality and power of their false gods. False gods cannot predict through false prophets what will happen in the future, nor can they make it happen. The prophecy of Isaiah made plain that there will be an eastern power that will come from the north and would carry out the purpose for which God intended. The Medes and the Persians did just that and conquered Babylon years later, just as Isaiah had said. "Behold them!" Those predictions have been fulfilled and Jerusalem had a prophetic messenger come with good news. The false prophets of false gods who promoted a false religion could do nothing like it.

The nations around Israel had idol/gods for planting, rain, harvest, war and pretty much every vain imagination of the human mind. We can learn from those failures of the past, that idolatry still doesn't meet or satisfy human need. Money, military might, success, family and governments all fail to bring lasting hope, satisfaction and peace. Worthless idols with no intelligence are as deceptive today as they were in the past. Each generation is uniquely different, but the plans of God include all generations. God has worked personally through our forebearers and He will do the same through us and those who come after us.

Hopefully, our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and those following them will have learned from us the value of grace, faith, the Bible, prayer, Christian fellowship and the Gospel, to have something to pass on to those who follow them. How sad life is, if there is nothing of value left to others when we move to our eternal home. It is only in the light of truth and righteousness that any of them will find meaning and happiness in life. It is only when their faith in God is real, that they will produce anything of lasting worth through all their years of living.

All believers have the privilege and responsibility of representing God to the world in our generation. God will bring those people of faith together in the future, and we will find we all had in common, the assurance that God is with us; God has given us eternal life and the lasting relationship with Him through faith. We will all know that God has helped us all the way by strengthening us in times of need. He has given us victory over sin and death. He has never abandoned us even though we have experienced suffering and persecution. Our God is Great, Good, Faithful and personal to us even though He is infinite in every way.

Isaiah 41:10. *"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."*

FEAR NOT.

All these things in which men once trusted, have no value at all.
The idols of men are of their own making, it is foolish on them to call.
They represent nothing but the vain imaginings that come from the minds of men.
There is no way any benefit can come to you if you put your trust in them.
For they are based on fear of the unexplained and unknown - fear is their motivation.
There is no way anything men can make - especially those made from their vain imagination -
That can remove the cause of guilt and fear, and bring peace to a troubled soul.
Nothing that can be accumulated from the most ardent labor can make a person whole.

The Lord thy God is the One who has strength; He has all power in heaven and on earth.
He knows what is right and what is wrong; what is valuable and what has little worth.
He who created everything and holds our breath in His own hand -
Knows what creates fear in the human heart - He knows what is in every man.
When He moves to help us and make our cause His own, we are in a place that is safe.
There is no higher advocate than the Holy One who will take your case.
He comes to where we are, and with His right hand of righteousness -
Takes what would have failed, and by His power, turns it into something to bless.

Though we are weak with no strength of our own, He comes to where we are -
And through His eternal wisdom, changes us and removes the paralyzing power of fear.
We are still human and we still have the tendency to try to run things our way -
But when we turn to the Lord for needed help, and listen to all He will say -
The dark things are made light, the weak things are made strong, fearful things are removed.
There is no doubt when we call - He is there; His help is something I've proved.
So, in Him I will trust; in Him I will rest; and when in need on Him I will call.
My hope is in Him; His grace is sufficient - into the strength of His holiness I fall.

"O Righteous and Gracious Redeemer: I have to thank Thee first for Thy great redemption - and now I belong to Thee. The cost of the precious blood that paid the price for me to be delivered certainly removes every need for me to fear whatever may come. I am Thine - not my own. Resting in this fact does remove fear and I thank Thee. May I always be conscious of my position in Christ. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 42

THE PERFECT SERVANT

The prophecy of the Perfect Servant, Messiah, is described very well in the Gospel of Mark as the Holy Spirit describes the Perfect Servant, our Lord Jesus Christ, and His work through the whole book. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the embodiment of what Isaiah wrote of as the One who delighted His God. Matthew 3:16-17 certainly is a testimony of the Father in heaven as to the delight He has in His Son-Servant. Matthew 12:15-21 gives the fulfillment of that prophecy in the Person and work of our Lord when He was here. The character traits of Jehovah's Perfect Servant are gentleness, encouragement, justice and truth. Those were all found in our Lord Jesus. Israel was to be the servant of God as a corporate national identity, but failed almost from the beginning of their journey from Egypt to Canaan, and throughout the years to the captivity. Even today, Israel has gathered in the land, not in faith but only in hope. Unbelief still permeates the chosen earthly people of God.

God had chosen Israel out of all the tribal nations of earth to bring to the people of the world the knowledge of God. Instead of representing God, they failed in that they became like the people of the world, and they still follow that way today. Sadly, the people of God in the church who are here to bear testimony as the heavenly people of God to the world today, also often try to be like the world in order to "win them to Christ." We are supposed to be holy like He is holy so we can win them to Christ by being like Christ. In grace, when we fail to fulfill our obligation and call, or when we have been oppressed and bruised by the opposition of enemies, the Lord is there to lift us up. We also can show spiritual sensitivity to those around us as a way to reflect God's goodness to others.

A servant of the Lord is the One who voluntarily serves God like Abraham did. Sometimes in the prophecies of scripture the nation of Israel is called the servant of God. Other times the faithful remnant of the Jews is called the servant of God. However, mainly the Servant of God (Jehovah) is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One raised up from among "Jacob." He is the One who will restore Israel to be what God wants them to be. He is the One who is the "Light to the Gentiles." He is God's Salvation to the whole world. He is the One who has brought atonement and made it possible for "all men everywhere" to be saved through His suffering and death. He is God's provision and only solution for the sin of mankind. He is the One who was totally committed to bring redemption to lost sinners.

Unlike human leaders, the Messiah will rule with compassion and justice. When He came the first time, He came to His own, "but His own received Him not." But He did bring light to the Gentiles, and so presently both believing Jews and Gentiles are "one in Christ," and both are part of the "one new man," the church. When He was here, He made it openly obvious that the righteousness God intends to be a characteristic of His people was seen in human flesh – "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The spiritual light that was in Him, has from Him and through His people, brought spiritual light to all people all over the world who seek Him. When a person indicates in some way their desire to know God, He arranges that there will be a way for them to find Him.

Believers in Christ today have been given the privilege and responsibility to give light, "Ye are the light of the world," as our Lord gave His light to us and to all men. Righteous living, spiritual grace, living faith show others around us, the difference between those who are in the kingdom of God and those who are not. Our Lord is both the Creator and Redeemer. Carved idols, the prophet wrote, did not create anything and so cannot redeem anything they didn't make in the first place. This redemption is only possible through the Perfect Servant. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." He is God's covenant to the Jews, and God's light to the Gentiles. The "former things," is in reference to the exile of Israel, and the "new things" are a reference to the promised return.

The Lord works His will for us and through us. No wonder a new song is in order! When we appreciate what God has done for us, our praise to Him will reflect our love for Him and our joy because of Him, and for what He is to us personally. Hopefully, that attitude and action of holy joy will produce a longing in the lonely lost souls of people for the Savior who found us when we were lost. The Lord delivers those who are helpless in themselves. "Without Him, I can do nothing." But on our behalf the Perfect Servant, and God are doing the same things because they are the same. This is a reference to the deity of the Messiah, the Christ of God.

The people who were enemies of the Jews who had trusted in the idols they made, will abandon idolatry when divine judgment comes upon them and demonstrates the mighty power of a living God to deliver His people. They will recognize they are up against an infinite power over which no idol, person or thing can defeat or even stop. God does not stop loving people even though divine justice requires punishment. His love for Israel is real but evil is not curbed yet.

Our Lord was always blind to disobedience to God and deaf to any attractions, opposition and enemies that were arrayed against Him who was the Perfect Servant, and who was obedient to God in everything. In contrast, Israel who is called a servant of God, is blind and deaf. They had been close to Him, but did not appreciate, or even see what He was doing for them. They had many miracles performed by Him for their good and had experienced His tender care even when they were down and out. They could not deliver those who were robbed and plundered, and became a prey of other nations themselves.

Unfortunately, this is not only a Jewish problem. It is the same today among many who profess to be Christians. Partial blindness is as deceiving as total blindness, and in some cases is even worse, because people don't realize they are blind. They don't understand much of anything about God and His truth revealed in the Bible. Before we condemn those who have gone before us for their failures, we must make sure we have not made mistakes – the same ones, or others that are worse. It is possible for us to be so concerned as to how others take the message of God, that we don't realize others are watching to see if we practice what we teach and preach.

Isaiah 42:1. *“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”*

GOD'S SERVANT.

Not a servant like other servants - this One is chosen and unique.
Among all others who have served the Lord; each one was in some way weak.
But this One Jehovah set His Spirit upon, stands out among all the sons of men.
Though in fashion as a man; He is divinely perfect - He is God's Son from heaven!

What an act of grace! What condescending love! This One is God's eternal delight!
Perfect holiness was always in His nature; from Him eternal luminescence shines bright.
His voice was the one that first spoke on earth, speaking light to a world of dark.
Authority is in every word He spoke; even the winds to His will do hark.

His strength is limitless and universal; all power is His in heaven and earth.
When God sent His Servant-Son to save us, He came by way of the virgin birth.
His moral strength and character are impeccable; nothing responds to sin or defiles.
His power was always under control; even when young, He was an obedient child.

As the years of His service opened before Him; He always did those things that pleased His Father.
He was a servant to servants when here; even outcasts around Him did gather.
His Father's business was always before Him; it was a joy to Him God's will to obey.
Whenever He spoke people stopped to listen; it was always God's word He did say.

His faithful service to Jehovah brought blessing, that has lasted through all generations.
The labor and service of His life and death, made possible our souls' salvation.
His service wasn't only in the fields and streets; not only in a carpenter's shop -
For His service for God led Him beyond all that - to His vicarious death on the cross.

He never rejected those who failed, who thought life and God had passed them by.
He stopped to minister in blessing and grace when He heard people in faith loudly cry.
When there was hunger - He fed; when there was bondage - He set free.
There were even those who died He gave life to; blind people He made to see.

To God's people and lost souls down through the centuries, He still ministers and in grace He
blessed.
He still calls for the wayward to turn and seek the Lord; and for those who labor to come and find
rest.

I have experienced for many years His service: divine, holy - perfectly appropriate to me.
I pray, O Gracious Servant of God: Thou wilt accept some feeble service to Thee.

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 43

THE WITNESS OF ISRAEL

God spoke with sorrow to Israel because of their spiritual decay in chapter 42. In chapter 43 the prophecy takes an entirely different course as the Lord deals with them by showing mercy in view of restoring them to Himself. He does this by redeeming them, not by overlooking their sin. It would be unjust if He removed the consequences of sin without the price incurred being dealt with. So, the consequences of sin had to be faced and gone through, but the Lord protected them as they went through the trials, and they are preserved as an identifiable people until this day.

There are some very encouraging “Fear nots,” at the beginning of this chapter that believers can claim for themselves. The first verse tells us what the Lord has done for us. “I have redeemed thee...” We have been purchased. “I have called thee...” We have been placed in a position. “Thou art Mine...” We are His possession. In verse two: “I will be with thee...” is a promise. In verse three: “I am the Savior...” is the greatest possible provision. Then in verse four we learn what we mean to Him. “I have loved thee...” indicates the preciousness which is His value of us. Then in verse five, the last “fear not,” assures us: “I am with thee....” His present presence is always with us.

The debt of sin has to be paid and the bondage of the Jews in Babylon for seventy years was a debt that could not be avoided. By the end of that time, almost all of those who had ignored and rejected the entreaties of the Lord through the prophets, had died. Restoration and redemption from Chaldean bondage was promised by God because of His love for them. But the redemption price had to be paid. The full restoration of Israel is still in the future, but the price of redemption has already been paid by our Lord Jesus Christ. The day will come when they will say, “Who is this that cometh from Edom?” Then they will see the wounds in His hands, and will wonder and worship as they consider Him who they had despised and rejected.

Israel is His own family. He has rights to claim from them, and He will fulfill all His obligations to them. They will be gathered to Him in peace, but until then His intention was that the nation of Israel would be a witness for Him. Probably the most outstanding assurance of the validity and power of the word of God to skeptics, is Israel. They stand alone in the world as a testimony of the faithfulness of God to them over thousands of years. However, the church, and the individual witness of true believers are also “witnesses unto [Him].” It is our privilege and obligation to be examples of righteousness and to reflect in daily life and walk, the principles of holy living. Our faith in God should be plain enough to see that people know we believe in a living God who has everything under His control. The forgiveness we have been given, has brought the relief to our soul and spirit to the extent we don’t have to feel guilty in spite of the fact that we have sinned. We have placed our trust in Him who has righteously dealt with our sin problem, and has given to us the gift of eternal life when we believed on Him.

The promises God made to Israel were not based on them being superior to the other people of the world in any way, but because He chose to set His love upon them in a unique way. They were weak and knew it. But “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto Him for righteousness.” This testimony of the father of the Jews, and of people of faith, is given three times in the New Testament, giving us the proof of positional righteousness being imputed as a gift from God to us by simply believing on Him. There was unspeakable suffering as payment for our sin by our Savior, and by His grace He has saved us. To us who believe, and in a coming day, by the natural seed of Abraham, there is favor given because of His commitment to the new covenant He made with us, and the covenant He made with the seed of Abraham. These people are precious to God because of the perfections of our Lord Jesus Christ that have been imputed to us by grace. This includes those who are “called by My name” from all over the world who He created for His own glory.

Israel as an identifiable people, is not only a testimony to the validity of the Bible through fulfilled prophecies, but to the character of God who keeps all the promises He makes. What He says He will do, He does. Israel, the servant-nation, is God’s testimony to the world that He is faithful and true, and is the only One who can save sinners in a just way. Such promises are relevant to us because of the promises He gives to us of salvation, eternal life, power for living, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the presence of the Lord with us to the end of the age. As we fulfill the “commission” He gave to preach the Gospel, we experience in a special way, the blessing of His presence. No heathen deity/god can deliver anything or anyone, but still the “idols” of the world, are still given priority by millions of people. God will not demonstrate His saving grace and power when any other gods are worshipped. Even the “modern smooth cross” before which many people genuflect, or the gods of pleasure, money and fame, will not permit the blessing of forgiveness and salvation from sin to be experienced by those who put such things before the Lord.

God demonstrated His universal sovereignty when He brought down empires and nations using His authority over creation and supernatural events to deliver His people. In spite of the broken condition of Israel spiritually, that nation is evidence of God’s greatness and His grace. They have survived only because of His intervention and deliverance time after time. He does not always use the same means nor act in the same way. A “new thing” is not uncommon when God deals with us and with sin. He “blots out” sin but does not ignore the transgressions committed against Him. He deals with sin justly, to the full extent of the law, and completely, in the way He chooses. The people and nations of the world will benefit and rejoice when restored Israel bears worldwide witness to the Sovereign Lord as their King.

Sadly, the ungrateful children of Israel will have to suffer more yet, before God can bless them. Agnosticism, atheism and unbelief are common to the majority of the natural seed of Abraham. They also have substituted outward forms in the place of inward reality. It wasn’t only animals and sacrifices they brought before the Lord, but they also brought

unconfessed sins and unrepentant hearts. Those things canceled out any benefit a lavish expensive offering would bring. God “blots out” sin for His own sake to honor His covenant promises, and testify of His genuine love for them. The Jews had no basis for justice to be carried out on their behalf, because right from Abraham’s lie to Pharaoh, to those who are alive at this present time, they have sinned and ignored the seriousness of sin against the Lord and disobedience to His revealed word.

Isaiah 43:1-2. *“But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee O Israel, ‘Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.’”*

FEAR NOT.

A word for the year by God has been given to me -
I have been purchased, “Fear not... I have redeemed thee.”
My position is secure, the Lord calls me by name -
I am His possession, “Thou art mine” is His rightful claim.

His promise is to be with me when the waters are deep -
When God makes promises, every promise He keeps.
Whether swelling rivers or hot fire I will be safe -
As with others in the past, He is with us in every place.

Provision is secure, the Lord God is my Savior.
That truth changes the heart and affects my behavior.
Unbelievable except by faith, He considers us precious -
Impossible to fathom, but the Lord is so gracious.

His presence has removed any fear of the future -
In every area of life, He has committed to nurture
Anyone who by faith appreciates what He has done -
Is loved by Him, our Savior, the Holy One.

“The new year, O God, has me realizing what I have been missing in these last days when I have been foolishly involved in so many insignificant things. I need this fellowship with Thee early each day. Keep me with a proper perspective in spiritual truths. Thanks so much for these verses of promise. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 44

TRIUMPHS OF GOD’S GRACE

The contrast between the Lord God and idols is very obvious when we read the scriptures as well as use the common sense and logic that God gives us. Israel was a living witness for the living and true God over the man-made idols of people around them. Yet, for some reason, idols attracted those who were God’s chosen people, and they sinned in following idolatrous practices. Lest we get too lofty in our own minds, we need to consider that today, idolatry is rampant in this country and all over the world. Even so-called Christians have substituted divine guidance by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit given in the Bible, for “ministries” and practices that are designed to please people and create large attendance records in “churches.” Other modern idols are pleasure, money and fame that are actively pursued by millions of people.

Sports figures who are successful at playing games to the extent they become millionaires, are called idols. There are movie stars who are considered idols to be copied. There is even a program called “The American idol” that promotes young people into the public eye because of a special talent that gives vicarious pleasure to those who watch and listen. One famous person said, “Hockey is my life.” Another said, “I live for playing football.” Others have as their main goal in life to be successful entrepreneurs and make their ideas come to life in a thriving business. Even religion and religious practices become the focus of life for some people, rather than love for God and a willingness to do His will in every way they can. Such things substitute the “creation” for the Creator; the effect for the Cause; the idol for the Almighty Living God.

In this chapter, Isaiah contrasts God as Lord; King of Israel; Redeemer; Lord of hosts and the First and Last - with idols. Idols are gravened images that are only vanity, that have no profit, cannot see or know anything. They are made by men out of the imaginations of the perverted minds of people, who take a piece of metal and form it into an idol, or a piece of wood and make an idol out of one part of it and burn the other part to bake bread. Israel had fallen for that kind of deception and so there was a cost to be paid for ignoring God.

Despite their backsliding and apostasy, the nation of Israel is still God’s chosen earthly people. What grace that is! “Jeshurun” (Upright one) is still on the heart of God even though ungodly leaders like Manasseh and other wicked

kings had led the whole nation away from God, and they became an idolatrous nation. This prophecy tells of a time when the Living Water and the Holy Spirit of God will establish the covenant testimony of Israel in a real way. The time will come when Israel will be glad of their unique relationship with God and will realize how much more important that is, than to be like the nations around them.

Any person or assembly of God's people who belong to the Lord in any time or place, should be glad to be associated with the Lord. God forbid we would be ashamed of who we are as children of God who follow Him and obey His word. We should be delighted to be able to let others know of the special relationship we have with Him, and let them know that He wants that same connection from them by faith in Him. To be associated with divine Persons in a living, vital, eternal relationship is of greater worth than gaining the whole world.

From verse six through eight, God Himself speaks and identifies Himself as Israel's King and Redeemer. There is no one like Him, nor ever will be. He is the Lord. He is the King of Israel. He is the Redeemer. He is the Lord of hosts. He is the First and the Last. There is no other God. He challenges the idol-worshipping world by stating His uniqueness and His eternal being. His authority and His power are unmatched by anyone or anything. His infinite knowledge, His omniscience of things yet to come, is passed on to us and all generations through His prophets whose prophecies have never failed. False prophets make failing predictions. Prophecies given through true prophets of God are one hundred percent accurate and fulfilled. The nation of Israel, in spite of all their failures, is a witness to the world as to who the Lord is. They remain as an identifiable people even though they are small and despised, persecuted and spoken against. Other great and mighty powers have risen and now are not even a memory in the minds of most people. The great empires that rose up and conquered nations around them have fallen and now are only thought of in history books. But Israel remains.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the King eternal. He is the Redeemer who has paid the price of redemption for all who believe on Him – and the day will come when He will redeem Israel. He is the Original Source of all things and He is the Creator of all things by the word of His power. He is eternal in His being and is fully verifiable by history and a real Person who lived here and dwelt among men. His power and authority come from Himself, not human beings and their opinions, or idols that are totally senseless. He knows everything because he is omniscient and controls everything because He is omnipotent. He is consciously aware of all that is going on because He is omnipresent.

The verses from nine through twenty are a satire on the foolishness of idolatry. Idols make big promises but produce nothing. They produce nothing because they are nothing but a figment of imagination. The false advertising concerning idols was based only on the outward appearance of lifeless gold and precious stones. Their only attraction was visual that blinded or smeared the eyes and minds of ungodly devotees to accept idolatry.

Contrast that outward sham with the power, authority and beauty of divine creation that lives and maintains itself with the cycles of life with which God made them. There is nothing shoddy or gaudy about God's work. It is real, living and reliable from one season to another, one year to another; and down through the centuries people have counted on what God has done, and still do, even though some deny Him. His reality is not only seen by the evidence of temporal things He has created and maintains by the word of His power. It is also made evident by the things that are unseen and eternal. Those are the things that last forever, like love, grace, mercy, kindness, intelligence, faith, truth and understanding of who God is that comes through these things. These unseen things last eternally and are what really count in life. All of this comes from the Lord God who idolaters deny and reject.

The ignorance and lack of reason that is in believing and trusting idols, is described with sarcasm. The craftsman who makes the idols gets hungry and is weak. He has to take a rest in order to continue making something that he thinks is powerful. He makes marks and lines, and draws forms on a piece of wood to carve out an image that comes from his own imagination. The wood that is left over: chips, sawdust, pieces broken and discarded that come from the same piece of wood from which the idol was made, is used to make a fire to keep warm by or to bake bread to live by. The wood-cutter, the carpenter, the craftsman use their trades to make an idol, and then bow down to the product of their own making. We consider that the heights of foolishness.

Sadly though, idolatrous forms have found their way into Christendom. Counterfeit worship has taken the place of worship in spirit and in truth. Traditions and rituals have claimed the emotional senses of counterfeit Christians and some believers who have been sidetracked by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Catholicism claims to change bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ. Protestantism has made the worship of the Lord into a musical production that entertains the minds and controls the emotions of those who sit and listen to wonderful productions. Lively music instead of serious heart-felt thoughts expressed from humble and contrite spirits, has taken over the place of true worship.

What people think about the Lord has taken the place of the Lord Himself. It was because of cases like this Isaiah wrote, "He feeds on ashes. A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul." Neither are they

willing to say this “thing” in my right hand is a lie. Idol-gods of whatever sort they are: money, power, fame, pleasure – they all deceive people. They are powerless to save a soul; they do not give real meaning to life; they do not produce true joy and lasting happiness. The most serious thing of all is they do not prepare a person to meet God, and they cannot keep a person out of hell.

God offered mercy to the nation of Israel, and he offers mercy to every individual now who will return unto the Lord for the redemption that He alone can give. The many sins of the Jews would be canceled out, and forgiveness granted if and when they will return to the Lord. When the repentant soul returns to Him and responds in faith to His offer of mercy and forgiveness presented in the Gospel, there is rejoicing in heaven among angels and on earth among the redeemed of the Lord.

The Lord is described as the all-knowing, all-powerful and all-present God who created all things, including each individual “in the womb.” Personhood comes from God at conception. He the Redeemer, is the Designer of every individual person, making each one unique. There are no two people exactly alike out of all the billions who have ever been conceived and given life by God. All idolaters have been deceived by false prophets and diviners who claim much, but produce nonsense. God’s truth is the standard of all righteousness, and His word is always absolutely reliable, accurate and unchanging. God’s truth has always been and always will be, the tried and proven standard that exposes the fallacy of all the vain imaginations of false teachers and idolaters. This chapter ends with a remarkable prophecy naming Cyrus by name, about 150 years before he became the ruler who arranged for Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem after seventy years of captivity. Isaiah prophesied that Jerusalem would fall under conquest 100 years before it happened, and that a new temple would be built 200 years later – even long before the first one was destroyed. Sure enough, Jerusalem was conquered, the temple was destroyed, the Jews were taken into captivity just as Isaiah had prophesied. Then Cyrus released Jews to return to Jerusalem, and later under the leadership of Ezra, another temple was built.

The premise of this chapter is clear: God, our God, is the One True God. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows all, controls all, and is in every place all the time. Nothing is hidden from Him. The idols which the Jews had turned to were deceptive imaginations from the sinful minds and hearts of men. Any person who falls into the soul-damning trap of idolatry of whatever kind it is, is lost. But God is willing to save and forgive those who come in faith to Him no matter how far they have strayed.

Isaiah 44:6, 9. *“Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the First and I am the Last; and beside me there is no God... They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they might be ashamed.”*

CONTRASTS.

The Lord, Master, Supreme Ruler over all -
Or the vanity of gold images to whom foolish men call.
How far removed from reality is such as this -
One from the heights of glory, the other the abyss.

The King of Israel, to David’s throne the Promise -
Delectable things of idolatry, absolutely no profit.
The future is bright when Christ reigns on the throne -
Deceived by a lie when one is left alone.

The Redeemer has evidence in hands, feet and side -
Idols see and give nothing seeking people to divide.
The price paid to redeem us far exceeds every cost -
To trust in vain idols means that poor soul is lost.

Angels and saints know who is the Lord of hosts -
Idols see nothing and are as deaf as wooden posts.
The Lord God alone is indeed the first and the last -
Those bowing to images fall under judgment’s hot blast.

“How far removed men have gone, O Righteous God, from the truth of who Thou art to the deception of their own dark minds. To make an idol or graven image and then bow to the folly of their own design is darkness deep and awful. How gracious Thou art to allow men to hear of Thyself and repent of their sin and believe to the saving of their souls. Have mercy on them, O God, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 45

GOD’S PROMISE TO DELIVER

History is really the story of God, although in that story, the God of all grace has included human beings in the unfolding of His purposes for eternity. We can only see a little dot of human history against the thousands of great volumes of divine plans. And yet, it is in this little speck of time, God chooses to call out a people for His name from all of the billions of humans that have existed and will yet exist. He chose an insignificant tribe of people from Abraham's seed to be His earthly representatives down through the past centuries, and they still are going to fulfill what He has planned, although they have not been doing a very good job of it so far. There is one exception. Our Lord Jesus Christ was found in fashion as a man, and came from the tribe of Judah as the Messiah of Israel. They have rejected Him up until this time, but we know from prophecy that His plans will be fulfilled and the King of the Jews will be the recognized world ruler in the future.

There is another wonder in the plans of God. From all nations of the earth, there is being called out from all nations at this present time, a people for His name. The church of God is composed of Jews and Gentiles who individually have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. They have looked to Him and Him only for their salvation. Isaiah prophesied of this fact in this chapter. By His grace. He will save anyone who will look to Him in faith as their own personal Savior. In an act of grace, the Lord revealed through Isaiah one hundred and fifty years before it happened, that He had chosen a person yet to be born, identified him by name as Cyrus, and identified that he would be a Persian, one group of ancient people who believed in only one God. Most nations had a national idol, and some many idols. This man, Cyrus was chosen by God to be the deliverer of His people Israel from the bondage of Babylon, even before the captivity took place. He was God's "anointed one" to fulfill the plans of God regarding His people at that time.

Most historical accounts are of little importance to people who live in the present. Few know much about the Hyksos, or the Sabeans. The Hittites and Jebusites are not even heard of by most people although they were famous people in the past. But one little group of people, the Hebrews (Jews), are the focal point of history when it comes to emphasizing the significance and purpose of mankind. The Jewish prophets thousands of years ago made predictions that have come to pass with one hundred percent accuracy. Out of all the chaos of human history that has failed to bring peace among the nations, and a consensus as to what human life is all about, there is still the on-going history of that God-chosen people that gives significance to our world today. Through them has come the Hope of all mankind, our Lord Jesus Christ.

God allows people to do things and make choices on their own volition, but He has given the direction to where righteousness and peace can be found. That is why the word of God is so important, and in this particular place, the prophecies that show us the course to follow in view of what is yet ahead. The sinful works of human beings have left a chaotic condition from which we are not able to break out of until we come personally to the Prince of Peace. Personal peace and a "quiet and peaceable life" are possible for those who know the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior.

God's power is evident in all of human history even though many people will not admit that. Human limitation is also evident through history. God's righteousness is demonstrated in history, and when a person or nation is willing to submit to, and live by God's standards of life and conduct, there is peace. Cyrus is named as God's servant to set His people free even though He didn't know God nor God's name, but God knew his – and named him. God stands in solitary majesty and glory above all intelligence and power in the universe. He created light and darkness. He controls the movement of earth so we have sunrise and sunset. He also "made peace through the blood of His cross" so that people who put their trust in Him can live in harmony and fellowship with the only true God, on a personal basis. God certainly does good, but he is also the Just One who will send "the wicked, and all nations that forget God," to hell.

He offers salvation and imputes His righteousness to those who believe on Him, and allows bad to happen to those who reject Him and have to accept the consequences of the evil they commit. He is the Sovereign God, the only True God who knows and reveals secrets, so nothing is hid from Him. He did not create sin. However, He gave all intelligent created beings the option to choose to do right as a free moral person. He did not make humans meaningless creatures who can only respond to physical needs. To choose that which is good brings the results that bless us. To choose that which is bad, brings the consequences of punishment for sin.

God is the Maker of all things. Therefore, He can do as He wishes because He has "all power in heaven and in earth." He can use a pagan leader like Cyrus to do His will if He so chooses, in order to get the desired result. We are His created creatures, and are in no position to tell God what to do, or whether what He has done is right or wrong. In His sovereign will He reveals Himself to people who want to sincerely know Him and who want to know and do the truth. To those, He offers salvation without any labor, and without any reservation. The simple act of a look of faith to Christ as the real living Savior is enough to know Him and believe on Him. Such persons are justified, cleared of all guilt and declared righteous by God Himself.

God's salvation is offered on the easiest possible terms: "Look unto Me;" with the best possible results: "And be ye saved;" to the greatest possible number of people: "All the ends of the earth;" from the highest possible authority: "For I am God, and there is none else." It is assured by divine guarantee. It is everlasting in its duration. It has been openly declared to all who seek the Lord. It has been offered to all mankind in all ages. It is guaranteed by the Lord.

Three times in this chapter God uses the phrase, "There is no other," to emphasize His authority and His unique character. He has declared that the time will come when the nations will serve Israel. Anyone who seeks Him with all their heart will find Him. The power of divine truth will lead the nations to the south to see idolatry for what it is, and will compel them to acknowledge the God of Israel as the true God. History has vindicated that the truth the God of Israel has declared is right. Other philosophies and religious opinions come and go because they are limited to human ideas. They have no answers to the basic questions of life, of our existence, of the reasons for living, and no lasting goals for which we can seek to attain.

The only way the people of earth who have submitted to false gods, idols and man-made philosophies can find hope, is to "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else." Every knee will bow to Him in faith and be brought down to the dust under His power. Those who have lived life based on a lie, will be damned. Those who have the spiritual seed of the word of God implanted in them, have eternal life. They experience a bit of what that means now, and the longer we live, we enjoy it more and find more of what that kind of life is. But presently we have only a little taste of what the reality of eternal life is. This much we know. We will live with God forever, and the kind of life He has for us, we will share with Him in perfect fellowship. We will never be deity, but the divine nature imparted to us will enable us to enjoy what God enjoys to whatever capacity He gives us.

Isaiah 45:7. *"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil (calamity): I the Lord do all these things."*

I THE LORD.

It has happened again - last night when I was sleeping
He who is the One True God - the Lord of hosts - unique
Created calamity with purposeful mind to speak again
In a voice louder than that of the noisy crowd cheering -
The passing game is over - faded into only a memory and a medal-
But God has moved again, and earth replies by falling down -
Stones breaking - like in the past when redemption's price was paid -
Not only earth trembling at the voice of God, but seas -
Mighty as they are, moving with unrelenting pressure
Against the land and little obstacles made by man -
These are nothing to the mighty waters - and then God stops them;
The waters turn and flee to distant shores in haste -
Anything feeble in their path may be quickly laid waste
As fleeing waters reach to distant lands and clamber onto shores
Seeking, but not finding a way to escape from God.
While men stand crying in despair for what he hoped to bring
Some joy or peace - anything to satisfy a hungry heart -
Lies in rubble at his feet or even overwhelming some -
And still he cries out from a distraught and rattled mind -
"No God for me!" He only wants a vague idea of a power supreme -
A "god" manipulated by the limited extent of his puny thoughts.
Awake, O man - for God is God - there is none else but He
Who forms the light with a word, and when He chooses, sends calamity;
To ultimately bring mankind - any or every person - to a table of consideration,
And there to offer once again the peace that was made - God's salvation -
Paid by death - peace made by the blood of His cross -
Warning again with unmistakable voice lest man be lost -
"Look unto Me and be ye saved!" - the simple invitation is given -
That careless, undone, weak, needy man - may go to heaven!

"O God, I thought when I heard this morning of another major earthquake and this evening when hearing of yet another in a different part of the world, the increase of these events may wake up some sleeping souls. The last one a few weeks ago had people running into the streets calling out to Thee. Maybe this one in a more affluent place may have a similar effect. We have tried in this Gospel series to call people to the light and they have not come. I understand that when Thou dost speak people listen. May they heed Thy call. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 46

PEOPLE CARRY IDOLS – GOD CARRIES PEOPLE

In predicting the downfall of Babylon, the Lord, through his servant, Isaiah, describes the contrast of the idols of Babylon that were so different from the Lord God of Israel. Israelites had fallen for the deception of idolatry because of its attraction to the flesh, and also to be like all the other nations around them. This same attitude affects God's people today in this place. For some strange reason, the Lord's people want to dress like those who don't know the Lord, talk the same talk, do the same things, go to the same places – and they think if they do that, the ungodly will be inclined to repent of their sins and believe the Gospel. If there is no difference between those who are going to heaven and those who are going to hell, why should the unsaved worry about it?

Bel was the chief god of the Babylonians. It was supposed to be the god of the air and land by whom people survived. Belshazzar's name meant, "Bel, protect the king." Nebo was idol who was supposed to be the god of science, education and writing. Nebuchadnezzar's name meant, "Nebo, protect the boundary." When Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were taken to Babylon, and were going to be trained to take leadership roles there, the names Belshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were given to them so they would become idolaters like their new names suggested. Fortunately, these young men knew who they were in God's eyes and kept their distinctiveness as true believers. It doesn't seem like Daniel's new name ever stuck. Even the kings called him "Daniel." Most of the Israelites in Isaiah's day, seemed to be uncertain as to who they served – idols or the Lord God of Israel.

Therefore, the Lord had Isaiah to write down the contrast between idols and God. He clearly pointed out the fact that graven images are just helpless baggage that must be carried by idolaters. The idols the people of Judah worshipped had to be carried into exile by those who worshipped them. In stark contrast to the powerlessness of idols, is the Lord God who carries all His people. He carried them all from birth to old age. He is all-knowing, and has all control of the future. His plans will be carried out. Commitment to our God overrides every other matter and commitment. Idols do nothing, know nothing and are nothing but the product of man's imagination.

God is the God of the living, and He is the Living and True God. He is the One who gives and sustains all life for all of life's span. He is the One who rescues and preserves His people. Idols can do nothing because they are only lifeless forms. Idols are made by men to reflect what man perceives himself to be. How strange and unexplainable idolatry is, and yet people persist in chasing their vain imaginations today, because it exalts them in their own eyes, and they hope, in the eyes of others.

From verse eight through eleven Isaiah wrote that God only is able to predict the future. He is the eternal God over whom time has no control. Everything is an eternal "Now" to Him. The rebellious Jews were called to remember how God had dealt with them and preserved them for many generations. They survived because God kept them alive for His own covenant purposes. In spite of their stubbornness and waywardness, after the captivity in Babylon had fulfilled its purpose and course, and brought the Jews to consider who they were and to whom they belonged, He was going to arrange that they would be freed.

The naming of Cyrus as a "bird of prey" from the east was a prophecy of Isaiah who got his message from the Lord. Cyrus was coming to "fulfill My purpose." They would be set free, and it would not take a long time for it to happen. God's promise is a sure hope for the future and well as a help for the present. He is near unto all who call upon Him and will save them. Idols can do nothing for anyone, but contrast that with the Lord God who not only carries His people, but is able to "abundantly save" them.

It is something to take seriously when God's people allow anything to take the place of our Lord as the main objective of our lives. He is the One who has carried us through life from our birth to the present time. He is the One who makes provision for all of our needs. He is the One who supplies life and breath and all things. How could we ever consider anything else as important as our relationship and fellowship with Him? The Lord has all power and that power is limitless. It is controlled by God's sovereign will and used for divine purposes. He knows all things in contrast to idols that know nothing. His own counsels decide what will be, long before it happens or is even thought of by men.

Man has been made by God to reflect His image, but not in a mere visible form. We are made with a mind so that we can rationally consider all that we can see and well as what we cannot see. We have emotions like God has so we can experience things like love, joy, praise and honor in ways that are expressed as worship from our hearts. We also have a will to be able to make choices which enable us to function in life in ways that can please God, and produce benefit for others and ourselves. It can also do the opposite.

Objective evidence of the fulfillment of prophecies like this, silence the skeptics who cannot give any explanation as to how history can be known and promises regarding the future comes to pass. There were people referred to in the last couple of verse of this chapter who were stubborn in their hearts and did not believe that God would deliver His people from Babylon. God will vindicate and deliver His people who have been oppressed and victimized for many

generations. He will yet save His people and they will become the kind of nation of earthly people God intended when He first made His promise to Abraham.

Isaiah 46:5. *“To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we be like?”*

COMPARE.

The greatest earthquake known to man with all its latent power
Is not even like an indrawn breath to God who with a single word
Can make the earth with all its beauty and also a trillion stars
Each one unique with its own name, and His infinite power not be stirred.

The morning light impresses me as earth's beauty comes into view,
Even the heat of the sun is felt as darkness gives way to light;
But the beauty just displays God's work as I see each different hue,
That reflects the beauty of the Lord Himself who gives to eyes their sight.

Movement comes and I see birds go by and the insects show their life.
Men have spent a lifetime trying hard to learn what they think is life's secret
That makes from nothing or from dust so many forms - even man and wife -
Not willing to accept the fact in every life form, God holds the key - He made it.

Emotions that come unseen from within are in various ways expressed.
A facial expression, a tone of voice, a tear, a word - a touch -
Each one expressing in some way - the heart, yet God has far greater blessed -
Expressing His love beyond compare, when Christ endured so much.

It is absolutely impossible to compare God with anything,
He is so far supreme there is no way found to define
The One who stands alone and by Himself has brought all into being -
Still, He in indefinable grace makes us heirs saying, “What's Mine is thine.”

“O eternal God, the Maker and Maintainer of the universe: in no way would I ever try to compare Thee with the limited knowledge that I have. Still, I thank Thee for allowing me to know Thee and for being willing to make me to know and love Thee. Yet far greater, is the knowledge that I have been loved by Thee. I praise and thank Thee for who Thou art and for revealing Thyself to me through Christ. Amen.”

Isaiah 47

THE DISGRACE OF BABYLON

This chapter is like a song of victory over Babylon that was reduced from being like a queen to a half-naked slave girl grinding grain with a millstone. Babylon was the major hotbed of idolatry in the Middle East from the time of Nimrod who began the kingdom of Babel, all down through the generations to the time of Isaiah's writing of this prophecy. The influence of Babel brought sorceries, black arts, astrology and occultic practices that led many of those nations astray thinking that those powers of darkness were to be worshipped. Even today in this country, people look in the newspaper to see what their horoscope is for the day. Some people don't do business until they consult astrological charts.

The Babylonians were permitted the conquest of Judah by the Lord in order to bring chastening on His own people in Judah and Jerusalem who had turned to idolatry. But the Chaldeans became a proud and arrogant power that God left alone to face their own enemies by themselves. Like the Assyrians, the Babylonians showed no mercy, and no mercy would be shown it by the Medes and Persians who would conquer them.

Before Babylon had even become the mighty power that made it known as the “lady (queen) of kingdoms,” and conquered the Middle East under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Isaiah prophesied of its downfall one hundred and fifty years earlier. Like all of humanity: nations and individuals alike, God is determined to bring the proud down and the humble up. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” “[God] will bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.”

Just like Isaiah predicted, Babylon would become like a captive female slave, open to public view in humiliation and shame. The people of Babylon had become an indulgent, ungodly, self-centered society to the extent that they even worshipped themselves as if they were gods. They had been used by God for His purposes, but because of their lack of response to Him, after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and the guidance of Daniel, they had to be removed. The humbling of Nebuchadnezzar to be like an animal eating grass for seven years, didn't seem to stick to Belshazzar who desecrated the things of God at a feast and died the same night the warning came to him from the Lord through Daniel.

The Medes and Persians had been outside the city for some time and would not take anything but full surrender. Complacency was a problem to the Babylonians because they felt secure inside their city walls. When the time of

reckoning came, there was no nation or false god who could defend or help them. No business, no military power or no idol can defend and help those who turn away from God when He sets Himself against them.

An independent attitude on our part toward God and His word is an affront to Him. If we consider our own ideas to be of great importance when we think about the Bible and God, we are setting ourselves up for a great fall. Babylon believed in its own greatness and power. They became captivated by their own press releases. No matter how powerful and smart we think we are, it can all be taken away in a very short time. Then we too will be exposed for who we really are – like a half-naked slave woman who chose her own way and had to pay the price of sin herself. The second Babylon that is coming in the future, will fall from pride in the same way only with far great consequences, and there will be none to help it either. Like Cyrus was to the first Babylon as the conqueror, so our Lord Jesus Christ will be to the future Babylon to come in the time of tribulation. It will fall quickly to the great King of kings, and there will be no one to save it.

Isaiah 47:9. *“But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.”*

IN A MOMENT.

Things can change in a moment of time by a simple knock.

For many years, things went on the same,
Life went on like the workings of a clock -
Similar to the schedule of a daily train -

Then in a moment it happened -
One stepped on something left out of place -
Quicker than one can even plan for
The rest of life will be lived in a brace.

He left for work as usual -
Life seemed as normal as yesterday.
Another too left his abode -
One must work to get his pay.
The night before left him sick and sore -
He knew he should have stopped,
“Friends” urged him to have one more -
In a moment both men fatally met.

It is never wise to plan a day -
Or a work too far in advance,
For God alone has the final word to say -
Nothing is really left to chance.
To live as if our God is dead,
Is a terrible mistake.
He who holds our breath in hand -
Knows every single choice we make.

Family life; personal life - life in all its forms
Can change in a moment to something else -
Totally different from previous norms -
Pleasure or pain are changes that are felt.
May it never be that I live a day,
Without this important thought:
God who knows all I do and say,
In a moment can bring all to naught.

“I know, Holy God, the warnings in this scripture text, are for those who knew what was right and did the opposite. But I also know that I must remember, one moment can change everything in my life the same as anyone else’s. I also know “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” I will be changed to be able to look on my Savior without fear. I wonder will it be today Father - I anticipate that particular moment with joy, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 48

GOD WILL DELIVER THE JEWS

The people of Judah felt confident because they lived in Jerusalem and the temple was there. Israel’s faithless hypocrites were pious appearing idol worshippers who used the name of the Lord as a pretense. Israel’s piety, even in the time of Moses and all down through succeeding generations, was merely a sham with no real appreciation for

the Lord who was their Deliverer and Redeemer. So, they had to suffer the consequences of their pretense. But God is still their God, and Israel is still His people.

Heritage, location, and religion are all false security when they are mere forms without an active relationship that involves hearts and minds joined in fellowship. Divided loyalty is not real loyalty. "You cannot serve two masters." The promises God made to the children of Israel will be kept, even though they haven't done anything to deserve it. The "faith" of the Jews is only superficial. There were things revealed to them right from the beginning of God's personal dealings with them, and things which God did for them, that they credited to idols. They were a very perverse nation that relied on their own ideas and false opinions of idolatry.

According to Isaiah, they dismissed as of no worth, the many ways God preserved them, like the manna from heaven and water from the rock as well as other things, and even forgot about them. Redemption as Isaiah described it to them was new to them, because they had not paid attention to it before, and didn't seem to think it was important. They were just going through religious forms. The teaching of redemption apparently held no concern to the nation as a whole, so they couldn't honestly say, "Behold, I knew them," or "Of course I knew them." If they had, they would not have followed the path of idolatry.

When there is no real response to the will of God and the word of God, there is nothing that would keep the just hand of God from chastening His children. Attitudes and actions reveal what a person, or a nation, is really like. All their accomplishments mean nothing when it is done only for self-centered interests. Unpleasant things that happen to us cause us to complain if we are not cognizant of the fact that God allows, and occasionally arranges, troubles for our benefit and learning. "The furnace of affliction" may at times be the best thing to happen to us. Faith, spiritual God-given strength, holy conduct and a godly attitude will refine us and make us useful to our Master.

Even though the people of Israel and Judah were perverse and willfully ignorant of the truth of God, the Lord didn't cut them off. Instead, He set about to refine them by putting them through the "furnace of affliction." For His own sovereign reasons, the Lord chose Cyrus to be His ally, and through him, the Lord would free the Jews and make it possible for them to return to the land promised to their forefathers. When the captives were freed and able to leave Babylon, Isaiah said there would be shouts of joy for the relief of freedom, and the security of being under divine guidance.

Often people take their liberty in Christ as liberty to do what they want regardless of what God wants. If there is no repentance for sin or trust in the Lord, there will be no peace. God teaches us and directs us in ways of His own choosing. When we are aware of that and pay attention to Him, we learn to obey Him. When we obey Him, we will be committed to righteousness, and peace follows.

Any person who is willing to listen to the voice of the Lord, will not only know the ways of the Lord, but will also know Him who is the "First and the Last, the Holy One of Israel, the Lord thy God." The call goes out to all who will listen. "Come ye near unto Me," from the One who is the Messiah of Israel. It is necessary to hear and heed the commandments of God in order to live as we should and be able to please Him. If the people of Israel had listened, and learned, and paid heed to what the Lord said through His servants the prophets, they wouldn't have been taken captive, and the deliverance after seventy years of captivity wouldn't have been necessary.

To us, the Lord is the Prince of Peace when we are obedient to His words and commandments as in verse eighteen. Not only is obedience expected but also righteousness, verse twenty-two. When our mind is set on the word of God, and there is real love for God's word, we will find ourselves dead to the flesh and alive unto God. The Lord Jesus Christ is also the Prince of Peace to God because "He made peace through the blood of His cross." He has "broken down the middle wall" that was between Jews, Gentiles and the Lord and made us one in Him. Through our Lord who has commissioned His own, the "Gospel of peace" goes out to the world that is in a state of turmoil.

To have peace, we must seek the Lord and He will give us His peace. By God's grace there will be deliverance from Babylon in the future like there was in the past from the first Babylon. There will be redemption for Israel, "His servant Jacob," and they will know and recognize it for what it is and the value of it when they see the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory. This is the last mention of Babylon by name in the book of Isaiah, which seems fitting, as the chapter ends with, "There is no peace," saith the Lord to the wicked. All who choose the course of wickedness in this life, will never find peace – forever. From chapter forty through forty-eight, God deals with Israel concerning their idolatry. From chapter forty-nine through fifty-seven, God deals with Israel concerning their rejection of the Messiah, and ends with the same words, "There is no peace," saith my God to the wicked.

Isaiah 48:11; 17. *"For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? And I will not give my glory unto another... Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou shouldest go."*

FOR MINE OWN SAKE.

Why such restraint when evil abounds?
Why would God allow such calamities all around?
There is an on-going purpose God knows and wants to be.
God has a plan for us all - it is God who "refineth thee."

Long ago, it happened before the earth was made.
God made plans - there are those who would be saved
Without prejudice - any person who wanted to see
God's salvation, now realize - it is God who has "chosen thee."

For the benefit of man - much more than the profit of money,
It has been revealed by the Spirit - God does not respect any
Higher or of more value, all humans, whether he or she
All can learn God's will - it is God who "teacheth thee."

In early life or as the many years fly by
We need the Lord to lead us in ways we don't know why -
With trust in Him who wants the best for me -
I'll walk in faith with confidence - it is God who "leadeth thee."

"O Father in heaven, this passage of scripture makes me to understand that Thy plans and purposes are not just for the sake of the Israelis, or even me - but for Thyself too. There are reasons things happen to nations and persons that are for Thine own sake. May all that is going on bring much glory to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 49

THE MISSION OF JEHOVAH'S SERVANT

This part of Isaiah's prophecy has mainly to do with the doctrine of salvation through the Person and work of "Jehovah's Servant." The Servant of God from here on in the book is One far greater than Jacob or Cyrus. This Servant is the Messiah of Israel, our Lord Jesus Christ. This Servant does what the Master says, and this Servant fulfills the word of God exactly as God says. He is the Son/Servant. The calling and mission of the Lord Jesus as the Servant is clear. He has come to redeem His people. Right from the first words of this chapter of the prophecy, we understand this call goes out to the whole world. "The isles," the "coastlands," makes plain God wants "all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

This salvation message that is given in these next chapters, speak of deliverance from the penalty of sin and the new life God gives to people world-wide who trust in Him. To them there is given safety and security bringing to them joy in salvation and the peace that follows knowing one is right with God. The beginning of this is that Messiah will come to restore Israel, and He will also give "light to the Gentiles."

The call of God to His Servant was not an afterthought. This plan was conceived by God's eternal purpose to have a people for Himself who will love Him, enjoy Him, have fellowship with Him and share life forever with Him. This plan came into full light when a "virgin conceived and bare a Son." He was called from the womb to be the Savior of the world. He is and always was fully equipped to do what He was called to accomplish as we read in the second verse. He is the One who is the ideal "Israel." He is the incarnation of what God wanted Israel to be.

To the Jewish world, the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ was a failure. When He was here, He had every right to be discouraged when He "was despised and rejected of men." Even His own disciples misunderstood what He said, and what he meant at times. The Lord Jesus did not resort to their human and national expectations. Therefore, He left the results of His time here when He spoke as a man who said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent My strength in vain and for nothing," [NIV] with the Righteous God, and concluded the thought by saying, "Yet what is due Me is in the Lord's hand, and My reward is with My God" [NIV].

The Servant in this prophecy is obviously not "Jacob" (Israel), but the One of whom Simeon quoted as, "A Light to lightened the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." This Servant's ministry is to the whole human race. Universal atonement is offered to "all men everywhere" who will repent of their sin to God, and seek the Lord with all their heart. The words of Philip the evangelist to the Ethiopian eunuch who wanted to be baptized were, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." His answer, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," gives assurance that "in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." Jehovah's Servant is "Lord of all."

The return of the exiles from Babylon to Israel led by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and later Ezra, is an illustration of the return of the Jews from all over the world in the future. They will come to Israel after having been dispersed throughout the world for thousands of years. A small portion of the Jews have returned in recent years, but when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to not only reign as the "King of the Jews," but the "King of kings," the nation will be fully restored. In that "time of acceptance," the Lord who has preserved them as an identifiable people through the centuries, will restore them. He hears them, He helps them, He has mercy on them, He guides them, He smooths the way for them, He will comfort them, because he identifies Himself with them and does not forget them – even after all this time [vs.8-16].

The Jews from Jerusalem did not believe the promise of their coming redemption. They believed God had abandoned them because they had abandoned Him. Chastisement is not a sign of rejection, abandonment or being cast out. It is rather a sign of care and concern for the future of a person, or in this case, of a nation. The whole point of punishment is to bring about a change in behavior. It will be a world wide wonder to see the nation of Israel gain world prominence under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. This prophecy goes beyond the rejection of the Lord by the Jews and also refers to the exaltation of the Lord after His glorious resurrection, when the people of all nations will worship Him.

In the "acceptable time," that "day of salvation," those held captive by sin are set free by the power of the Gospel. How true that is for us today who have been redeemed, saved, delivered and set free by the grace of God. There have been, and still will be until our Lord comes for us, times of affliction. These are training times for the reigning time when we are with our Lord Jesus Christ and will experience the joy of that new age. From places that have been barren, fruitfulness will come to enrich God's people. The barriers between Jews and Gentiles have been removed during this church age to include all who have been born again by the Spirit of God, to have a part in the kingdom of God.

The Servant of Jehovah openly expresses His compassion and care like that of a mother with her newborn baby. His people are so important to Him that he has them inscribed on the "palms of His hands." That indicated that everything He does, has a future goal in view. It is true that the land of Israel was laid waste, but destruction is not the final purpose of defeat. God wants to restore what was lost, to become what it was intended to be. We can see a bit of a foreshadowing of what that will be in the future, when we look at the changes in Israel today.

In the future, the restoration will be real and genuine, after repentance is real and genuine. God will restore what was lost. It won't be a tribute to the skill and innovation of Jews themselves. The Lord will raise up His standard, His banner, and will command the captives to be released and returned to where they belong. People who are delivered from the bondage of sin, really know they are delivered by the Lord, not by their own works of righteousness. We who know the Lord, have been set free, and we know it is the Lord who sets free others who were captives to sin. Those who have been set free by our Lord Jesus Christ, and have experienced the deliverance that His grace has provided, are not ashamed of our Great Redeemer, our Savior.

Isaiah 49:8. *"Thus saith the Lord, 'In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.'"*

PRESERVATION.

A plan unfolds - the Promise the Lord has made will never fail.
Redemption of the nation will not come with ease -
Changes showing evidence of repentance that is real
Will have to be heard by God - repentance that really means
All will know there is a return back to what God wants -
Then the Lord who hears what is said and what is really meant -
Moves heaven and earth to bring results - He who helps
Has in mind to restore and preserve what was His first intent.

He is not done - the plan includes suffering - and sacrifice
To fulfill the ultimate purposes God Himself guides
Those He cares intensely for - it is His will alone that will suffice,
To give reasons why the Israeli Road requires so many lives -
Until the day will come when those survivors see a throne
Established and the heritage long promised and preserved.
Rule is established in the nation by Him whose right it is alone
To take David's long promised kingdom that He deserved.

Here and now in this paragraph of grace in which I live,
The Lord hears and helps and guides His blood-bought Church -
Preserving her for Himself - His heart-throb for which His life He gave

That now and through ages yet to unfold before us - a love such
As never has nor will be seen the more - for His bride He gave His all -
Preserves it now by constant attention and personal intercession -
I too, experience the preserving hand of God outstretched lest I fall
And preserves me - saved from sin and hell, for heaven, a full salvation.

“How thankful and secure I know I am, O God, who preserved the nation of Israel all these thousands of years. A nation has survived unspeakable atrocities. If You can preserve them, I know I am preserved and kept from everything that would overcome me apart from Your sovereign will allowing it. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 50

ISRAEL SET ASIDE

In the on-going unfolding of who Jehovah's Perfect Servant is, and the contrast between Him and all other servants, there are a number of specific things in this chapter that set Him way above and beyond any other servant, including Isaiah. There are seven things that are true of Christ. He is the Acceptable Preacher in verse four. He has the power and right to instruct in the things of God. He is the Obedient Servant in verse five, in whom is the spirit of meekness and obedience. He is the Suffering Savior in verse six, who in spite of what was done to Him, had the spirit of confidence and strength in God. So, in that way He was the Persevering Servant in verse seven. He was also the trusting Confident Man with His face like a flint, and no embarrassment or shame because of what happened to Him in verse seven. In verse eight, He is the Accepted Servant, who as the courageous Champion, stands alone in victory in spite of the condemnation of sinful men.

Israel created their own problems by choosing sin and idolatry even though the Lord had promised to help them in every way. But they rejected Him. They rejected Him in the past and they rejected them when our Lord Jesus Christ came to earth. He did not reject them. The question then is why is Israel divorced as Jehovah's earthly bride? God did not want to put Israel away to the captivity of Babylon, but the people of Israel didn't want to hear what He said or do what He wanted. They wanted everything their own way. Consequently, He allowed the captivity to happen. The nation is still not recovered to Him. He is able, and willing to deliver them at the appropriate time – and He will do so.

Self-sufficiency leads to torment as Israel learned. When we are confident in our own success, and we think our intelligence is all that is needed to solve every problem, God will leave us on our own until we face the fact that we don't know everything and cannot deal with the consequences of our sin. The appearance of confidence and nothing is too hard for us, will leave us high and dry and in torment. It is the light of divine truth, given by divine Persons that enables us to walk in the light in times of darkness all around us. When we know the Lord and are in fellowship with Him, the "Light of life" is real to us, and we can "walk in the light, as He is in the light."

When the Lord Jesus Christ came to His own, they would not receive Him; no one welcomed Him. There was evidence as to who he was right from His birth all through His life here on earth. "We have never seen it on this wise before!" "Never man spoke like this Man." But because of their hardness of heart, self-sufficiency in religious practices, and self-centered identity, they could not conceive of the Messiah being different than their preconceived notions. They saw evidence of His power over nature, over creation, over sin and wickedness and even over the devil, but they would not believe on Him.

He came in humiliation, but was "full of grace and truth." He was "found in fashion as a man," but did things that only God can do. He did not come in visible glory as a conquering king, but as an obedient Servant of Jehovah with His inherent glory veiled. His deity was revealed in many ways, but because He didn't reveal it in the way unbelievers wanted, they would not believe in Him nor accept Him. He came, fully God and fully man, so that He could identify Himself as the perfectly appropriate sacrifice for our sins. In His sinless humanity, He was able to take our place as our sinless substitute, and suffer on our behalf for our sins, so that He could bring us to God.

He did not take action in the full power of His omnipotence, but rather as a Man among men, He experienced all the things that happen to humans and what they do, apart from sinning in any way. In that way, He could be our "High Priest" who is touched with the "feeling of our infirmities." He is able to help us in our human experiences of sickness and pain, sorrow and grief, rejection and trouble. In His amazing grace, he received sinners who came to Him in faith. With tears on His face He wept over His earthly people the Jews, because they "knew not the time of their visitation."

In spite of the abuse of the world, the Servant placed His confidence in God and is "awake" to take action on all that God wants to do and say through Him. He is not rebellious in any way in spite of what people did to Him when He was rejected. His back was beaten; the hairs on His face were pulled out; He was spit on. All of this was done to Him, and He endured it for the sins of others who deserved that kind of treatment. In His own sinlessness, He set His face as a flint to endure all the reproaches that should have fallen on us. He was not ashamed in any way before God, even though He was despised and rejected of men. "Morning by morning" the Servant and His Master/Father

connected in perfect communion. This Servant was what the servant Israel, was not. Even in the sufferings He went through in His servant-work, He had His confidence in God alone.

The Lord God helped Him, so the condemnation of men against Him had no validity in any way. The very things people condemned Him for, is what condemns those who refuse Him. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." "He, Himself is Christ, a King." "Are You the Son of God?" "Save Yourself." People think they can make themselves acceptable to God "if there is a God." Many people think they are God or are becoming a god. Their opinion as far as they are concerned, is what is truth. Like the Jews who trusted in the false teaching of the rabbis, many today base their beliefs on what some professor says, or what some philosopher has written rather than the unchanging and infallible word of God.

Consequently, people today and those in the past who reject Christ, will suffer His rejection of them. Israel will continue to experience sorrow and rejection until they will "look on Him whom they have pierced." The consequences of that divorce will not be lifted until they acknowledge "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." As individuals, both Jews and Gentiles since the time our Lord Jesus was here, have "[confessed] with [their] mouth, Jesus as Lord, and have believed in [their] heart that God hath raised Him from the dead," are saved by His grace. That salvation is personal, real, wonderful and eternal.

Restoration of Israel is possible because our Lord can redeem, He can deliver and He can save His people from their sins. As a result of the obedience of Jehovah's Servant, Israel is called to prepare for His coming. The challenge goes out to all the hearers to listen to the Servant. He can be trusted and when people trust Him, they will find light in the darkness. If they choose to walk in the light of their own fire, they will end in torment. Trusting believers will be saved and delivered. The rebellious will be condemned and tormented as a result of their own choice.

Isaiah 50:4-6. *"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I would know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."*

GOD'S SERVANT.

The Acceptable Preacher [v.4]

His words are acceptable as God's truth He unfolds.
His message is the most important, that ever was told.
His thoughts are expressed as suitable words for the season,
Making plain to this listener God always speaks with a reason.

The Obedient Servant [v.5]; The Persevering Servant [v.7]; The Accepted Servant [v.8]

As Jehovah's Obedient Servant, He yields to His tormentors,
Not seeking to avoid them - He gave His back to the smiters.
His face like a flint, this Servant preserves to the last -
Accepting my punishment until righteous judgment is past.

The Suffering Savior [v.6]

The Suffering Savior was the Christ sent from God.
The Son becoming God's Servant fulfilling God's Word -
Never turning against those who rejected His claim -
The Eternal Son is the Savior - Jehovah is His name.

The Trusting/Confident Man [v.7]

In sinless humanity Jehovah's Servant obeyed,
Knowing full well the price of sin must be paid.
Trusting in God with full confidence - there never was a question,
The Man-Servant who men pierced - was the One who would bless them.

The Courageous Champion [v.8]

With victory assured, the Servant was the Champion
Who defeated His foes and for those who trust Him;
On behalf of the fallen in sin He did die -
In justifying victory, from the grave He did rise.

The Servant has "all power" to instruct in God's ways.
There is authority and wisdom in every word He says.
With meekness and obedience, He defeated every foe -
His strength and in confidence, His grace to me shows.

"Father God, the prophetic descriptions of the Lord Jesus Christ are very enlightening as He is revealed as Thy Perfect Servant. It never will be fully understood by men how and why the

Eternal Son became Jehovah's Servant. Yet, there is a certain measure of knowledge I have that there was no one else who could meet the need man's sin had caused: He had to be perfect; He had to be willing; He had to be acceptable and in every way the Lord met my need. I worship and praise Thee for this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 51

ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN

Imagine being committed to the Lord and His word, and all around you, people are idol worshippers, pleasure seekers, self-exalting people who think you are stupid for putting your unreserved faith in the Lord. You might say, "Well, that is the way things are right where I live." That was the situation in Judah when Isaiah wrote his prophecy. There were a few of the Jews who had their faith in the God of Israel, and were looked down on and despised by the majority of the people. Isaiah was addressing these words to those who could see that coming judgment was inevitable on Judah and Jerusalem.

There will always be some who remain faithful to the Lord in every time of departure, but they will be few and far between. The few may feel very alone when they are surrounded by those who hate them, maybe not openly, but do not want anything to do with them. Isaiah reminded them of their heritage as a way to encourage them, and as a reminder of the value of being righteous no matter what others do. He went back to the father of the faithful, Abraham, who believed God even when he was in Ur, which was a hotbed of idolatry. God called Abraham and Sarah out of that place and promised to bless them, and through them, blessings from God came to millions. His faith and faithfulness continue to bear fruit that remains world-wide. Imagine if the Lord, Jehovah's Perfect Servant, hadn't come.

Isaiah challenged Israel to follow the example of Abraham who looked forward and "saw My day. He saw it and was glad." Israel's disobedience caused their own suffering. Many in the generations that followed him, failed to follow the path of faith in God, and had to accept the consequences that come from idolatry and disobedience. Israel could have hope for the future because the faithful God of the past, is still the same as when He demonstrated His care to past generations who obeyed Him. God can do great and wonderful things through a few faithful people. Justice, righteousness and salvation are linked, because without God's justice being satisfied, and His righteousness being imputed to us, there would be no salvation for us. Those three are linked the other way around too, because when we have been saved, righteousness of life is an evidence of reality, and justice controls our conduct.

Isaiah encouraged those few faithful few, who like people of faith in every generation and place, they will be disliked and avoided. They will often feel alone because of their belief and confidence in God, but that attitude is not against us. Rather it is the attitude of people against God. Therefore, He will deal with them in the way He chooses. It is our responsibility to remain faithful to Him, to obey Him no matter what happens, and to conduct our lives as those who love Him and trust Him. The God we serve is the same God who made a "road in the depths of the Red Sea" to deliver the Jews from Rahab (Egypt). He doesn't always do the same thing, but of this we can be sure; His love, care and concern for His people does not change.

God responded to their appeal to show His strength in deliverance of the remnant Jews, because He is their Comforter, their Maker and their Redeemer. He assures them they are His people. Babylon wanted to capture God's people but could not do it until He allowed it to happen because of their sins. Captivity for seventy years was His way of correcting their behavior and punishing them for their idolatry. His reason for that was so they would return to Him as His obedient people, and He would find fellowship with them again. He wanted them to be free to love Him as He loved them, and share life together. They had put their love and fear into idolatry and blatant sin. He wanted them to respect, love and have reverential fear for Him.

When our faith is in Him, there is fullness and meaning in our lives. There is confidence and peace when we trust the Lord and rely on His ability to control all the circumstances of our lives in everything we do. Like to those Jews, there comes the call to "Awake," and then the Lord will bring His promises and promised blessings to His people. The Lord called Jerusalem to wake up and recognize what was going to happen because of their sin. The "cup of trembling" they held in their hand will be taken from them, and in grace He drinks it for them – and us. The "cup of wrath" was ruin because of their sin. God intends for them, and us, a full and prosperous life.

The people of Judah and Jerusalem had to face bondage, suffering and destruction instead of freedom and the blessings of true liberty. Before they could start over again in fellowship with God, just judgment had to be carried out to bring repentance and restoration. The standards of righteousness must be established on the strength of God's word, even though grace certainly has been shown in times of failure. The people who need to fear are the ungodly, not the righteous. The persecution of the faithful remnant is temporary. God delivered His people before and He will do it again.

We may be small and insignificant in the eyes of the world, but God is not done with us. We can be assured that those who trust Him will see a new day after the captivity is passed. It is the ungodly that need to be afraid and ashamed, not those who fear the Lord. For our encouragement, and any small remnant of believers, like Isaiah said earlier in his book, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee."

Isaiah.51:1. *"Look to the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged."*

HEWN.

That rock is huge, with cracks and dirt and bumps so rough;
What use is such a thing? What value could possibly be found to reveal such grace as
Thine?

The rock is hard, and to all outward signs, can serve no real purpose;
How can such a thing be of benefit to anyone? What can be done to it that some good
might come?

One comes to look and view from every side what until now has been hid from view;
Then hammer in one hand, chisel in the other, begins the task of discarding, forming,
shaping.
Some pieces break off that are large, obvious, and useless; others are small, insignificant but off
they come;
That from that rock might come that which the Sculptor knows will fit the end result in His mind.
A separation comes, a trench is cut, a groove is made, that line that the chisel marks now carefully
made, is seen;
A sharp blow here, a light tap or two there, the steady eye follows every changing shape.
In patience, one line upon another, here a little there a little, and the quarry rings with the sound of
the hammer;

Still doing its work as the hand that guides it here and there from time to time adds strength.
When to most eyes unexpected and unwarned, the Master Sculptor raises the hammer
high and the chisel in place;
And with one hard, strong, clearly guided blow, the project falls from the hard place it has always
been.

Then with quiet satisfaction, the Master Sculptor carefully looks over the new formed stone;
A light tap here on one corner, another light blow there, careful scrutiny and the stone is
placed.
Placed where He knows it fits best; placed where He planned long before; placed to match those
around;

The deed is done; the position secured forever; the occupation now has meaning; no longer just a
rock.
But now part of a growing building of similar stones; forming a dwelling place for God: a
place where sounds
Of praise and worship, of words and witness, of prayer and glory - ring. A place for God to dwell.
The rock, still earthbound, dirty and hard, but time to time there comes again from hardened clay
a lively stone!

The pit, that hole so deep that none but eyes divine can see beyond the covering of earth!
But there beneath it all, the Master digs the rock and leaves the hole so all around can see
that there is value where and when He moves the dirt to find the gem.

"I thank Thee, O Father God, that I am built upon the Living Stone. Small replicas we are and yet it must be in all these layers of living stones, each different yet so alike, there is some delight that Thou wilt get when at last the final one is laid in just the place that Thou dost choose. And then?! Then the finished place, all at home in the dwelling place of God. Christ the Object of our joy and satisfaction. Amen."

Isaiah 51:11. *"Therefore the redeemed of 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."*

COME WITH SINGING.

Anticipation - as I read the words and the message, it all seems to fit the need of my soul
Voices are raised together - many myriad thoughts are narrowed into one experience
Words blend with the sounds - the changing tones unify the whole company
Some eyes are reading the words - new thoughts are formed and join old ones and are expressed
Some eyes are closed - memory shuts all distractions out as old thoughts are repeated
Mouths are opened - what is inside comes out in harmony with others
Faces are softened - individuals express thoughts in unison finding through singing kindred souls
The blend of voices makes beauty - different voices together make something unique for God's glory
Ears of angels and men hear - unseen observers, those in the observer's seat watch and listen; maybe some even wonder!
Worship and praise are melded together - hearts open expressing silent worship; faces open and words in rhyme and rhythm praise audibly.
Spirits are uplifted - the focus of attention is directed outward toward men and upward toward God
Souls are warmed - a spiritual fire is caught from each one occupied with the same Supreme Person and the important message they sing
Bodies relax - tension is relieved and body parts - feet and fingers, move to the sounds of joy and testimony
Heads/minds go upward with joy - even those who have lost memory are not able to forget the hidden singing of the past
Aches are forgotten momentarily - the heart-aches are relieved by the messages that reach beyond hidden barriers
Little children hear singing - and night-fears are lost in the power of singing
Busy people hear singing - and stopping stressful activity are made to relax by the power of singing
Older people hear singing - many reminders of past blessing come forth by the power of singing
Sing unto the Lord - in a child's chorus or song
Sing unto the Lord - in a mother's quiet lullaby
Sing unto the Lord - in the field or other busy pursuits of life
Sing unto the Lord - when age claims the memory of words but not the inner spirit
Sing unto the Lord - in public witness to the Gospel
Sing unto the Lord - in worshipful tones and words of remembrance and testimony
Sing unto the Lord - in the great congregation

LET THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD PRAISE HIM WITH JOY AND GLADNESS!

“On this Lord's Day morning Father, I lift my heart and voice to praise Thee and express the worship that is in my heart. May I never be silent! Amen.”

Isaiah 52:1-12

GET READY TO LEAVE

There are times when a casual approach to things is entirely inappropriate. When a real danger is imminent like a fire out of control, an injury or serious sickness, urgency is called for, and unless we respond to the situation as it is warranted, there will be consequences that are way beyond our control. Occasionally there are also times of joy and gladness when a song, a hymn, or an outburst of “Praise the Lord,” enthusiastically given, is the right response. In Isaiah 51 and 52 there are three urgent wakeup calls.

The first call is from those who are in bondage, as they call in their extremity to the Lord. “Awake, awake! Put on Thy strength, O arm of the Lord.” Isaiah prophesies that the captives in Babylon will call on the Lord for deliverance in their time of trouble. It is most appropriate for a concerned soul who faces up to their sinful condition before God, to call on the Lord. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The second call is from the Lord to those people in Jerusalem, who had become used to their sin and were complacent about their condition before God. “Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem!” The cup of trembling in their hand finally made them aware of the righteous judgment of God. Isaiah could speak from experience about this, because he was the one who got a sight of the Lord in His holiness, and said, “Woe is me, for I am undone: because

I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

The third call is in this chapter to “Awake, awake! Put on thy strength, O Zion!” God was calling His people to rejoice as exiles who were set at liberty to return to their own country. More than that, they were also to be reconciled to God and to be restored to fellowship with Him in the place where He chose to place His name. What a blessing it is to have “fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” This in turn brings us into fellowship with His people of “like precious faith.”

All of these “wakeup calls” were prophecies given before the events even happened. How wonderful is our God to warn us ahead of time so repentance and restoration to the Lord, can take place in individuals who take God seriously, and seek the Lord while He may be found. God is determined to restore Israel as He has promised. The day will come when by His grace and power, Israel will again reflect His glory here in the world. They will honor His name, and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be as precious to them, as it is to us who have personally responded to His mercy and love for us. As guilty, but redeemed sinners, we have put our faith in Him for our salvation. Believers in Christ today, live in the good of what Israel will experience in the future.

The Jews sold themselves to the sinfulness and value lessness of idolatry, and the depravity that accompanies that spurious faith. After seventy years of captivity, Cyrus would release them from captivity without them even paying a redemption price. In a sense they were free to return to the land of Israel with no strings attached apart from their submission to his distant leadership. Beginning with the children of Israel as slaves in Egypt; then the ten northern tribes conquered and dispersed by the Assyrians; and finally, as captives in Babylon, there was a disregard for the Lord. In Egypt they worshipped “gods on the other side of the flood.” Even when they were in the promised land and had at their disposal, all that God promised, they regarded the Lord with contempt, and turned to idolatry.

May we all learn the lesson, that even when we are in a place of great blessing, the attractions of the world, the flesh and the devil, will always be there. It is our highest responsibility to maintain a vital, living relationship with our Lord, that is a well-spring of real and abundant life, not the trivial fleeting rush of fleshly satisfaction. The experience of ancient Israel is here for us to learn from, by avoiding what they did not avoid. When we find our satisfaction from the things that are not seen, we find permanence and rest to our souls, peace in our lives, and assurance in regard to the future.

Poor Israel; they were warned by Isaiah as to what to expect, but they didn’t learn from his message, nor take it as a real message from the Lord. Thankfully, there is also the good and glorious message of the Gospel! After bondage, deliverance will come. God Himself is the One who paid the redemption price to set His people free. Our Lord is the One who the Spirit of the Lord is upon. He is the One who is appointed to preach the Gospel to the poor. He is the One who came to heal the brokenhearted, and preach deliverance to the captives. He is the One who gave sight to the blind and set at liberty the oppressed. He is the One who preached the year (time) of the Lord’s favor.

We who are saved can echo the words of our Lord, “(Our) Your God reigns!” To those who love the Lord, even the feet of those who brought the message of the Gospel to us are beautiful. What if they didn’t want to come? What if they said, “We’ll leave that to someone else?” Reconciliation to our God through His Perfect Servant has been provided, and is real to those who avail themselves of the offer of salvation. Peace between the Holy Righteous God and sinful man is now possible because of His Servant.

The exhortation to leave the sinful, defiling world of Babylon was urgently given. There would be hardship and hazards for those who left the pleasure of sin and the economic security of Babylon. Leisure and plenty, would be left behind, but the safety and security of the souls of those who trusted the Lord, would last forever. The enticements of the world are very temporary. The Jews that remained in Babylon would find out all that they worked and lived for would be lost. Even traces of the city itself are hard to find.

Captives in Babylon were free to go because God’s plan of redemption was in place already. They were not fleeing as runaway slaves like when their forefathers left Egypt generations before. This time they were free to choose. They had a guaranteed safe-conduct passage from Cyrus the emperor. Of far more value was the assurance the Lord was going before them to lead them Himself, and He was the reeward (the rear guard) protecting them from behind. We find ourselves today as pilgrims traveling through a foreign land on our way to the promised land. The appeal of the world gets less and less the closer we get to our real home where we truly belong. How comforting it is to have the

unfailing word of God to guide us and protect us, as well as the assurance of divine Persons with us on this long journey.

Isaiah 52:10. *“The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”*

HIS HOLY ARM.

With His holy arm God makes all nations to see He is indeed in control.
Holiness and justice are enforced it is true, by Him who knows each person's soul.
In His strength He extends His arm of salvation - the effects cannot be ignored.
From the north to the south - to east and west, salvation reaches to every shore.

The stretched-out arm of omnipresent God leaves no one out of His reach.
To each man and woman, each young person too, God has His message to teach.
Some listen to words preached in the Gospel - many others turn a deaf ear -
To those who ignore Him - have no time for His message; He still makes His holy arm bare.

His arm is glorious, it is life itself - He holds each breath of mine in His hand.
The strength of God's arm can maintain starry order, nothing can defy His command.
Yet the same arm of God that can lift up or bring down all the nations
Comforts the sorrowing widow and can be father-like to all the orphans.

When that all-powerful arm is stretched out to bless, the result is blessing indeed.
That holy arm revealed to those who defy Him, brings judgment when they will not heed
His commands to be holy and to walk in the light that He might be a father to them -
Who unto this time lived in darkness and sin, rather than yielding their will to Him.

I have experienced, O God, the blessings of seeing the effects of Thy holy arm made bare.
To see lives transformed; sinners made worshippers; the results of the Gospel they hear -
Makes me worship the more and want further to share the good news of the Gospel to men -
Knowing with Thy holy arm with which Thou dost redeem, brings eternal life to them.

How glorious is Thy arm when in holiness and grace; conviction is followed by salvation.
Whether bringing calamity or calm; peace or war - the final purpose is to bless every nation.
How strange it is when Thy arm is stretched out, men blame Thee for what their sin has wrought.
How wonderful the blessing when with arms stretched out on the cross; Thou hast my salvation
bought.

“I thank Thee, O God; Thy arm was stretched out toward me in salvation. By Thy strength alone I was made to understand the message of salvation and Thy Spirit brought me life. I thank Thee for the arm of the Lord that has preserved me through all of these years and for the evidence that I can be used as a tool in Thy hand to bring blessing to others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 52:13-15

THE SERVANT/KING, SUFFERING

This fourth “servant song,” is the longest and most impacting of them all, because of the scope of the message and the graphic illustrations of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Words from this song of the “Suffering Servant” are quoted often in the New Testament, speaking directly of our Lord Jesus and the subject of the Gospel. When we read these words, we are touched in our hearts with all our Lord Jesus Christ endured when “He was made sin for us, He who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” One who loves the Lord Jesus cannot read the words of Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12, without going in our minds and hearts, to the time of His suffering on the cross that He might bring us to God.

“My Servant” is the Messiah/King who will reign wisely when He reigns in the coming time of His exaltation all across the whole world. He will “deal prudently,” means that God's Work will **prosper** because of His wise leadership in a coming day in which the world will be blessed because of Him. In Isaiah 53:10, God's Will **prosper**s because of Him. God found moral and righteous pleasure in the sacrifice our Lord Jesus made on our behalf. Isaiah 54:16-17 assures us that God's Warfare will triumph because “no weapon formed against Thee shall **prosper**.” In Isaiah 55:11, God's

Word **prospers** when it is declared, and it will not be empty words, but will achieve the purposes He has in mind when it is preached. Sometimes the preaching of the word of God is informative. Other times it is convicting and other times it is enlightening. What an encouragement it is to know that what God does, “ **prospers .**”

The last time the unbelieving world saw the Lord Jesus, was when He was suffering on the cross as God’s Perfect Servant. He was physically abused until He was disfigured beyond that of any human. The treatment of our Lord by those who afflicted Him, was absolutely inhuman.

The Lord Jesus Christ understood His work as the Suffering Servant when He came to do His Father’s will. There are quite a number of the prophecies made concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, that were fulfilled as He accomplished redemption for us. His exaltation, verse 13, is referred to in Phillipian 2:9. The fact that His visage would be marred more than any man, verse 14 and 53:2, was fulfilled in Mark 15:17-19. Then it was prophesied that He would make atonement by the “sprinkling” of His blood, verse 15, and fulfilled, 1st Peter 1:2. He was certainly widely “rejected by men,” Isaiah 53:1,3, which was answered to in John 12:37-38. The fulfillment of the prophecy regarding bearing our sins and our sorrows [53:4-5] is in Romans 4:25 and 1st Peter 2:24-25. The truth that he would be our substitute in verses 6-8, is replied to in 2nd Corinthians 5:21 where it says He who knew no sin was made sin for us. He voluntarily accepted our guilt and punishment, verses 7-8, as the Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep [John 10:11] and then said, “It is finished” [John 19:30]. He was buried in a rich man’s tomb [John 19:38-42], just like it was prophesied in Isaiah 53:9. Isaiah 53:10-11, tells us prophetically that He would save those who believe in him, and John 3:16 and Acts 16:31 tells us that is what happens. He would die for transgressors, was made plain in verse 12, and Mark 15:27-28 and Luke 22:37 tells us that happened and how it happened.

The sin-cleansing blood of the Perfect Sacrifice extends world-wide (many nations) in its saving power. The treatment of our Savior by wicked people goes beyond our comprehension because of our moral and spiritual limitations. We do know the infinite sufferings of our Savior has not only provided for the salvation and forgiveness of sins of those who believe on Him, but it also startles those who will finally realize who He is. The nations of people will someday come to recognize who our Lord Jesus Christ is and why He did what He did. Kings will go silent in the face of such love and benevolent mercy from the King of kings.

In the future, those who led nations will see and understand that our Lord has accomplished an act of righteous justice that far exceeds anything they have ever conceived of, let alone has ever been done by any other human authority. They will understand what He did and why, even though they never heard any word of prophecy about it previously. His humiliation and then exaltation will bring to the leaders of the world an understanding of who the Messiah/King of Israel really is, and they will submit to Him. There is triumph in verse 13, as a result of His suffering in verse 14. The final result will be victory and exaltation in verse 15. “What a day that will be, when my Savior I shall see! When I look upon His face, the One who saved me by His grace!”

Isaiah 53:1-3

THE REJECTED PERSON

The report (message) with which the second stanza of the “suffering song” begins is the good news of salvation that was given by the prophets to Israel and the nations. That message is linked to the arm of the Lord which is the symbol of great power. When we think of “the arm of the Lord,” it brings to mind the sense of strength and power by which work is accomplished. No one expected “the arm of the Lord” would come into the world in a Servant. The majority of people were expecting a mighty conqueror who would come with armies and a great show of force, and defeat all enemies before him. A quiet, respectful, unassuming Servant who would suffer, did not fit the expectations of the people He came to bless. They wanted a mighty, conquering Messiah. That mindset is in everyone generally speaking. We usually think of greatness in the form of power and popularity.

When we read through the scriptures and consider what they say about the arm of the Lord, we get a better understanding of what it means. It isn’t a strong arm with a clenched fist ready to beat down all opposition. In Deuteronomy 4:34, His arm is stretched out to **rescue** His people. His everlasting arm is to secure and **reassures** His people in Deuteronomy 33:27. Psalm 89:10-13 gives a different view as He scatters His foes in **retribution**. His holy arm is described in Psalm 98:1 as sanctifying in its **righteousness**. In Isaiah 63:12, His arm is glorious as He shepherds His own people in righteous **responsibility** toward them. In verse one of this chapter His arm is **revealing**.

A new shoot coming out of the ground springing forth with new life is marvelous to look at. Everything about it is perfection. It has not been affected by anything around it or anything that happens to it. It is a tender shoot without the pressures of opposition hardening it to endure the pressures of life on earth. Our Lord, in His nature was like that always. Even though He was “found in fashion as a man,” He never lost that beautiful freshness and sensitivity that was so important as He was watched day after day, and year after year, to see if there were any imperfections in Him. He was never tainted by the imperfections that comes on us in our normal course of life, and certainly not by sin. “He knew no sin... He did no sin... in Him was no sin.” The only evidence of sin that will be on our Savior is “Thy wounds, Thy wounds, Lord Jesus, those deep, deep wounds will tell the sacrifice that frees us from self and death and hell! These link Thee once for ever with all who own Thy grace; no hands these bonds can sever, no hands these scars efface.”

When He came, He did not come with the fanfare and pomp that people expect of great people they admire so much. He came to deal with eternal things that had to be faced and dealt with, rather than temporary matters that appeal to the fleshly, worldly interests of most people. To those who have no new nature, our Lord Jesus is considered unimportant even when compared to themselves. Humility and suffering don't fit in the minds of unregenerate people. Most are indifferent to matters of everlasting importance, and only want to live for the present and “let the future take care of itself.”

Likely our Lord Jesus Christ was a man among men in His physical appearance, but would have been uniquely different in that there would be no evidence of the results of sin on His skin, no wrinkles in His forehead nor anything that would have come upon Him visibly as the results of worry or a bad conscience. The inner character of people is often seen in facial expressions, body language of different kinds that are evident when associating with people. His compassion and grace would have been evident. Truth and respect would have always been evident when He spoke. When He was a youth, He was in “favor with God and man.” He was not despised and rejected of men because of His physical appearance, but because of His “report.”

The Lord knew pain and sorrow experimentally because He chose to “learn obedience by the things that He suffered” as a man, as well as when He was the sacrifice for our sin. He became the “Captain of our salvation” when he stepped out voluntarily to take the first and hardest place of human suffering. His suffering was infinite in body, soul and spirit. There was nothing we will ever be called upon to pass through, apart from sin, that He has not experienced.

He was despised and rejected of men who avoided facing Him and the truth He represented, taught, lived and was personally, as “The Truth.” Truth could not be covered when our Lord was among the people. The people of the past did not want a Person who embodied the truth then, and they do not want anyone like that today. People today want a historical Jesus who is not really too important to them. The majority do not want to think about, or meet the Suffering Servant of Jehovah who paid for our sins by giving His own life for us. Any thinking person who understands that if they believe in Him personally, it would be normal and essential that they live for Him out of gratitude and by faith.

A person who would value and love us enough to die for us cannot be ignored or forgotten. The way most people today, and in the time when Isaiah preached, deal with these facts, is by trying to deny it ever happened. If they can convince themselves that such a real Person ever existed, then they think they can live with a clear conscience or at least get away with sin and have no real serious consequences for doing what they know is wrong.

Isaiah 53:4-6

THE VICARIOUS SUFFERER

The vicarious sufferings of Christ are expressed in the Old Testament by types like Abraham offering Isaac on the altar. A ram nearby was caught in a thicket by its horns, and that ram was killed and put on the altar in Isaac's place. There are other types and foreshadows of what Christ endured when He died in our place on the cross. Every person who brought a sin offering to the tabernacle and placed their hand on the head of the animal while confessing their sin, and then saw the innocent animal taking the sinner's place, would be conscious of a vicarious sacrifice. In this chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, the sufferings of Christ are explicit. Philip the evangelist explained the Gospel, and the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch from these verses. John the Baptist said the “Lamb of God” would bare away the sin of the world. Our Lord Jesus said He came to give His life as a ransom for many. Peter said we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. John said God gave His only begotten Son for “whosoever believeth in Him.” In Hebrews 2:9, we read that “He tasted death for every man.”

This three-verse stanza of the sufferer's song contains some of the clearest words of the doctrine of substitution that are in the whole Bible. Our Lord was a man of griefs and sorrows, but they were our griefs and sorrows, not His. The identification of our Lord Jesus Christ with us, was for many different reasons. As God, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" [John 1:14]. He identified Himself with our humanity, when "He was found in fashion as a man" [Philippians 2:8]. Our griefs and sorrows were made personal to Him in this passage of scripture. "He was made sin for us" [2nd Corinthians 5:21], when He identified Himself with our sin. Romans 5:8 tells us, "Christ died for us," identifying Himself with our death. He is willing to identify Himself with us as family [Hebrews 2:11], and is "not ashamed to call us brethren." Right at this moment, and constantly He is our "Advocate with the Father" [1st John 2:1-2].

Being "wounded for our transgressions," indicates that He was pierced, which certainly happened when they nailed Him to the tree, and He suffered there as the Perfect Suffering Servant. All our transgressions, our rebellion, our guilt crushed Him in His holy spirit when the sins of the world bore down in full weight upon Him. He endured that, so we might be healed from the consequences of our sins and forgiven. He made it possible for us to be cleared of all guilt because of the perfections of Himself and the sacrifice He made on our behalf.

A sheep is a stubborn, ignorant and willful creature that wants its own way. By nature, it is unable to protect or defend itself when attacked. Without a shepherd, a sheep is lost. In contrast to the first sheep that goes its own way, is the second sheep in the next stanza of the song. The first sheep has gone "its own way." That is the essence of sin. Sin is going our own way, rather than God's way. It is going beyond, or coming short of what God says. It is deviating to one side or the other of what is God's revealed will to us. How blessed is the fact that the first sheep (any person) who has gone its own way, can personally experience by faith, the fact that "the Lord hath laid on Him, the iniquity of us all." He conquered sin, when in submission to the just claims of a righteous God, He suffered as the sinless sacrifice for us. He absorbed all that sin demanded, when "He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Isaiah 53:7-9

THE ATONING LAMB

Lambs used for the Passover, had to be kept and watched carefully for three and a half days to make sure there were no defects of any kind on it. For the Day of Atonement, and for all the sacrifices; the lambs that were to take the place of sinful people because of their innocence, also had to be free of any blemishes imposed on it by outside forces. To be carefully watched was a requirement before it could be made an atoning sacrifice for the sinner. Our Lord Jesus Christ was out in the public view for three and a half years, before the "hour was come" that He should be offered as a sinless Substitute for our sins.

Because of God's love for us, He commended or demonstrated that love unmistakably, in that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to save us, so that we might live through Him. God did not spare His own Son, "but delivered Him up for us all." In order for that to be done righteously so no charge could ever be laid that sin was overlooked; He first became one of us. He took on Himself, human nature as a perfect man like God wanted us all to be. Then He became a ransom for us all and willingly died in our place as a sinless, perfect sacrifice. Because of that sacrifice, the legal just satisfaction that our Holy God demanded, was received from the price our Lord Jesus paid. "Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him" [1st Thessalonians 5:21]. As a result of what our Lord did for us, we are able to be reconciled to God. Now fellowship with God is our privilege and joy. "He made peace through the blood of His cross" [Colossians 1:20]. What blessed freedom we have to enjoy now and forever!

Our Lord Jesus Christ made this possible when like the second sheep. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. Without complaint, without noise or recrimination; He went in holy submission to the cross. There he conquered the suffering for sin that we should have had forever, by absorbing all of sin's consequences completely Himself on our behalf. Death settles all accounts, and when our Lord was "cut off from the land of the living," that settled the charges against those who, by faith, have accepted Him and the gift of eternal life which God gives. That wonderful gift was paid for in full by our Lord Jesus when He gave His life for us.

Those who receive Him, are no longer our own, because we have been bought with a price. Therefore, we are to glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are His. We belong to Him as redeemed people. When this happens, and we willingly respond in faith to the grace God gives; we find the joy and satisfaction that life was intended to have. We

have a new life, as a new creation in Christ. We are now suited to love God, live for Him, serve Him and enjoy fellowship with Him forever.

All of this blessing from God, comes to us in spite of the injustice of men that was openly demonstrated against our Lord. When he was before the high priests and rulers of the Jews, justice according to the law of God was broken. When He was before Pilate and Herod, the laws of the Roman government were ignored and an innocent man was condemned to die. The government of the land was ignored because of envy, hatred and the exposure of human sin by an innocent, perfect man. As a result of that willful action, judicial murder took place after an unjust trial that was a mockery of what a legal court should be.

Our Lord said when He was on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." None of those people in that generation of rejectors, considered that what He did on the cross was for their transgressions. They did not even consider that punishment for their sin was due to them.

A grave was appointed to Him. In the mind of Old Testament people, often the early death of rich people was considered the consequence of gaining wealth by wicked means. In the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, an honorable wealthy man, named Joseph who was of the city of Arimathea, gave Jesus a honorable burial when He placed His body in his own new tomb. Nicodemus also was there with a wealth of burying spices to give honor to the One who told him how to be born again. He would have been reminded of those words of the Lord to him personally, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. That whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have eternal life." Those acts of love by forgiven men, was a fulfillment of this prophecy given hundreds of years before to Isaiah.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had done no wrong to others, but had rather blessed them. There was nothing He said that was untrue or misleading. However, because of these words, Peter, who had seen the sufferings of Christ, in his first epistle, was able to encourage believers in Christ who were going through similar experiences as their Lord because of their faith in Him. These words establish a principle for us to consider in times of opposition and injustice against us or our fellow-believers.

The Savior suffered for us, and we may be privileged sometimes to suffer for the sake of His people and His kingdom. When we read these verses and consider what He has done for us, what can we say or do as our response to Him? "Let us love, and sing and wonder! Let us praise our Savior's name!" John Newton continued to write in this hymn: "Let us love the Lord that bought us..." "Let us sing though fierce temptations threaten..." "Let us wonder; grace and justice point" to our Lord's great mercy toward us.

Isaiah 53:10-12

THE TRIUMPHANT VICTOR

The first stanza of this suffering song introduces us to the "what" of the subject. The subject is the Servant of God, or as is often said, "The Servant of Jehovah." The second stanza tells us "who" this Person is and how he is identified. The third stanza tells us "why" the Perfect Servant of Jehovah endured all that He went through. That is where so many of us can identify ourselves with Him who was willing to identify Himself with us. The fourth stanza tells us "how" the Servant accomplished the full redemption that was needed, and what He endured in His suffering. The fifth and last stanza of the song gives us the "results" of all the Servant accomplished when He "made His soul an offering for sin."

Our Lord Jesus suffered in His **body** when every known wound was inflicted upon Him. He said regarding the suffering of His **soul**, "Now is my soul troubled, and what can I say? Father save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." When Jesus foretold His betrayal by Judas, He suffered when He was troubled in **spirit**. Then, just before going to Gethsemane, He said to His disciples, and to us, "Let not **your heart** be **troubled**; ye believe in God, believe also in Me." The soul suffering of the Lord is mentioned three times in this last stanza. Perhaps the best way to put the first phrase is, "When His soul shall make an offering for sin." There was no area of our great need that He did not face and deal with in full. "The travail of His soul," will bring satisfaction to Him, and He will be forever glorified by those He saved. "He poured out His soul unto death," indicates there was nothing left that could ever be done or added to the work He accomplished. He laid down His own life for those He loved, and He took it again by resurrection. We are justified by that work He accomplished.

The Suffering Servant has provided redemption for us, and in doing so has triumphed over all our foes: sin, death and hell. God had appointed Him, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the offering for our sin. This has resulted in millions of people becoming born-again Christians who are His children by faith in Him. A result of His triumph is "He shall see His seed." There is, and will forever be, a whole spiritual family, a posterity, because of the sacrifice He made. Also, "He shall prolong His days." Because He died, we live, and will be alive for evermore with Him. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." The on-going work of God through His people will bring millions of people into the kingdom of God by His saving grace. Even the nation of Israel will be saved as He promised, because of His great victory on the cross. "By His knowledge shall My Righteous Servant justify many," tells us that by Him knowing us, and we coming to know Him; we are given eternal life and are made fit for the kingdom of God having been justified by His grace.

The death, burial and resurrection of Christ for us, is certainly the good news of the Gospel. His days are forever "prolonged," and that assures us that because He lives, we shall live also for Him, and with Him. That "Light of life" is the lasting triumph by our Savior who is the Righteous One, God's Servant, who has justified us righteously by His resurrection from among the dead. He redeemed us and that brought perfect satisfaction to the righteous claims of justice God demanded. What He experimentally gained by personal knowledge, has made possible the true knowledge of God for us. Because of Him, many are declared righteous. The great God and Strong Servant, shares the spoils of His great victory with His own people. There will be millions, maybe even billions, of people in God's family because they have been brought into God's family, cleansed and justified because of the sacrifice of Christ when His soul was poured out unto death for us who were transgressors.

In looking back over the words of this song of suffering: v.3, He was despised; v.5, He was wounded, He was bruised; v.7, He was oppressed, He was afflicted; v.8, He was taken from prison and from judgment, He was cut off; v.12, He was numbered with the transgressors and bare the sin of many. Each verse of Isaiah 53 identifies the Suffering Servant in some specific way. In verse 1, He is the Strong One; verse 2, the Sensitive One; verse 3, the Sorrowing One; verse 4, the Smitten One; verse 5, the suffering One; verse 6, the Sin-bearing One; verse 7, the Silent One; verse 8, the Stricken One; verse 9, the Sincere One; verse 10, the Submissive One; verse 11, the Satisfied One; verse 12, The Successful One.

Isaiah 53:10. *"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief; when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."*

IT PLEASSED THE LORD.

It pleased the Lord the sinless Servant should offer Himself
This was indeed in the will of the Lord -
He suffered for our sakes there could be no one else -
To bruise His Son brought satisfaction to God.

It has pleased God, to make all fullness dwell in His Son -
Christ was always fully God who became fully man.
We dare not diminish any aspect of Christ -
He will be, and always has been eternally divine. [Col.1:19]

It has pleased God, to save them that believe on Christ -
Through the Gospel, we sinners are brought to Him.
Society all around us has many other gods,
Not one of their choices will bring salvation to them. [1Cor.1:21]

It has pleased God, to reveal His Son in saved sinners
Who by His grace He has reached and saved;
Throughout our lives we can show who Christ is
Through our words and deeds, and by what we give. [Gal.1:15-16]

It has pleased God to make His people a channel -
Though undeserving of the least of His mercies -
Pointing the way to our coming Messiah
Who will be revealed some day, bringing blessings. [1Sam.12:22]

It has pleased God to make many of us one
In Christ - we are members of His unified Body.

All are affected by what happens in us -
United, there is strength - challenging each one to be holy. [1Cor.12:18]

It has pleased God that we will have a resurrected body,
Sanctified, prepared - ready for whatever He will choose.

Then we will be like what now we ought to -
Members in His Body, ready and willing for Him to use. [1Cor.15:38]

“What a delight it is for me, O God my Father, to read of the great delight Thou had in Thy Son-Servant. But there are some things I wonder at, in an emotional way, that I can grasp in a spiritual way. When His soul was made an offering for sin - I know this was needed that justice be done on my behalf. Yet, there is such depths of infinite justice and love in that statement that I will never be able to fathom all it means. But I thank Thee sincerely, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 54

THE HERITAGE OF THE SERVANTS

Because of the victory over all foes brought to us by the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, great blessings have come to those who have become His servants when they put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the prophecy of Isaiah, the cross work of the Savior was many years in the future, but the promise of it and the effects of it were so real to him, that he wrote of it as an accomplished fact. Israel is seen as a barren woman who in desperate need, casts herself on the Lord. He promises that if she trusts Him, she will become unbelievably fruitful. Though that favored nation, came our Lord Jesus Christ, and because of what He accomplished, millions of Jews and Gentiles from all over the world are made alive from that “olive tree.” Jewish believers, and Gentiles who have been “grafted” into the tree, become fruitful for God. This prophecy also looks farther into the future when Israel is brought back to God as a wife who has finally been willing to reconcile to her husband.

Breaking into singing after a long time of sorrow, gives insight into the feelings of redeemed Israel. The result of the cross-work of our Lord Jesus has “enlarged” the scope of Israel’s influence to include every person born again into the family of God by the Holy Spirit and the word of God. All Gentile believers have been blessed because of the One who would “save His people from their sins,” and “bear away the sin of the world.” What great, impacting and lasting, blessings have come to all of mankind because of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came from the nation of Israel, giving Himself as “a ransom for all.”

No longer is “Jerusalem” confined to its own “tent.” Spread out through all the nations, are the benefits the Servant of Jehovah has provided to bless people. As a result, Israel itself will be brought back to where they will enjoy fellowship with their Maker, the Heavenly Husband, the Lord Almighty, the Holy One of Israel who is the great Redeemer. That look into the future is reason for joy in the hearts of God’s redeemed people. Lasting joy doesn’t come from the defeat of a foe, or the success of an event. It comes when a work is accomplished that brings real, personal and lasting beneficial results. That is what our Lord Jesus has done, and the blessings from that will last for all eternity.

Isaiah’s prophecy told the Jews there were consequences that had to be faced because of the past shame of her youth when they were in the wilderness and rejected the Lord and His counsel. There would also be the reproach of widowhood in Babylon because of willful idolatry and the rejection of her “Husband,” the Lord. That would be “a small moment” in comparison to the covenant blessings that would come in the future. God is holy and cannot tolerate sin, nor would He be just if He merely overlooked it, because by virtue of His holy nature, sin separates people from Him. It brings pain and suffering to those who sin against Him. How thankful we can be as individuals, if we confess and forsake our sins in true repentance, He is willing to, and does, forgive us. The joy of reconciliation can then be real.

After the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ was accomplished when He was here, a way has been opened for lasting blessing. The day will come when Israel will never again be driven again into exile. His covenant with them will be established and not taken away. Covenant love between the Messiah and His earthly people will have mutual commitment when they “look on Him whom they pierced.” Converted Israel will be restored and will be glorious to look at.

The Gospel makes “living stones” of Jews and Gentiles who repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. In the future Israel will also be like precious stones, and like our children today who “are taught by the Lord,” so will the children of Israel be taught of the Lord. Peace and righteousness go together in the church today, and it will be the same in Israel when it is finally secure in the fellowship that will be theirs with the Lord. Our safety and certainty are

not dependent on us but on Him who provided it for us by taking away our sins. We can live in the enjoyment and value of eternal life now, because our rest is in Him.

Millennial conditions will be such that fear and terror will not overcome the people of God. God controls the forces of nations as well as having all power in heaven and in earth. Now, as in the past through the control He had of Babylon, our Lord retains sovereign control and authority over all forces of men and nature. He uses them for His own purposes for the correction of behavior, and punishment for sin – or whatever other reason He has. “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper,” assures us that God is faithful to His people in spite of every kind of opposition.

Believers in Christ of every age, are the offspring, or the “heritage” of the Lord. All that goes along with being servants of the Lord is guaranteed to us. Through the rest of Isaiah’s prophecy, servants of the Lord are referring to those who belong to God by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our spiritual heritage assures us of protection and full provision [Isa.58:14]. The kingdom of God is inherited, even though much of what we have is unseen; beyond the ability of the eye to see or the ear to hear. Whatever the “all things” are that are freely given, we know that because they come from God, they will always be for our good.

Isaiah 54:7. *“For a small moment have I forsaken thee: but with great mercies will I gather thee.”*

A SMALL MOMENT.

The night seemed endless; time crawled; the hands of the clock didn’t seem to move.
Hours of watching and waiting looking for a change - some sign in the one you love;
The sun rose, there was no change - no movement - no sound - no voice.
The sign over the bed said, “DNR” - are you sure you made the right choice?

The losses mounted as the days passed by and the negative numbers went higher.
Each investment at the time seemed so right, but now we couldn’t find a buyer.
It seemed to be the right thing to use this stewardship God to us gave -
Now things seem to be going backward and we wonder - should all of it we have saved?

What to us in times of distress seems “forever,” when relief is slow to come.
The road of life has turned rocky and is getting steeper as we get closer to home.
But to God it is only a “small moment” and soon it will be like to me too -
When the testing time is past, we will thank God for bringing us through.

The sickness will soon be over - it may end in wellness or a safe journey to heaven.
The losses and disappointments are small compared to what might have been.
When it seems like you have been forsaken and the Lord is no longer in it -
Remember God doesn’t need a calendar or clock - testing time is only a “small moment.”

God’s grace isn’t measure in tons or in things - it comes from a storehouse without limit.
I must look way above incidents and seeming failures to be assured that “God is in it.”
When I do fail, the God of mercy wants me to confess sin and come back to Him -
I know His love is without measure, when times are dark that’s a “small moment” even then.

“We have had times Father, when we wonder how long will this pressure and grief last. Looking back now, I can see the times I thought were so bad, were actually times of training and blessing that have a greater impact for good than if they had never happened. I thank Thee for them - now. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 55

THE INVITATION

The prophetic message of salvation begun in earlier chapters, continues in this chapter. Salvation is made possible for “everyone,” as the writer calls for people to give attention to what he has to say. The Suffering Servant and His work described in chapter 53 has opened the door of salvation to everyone who is thirsty. The Sinless Servant of Jehovah was offered as our substitute and made full payment for sin by His death on the cross. Whoever puts their personal trust in Him by faith, is cleansed from their sin, and justified before the Holy Righteous God. He saves all who come to Him by faith. Such is the greatness fullness of His grace.

Isaiah calls upon those who “hunger and thirst” after righteousness before God, to take the water of eternal life that God freely offers. The “wine” of the Gospel message brings cheer and hope to the soul, and stirs it to act in faith. The “milk” of the word of God gives the spiritual nourishment needed to grow in faith and be strengthened by the power of God. There is nothing else that can bring real satisfaction to the spiritually hungry soul. Anything the world offers is like the “husks that the swine do eat.” The “food” offered by the things of earth have costs associated with them as well. Also, they only meet the physical and emotional needs temporarily. Even worldly religion only offers the “quick-fix” of an emotional high that is gone as soon as the music stops and the entertaining features of a church service are over. Then there is usually the announcement to people to “give what they can to meet the needs of this ministry.”

“**The waters**” referred to in the first verse are offered openly to any thirsty soul. They provide satisfaction freely for the one that comes and partakes of that which God offers. That action is personal and available without any strings attached in contrast to the dissatisfaction that has a cost attached to it that we read of in the second verse. The blessings of God are free and to all when they take steps to harken, make their own what is offered, and take delight in what God gives. When a person is deliberately inclined to listen to the voice of the Lord and will come to Him by faith; they will truly live. That makes the covenant of salvation real to us and the blessings promised to a believer are all available to us.

The free nourishment from God is ours when we come to Him and then listen to His word. It is our responsibility to personally seek the Lord and call upon Him now. The person who is eager for food for their soul, will find it there and then. When God makes covenant promises, they are like “sure mercies” similar to those He granted to David. They do not fail nor does He forget to give them. To call on the Lord while He is near, indicates a time will come when He is not near. The sins of neglect, procrastination, ignoring or rejecting the Lord, may make a person too late to be able to receive anything from Him.

To believe God can save a sinner who has gone far away from him, or can save a nation like Israel that has rejected Him for so long, takes a significant amount of faith on our part. But really, all God expects of a person is to seek Him with all their heart and call upon Him in trusting faith, and He will be found. Honesty and sincerity are expected of a seeking sinner. One has said, “A seeking sinner and a seeking Savior, always meet.” This is not just some nod of the head in acknowledgement of the existence of God. Nor does it happen because a person will genuflect in front of a cross. Nor is it some words repeated in a prayer that is not from the heart of a contrite sinner. To think we can reduce the actions and response of an infinite God to our limited thoughts is foolishness, and is a demeaning act of a mere mortal person who has no idea of how holy God is.

“**The wicked**” have been witnessed to by the One in authority in verse four, and the testimony of Israel in verse five goes out to all the world through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. People wherever and whoever they are, will be accepted when they seek the Lord with their heart, call upon Him in faith after repentance and forsaking of their sin is an actual fact. That is when each person who calls and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior will find mercy and pardon.

Heaven and earth were called upon at the beginning of the book of Isaiah to witness to the rebellion of the people of Israel and Judah. They were called upon in the same way in the time of Moses to witness to the acts of God on behalf of His people. In this chapter, the mountains and hills, the trees and the fields are sharing in the joy of Israel’s restoration and salvation. The exiles from Babylon went out with joy and peace from captivity. When Messiah comes and reigns, joy and peace will break out all over the world.

“**The word**” is the main point of verses 8-13 as the word of God is sent out to prosper in the ways God intends. God’s thoughts and ways are definitely different than those of human beings. We are limited to what we take in through our senses. The word of God from above has a purpose behind it as it waters the thoughts of human minds; then nurtures those into actions of one kind or another. So, we learn of Him, praise Him and worship Him all the while we are able to serve Him acceptably with respect and honor for Him. God’s word is not wasted and it fulfills the purpose for which He gives it. Such is the power and benefit of the word of God, that it continues to be useful as we assimilate its truths into our soul and spirit. The results of the word of God being real to us is that it brings joy to ourselves and peace to others.

All of the creation of God will again function as God intends. Creation will be restored, and humanity will identify the Lord as the Source of every good and perfect gift. The glory of the mountains will cause songs of praise to be raised to the glory of God the Creator. The fertility of the earth will be released and the plenty that comes from its fullness will be a testimony for all to see as a sign of God’s greatness, mercy and forgiveness. Never will the deliverance the

Lord brought be forgotten. Such assurance will be to all the world as an everlasting sign as we all receive all that could ever be needed. The "You shall give Him glory; and I shall give Him glory; we all shall give Him glory; for glory is His due."

Isaiah 55:4, 12. *"Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people...And ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and the trees of the fields shall clap their hands."*

MOUNTAINS AND HILLS.

What is that I hear? The sound of "going" in the trees -
As He who is our Leader and Commander moves
Leaving evidence of His passing in music.
From high places when men's faces are lifted
To look up and see the stable mountains and hills
Responding to my joy and the peace in my soul -
They are singing before me as a choir in full voice.
Coming back to me from them are my own words
Of praise and glory as I worship my Leader.
My Commander who has "all power" moves His baton
And the music and praise flows back and forth -
From me to them and them to me -acapella
Harmonious blends of sights and sounds -
The audience of trees: small ones and full grown -
Anything of nature that moves is moved -
By words and actions to honor their Creator -
My Leader and Commander - the Supreme
Witness to His people - and to me.
What joy - what peace - what delights from Thy word, O God.
It all fits together: the mountains and hills -
The people who hear Thy Witness - and me,
Who has tasted and seen that the Lord is good.
I have come - I am here - I hear Thee,
And the everlasting covenant of sure mercies -
Is real to me.

"It seems to me O God, that I really do fit in the scheme of things that I see all around me - apart from the world, the flesh and the devil. Creation; the Lord's people; prophecies - all that know the Lord as Leader and Commander, have all things in common because of Thee. I give honor and glory to Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 56

OBEDIENCE OR SELFISHNESS

In the previous chapters dealing with the Servant of God providing redemption at the high cost of giving Himself for us, it is clear that salvation is by grace alone. Beginning with this chapter, there are four chapters that emphasize obedient living is a real mark of salvation. If there is the claim of new life by faith, but there is no change in life or in attitude toward God and toward His word, salvation is a false claim. Salvation is "not of works," but faith is shown by works. If there is no desire to follow the Lord, and there is no motivation to obey Him because of a grateful heart, any profession of faith is counterfeit salvation.

Believers are admonished at the beginning of this chapter to maintain a godly life. Justice and righteousness of life reflect the character of God in those who believe on Him. A "new creature in Christ Jesus," is a "new creation." Life in Christ begins and there is an inner drive and desire to be like our Lord and Savior. "We love Him because He has first loved us." The time will come when those who live for the Lord will reap the rewards and benefits of a consistent testimony to the grace of God at work in their lives. We don't live for the Lord in order to be saved, but we do because He has saved us. It is a part of the new nature to express and show our appreciation to Him and for Him.

Gentile converts were accepted and included into the family of people who come to God by faith. Those who were looked down on, and the childless believers, have a better life and greater blessing, than if they had a long line of descendants that follow them, but have no salvation. Salvation is offered to all, even those who have made a mess of their lives before they came to the place of repentance toward God, and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nominal Christians and insincere people may keep the Sabbath and even insist that only those who keep the Sabbath are truly saved. They may even outwardly show adherence to the Lord and His word, but that does not make them accepted by God. External works and law-keeping has nothing to do with salvation by the grace of God alone. Those who rely on the outward show of Christianity are not any closer to salvation than those who trusted in carrying out the forms of law to make them acceptable to God. Sabbath keeping was the sign of God's covenant with the Jews after they left Egypt. Now, because of God's deliverance provided for all who will come to Christ, we have the opportunity to obey Him without reservation, and come together with fellow-believers to express publicly our gratitude to Him. We follow the teaching of the New Testament in relation to the acceptance of believers on the terms of grace, not law-keeping.

The Lord's Day and the Lord's house are important to our Lord Jesus Christ and they should be to us. Our Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and appeared to some of His own followers. The disciples came together in fellowship on the first day of the week, and the Lord appeared in the midst of them. New Testament believers partook of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week and were told to set aside that with which God had prospered them to give to Him on the first day of the week. Teaching of the Lord's people was given when they were gathered together on the first day of the week. The apostle John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and wrote the book of Revelation. This indicates that the Lord's Day is a day of resurrection, of remembrance, of responsibility, of review and of revelation.

There was another attitude revealed in this chapter that is very different from that of grateful believers. The Lord Jesus quoted verse seven when He cleansed the temple of money-changers and those who used His Father's house for business and self-centered interests. The sinful Jewish leaders didn't care for their own people. They were looking out for themselves, their leisure time and the profit they could make out of being professional prophets. They were supposed to be like watchmen for the people of God but were instead they were like watch-dogs that wouldn't bark. Isaiah describes them as shepherds who don't care for the sheep but are looking out for a way to enrich themselves, and use their leisure time to get drunk on wine.

Those who lead others in the way they should as true shepherds, will sacrifice their own time, efforts and much of themselves for the benefit of those over whom they have been given responsibility. The opposite kind of leaders, sacrifice the people for their own greed and gain. True leaders are not apathetic regarding what the Lord's people need, but are sympathetic and empathetic when needed to come along side to assist those who need their help.

Isaiah 56:7. *"Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."*

JOYFUL IN MY HOUSE.

It belongs to Him in His holy mountain, this special place, this house of prayer -
It is not "ours" or "mine" or any others - this place is not the house of men.

Every time as one we gather, worshipping or learning there -
The objects of our thoughts and interest - all are focused upon Him.

From different walks of life, we come, Spirit-drawn to sing our praise.
Hearts are warmed and voices lifted when our sacrifices we do bring.
After hours of busy living, pressured to conform to worldly ways -
Joy in God's house becomes contagious as we pray and together sing.

One was away for many days - sickness stopped her; she couldn't come.
Another was missing having gone away to some far and distant place.
But the time eventually came when all were there, the Father's house is really home -
And there was joy in the house again, seeing them all there, face to face.

The saints were praying, calling on God, before the time for the meeting to start -
Into the room came a long-lost prodigal, from the "far country" he is coming back.
Just to see him come into their midst, lifted in praise everyone's heart.
There was joy in the house to see him there - what a difference his presence did make.

My joy is in God's house - I have found my pleasure there for years.
That joy comes from the reasons we have come the Master there to meet
My joy also comes from God's people, every one of them really cares -
All coming, waiting and worshipping, rejoicing at the Master's feet.

When every saint of God from every generation finally meets in the house above -
What rejoicing there will be when everyone there is praising
The Triune God for His mercy, matchless grace and love -
Each one joyful in the house - all giving God the glory due Him.

“O God of glory, the joy we have in the house of God is certainly contagious. I noticed last night no one seemed to want to leave after we had been there for the whole meeting. Everyone wanted to talk to everyone else it seemed. Even on the sidewalk going toward their cars, the fellowship continued. What a blessing! What a cause for praise to Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 57

COUNTERFEIT vs CONTRITE

The “professional” prophets and the leaders of Judah who were not good leaders, are still the subject of the first thirteen verses of this chapter. They were supposed to be guides of the people of Judah and Jerusalem, but instead were exploiting the people who were righteous and wanted to please God. They were seeking to help other people who were perishing from the injustice imposed on them by idolatrous leaders.

All this was happening before the time of the exile, and when Manasseh was king, he was the worst of all. He “shed innocent blood very much.” Those people were killed for righteousness sake which was exposing the evil of the nation, and totally without reason. However, they were spared the terrible scenes of judgment that came upon the Jews when the siege of Jerusalem took place and the survivors were taken captive in chains to Babylon.

The idolatry that took over the people of Judah was immoral, and sickening to even think about to those who were living for God. Children were born from the unregenerate practices of idolatry, and became like their parents with contempt for God. The people mocked God and stuck out their tongues at thoughts of God. Under trees became places where the immoral activities were practiced because trees had life in them and they were “celebrating life.” They sacrificed their own children to false gods like Moloch, and poured offerings into streams that had movement. The worshippers of Baal had a god for everything that had life and/or moved.

When Paul came to Athens generations later, similar practices were going on there. Today it continues at the shrines of pleasure, loud concerts where ungodly music is played, and even at sports events where some people lose any sense of restraint and say and do things that they would never think of doing anyplace else. The movie industry is rampant with people whose roles in movies should never be seen, and many actors live without morality and integrity. Excessive drinking, addicting drugs and lawlessness are becoming widely accepted as practically normal by millions today. Idolatry continues in the world today unchecked. Parents kill their children before they are born so they won’t interfere with their “freedom of choice” in lifestyle.

People seem to become so totally infatuated with their own beliefs and desires, that they cannot conceive of any serious consequences that will come as a result of what they do. In order to respond to the inborn pangs of conscience, people will put their own theological spin on religion to suit the lifestyle they have chosen. Sexual perversions are practiced by “religious advisors,” and within a short time their parishioners, who follow them instead of the Bible, are “comfortable” with the sin that is practiced.

There will be a day come to this modern world, the same as when the justice and judgment of God came on Judah, that people will call on the idols they worship and live for, to help them get through hard times, and they will realize there is nothing there to help them. The idols of Hollywood, or the sports figures that people idolize, turn out to be as helpless as those carved idols were to people in the past. Those who looked to them as guides for living will find that they were just as lost as those who follow them. In contrast to the counterfeit false leaders who can do nothing to help anyone allay their fears, is the peace and comfort that comes to those who are humble and contrite before God.

The nature of God and His character are summed up by the words Isaiah wrote concerning the One who is eternal in His Being. He inhabits eternity because He has no beginning or end. There is no start or no finish with the Lord. He is limitless in every way. “The High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity,” is in that exalted position that He has always, and will always be in, forever. God has lived and dwelt in all the ages of mankind on earth, and the endless ages before He created the heavens and the earth. He will be the same in the endless ages ahead. The different “ages” emphasize the different ways God has revealed Himself to mankind in His character, His power, His indefinable glory

and in His great love. An infinite God has infinite characteristics that will be demonstrated continuously in eternity in which he dwells.

Of marvelous interest and impact to us, and is perhaps of greater concern to us, if that is possible, is the fact that there are two places in which He dwells. Our One God who is High, Lofty, Holy and revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and who has existed forever, dwells in eternity. He is limitless in His being, and yet dwells in a place that is extremely small. He dwells with the contrite and humble spirit of those who know and love Him. He stoops so low as to share with such people His holiness, mercy, grace, kindness and eternal love. His eternal majesty and glory are not compromised when He revives those who have been crushed by life, to where they are actually able to give Him glory. To be able and allowed to glorify God in our bodies and spirits, and to have the presence of divine Persons with us and in us, is the highest pinnacle of human experience.

The reality of such grace as has been shown to us, is beyond description. It enables us to worship, praise, honor and serve Him who "loved us and washed us from our sins with His own blood." To have a meaningful and personal fellowship with such a God, surpasses any attempt to define or describe such blessing and honor.

In contrast with that, is covetousness which is the heart of idolatry. People because of our sinful nature, want to have and control everything that goes on in our own lives. To submit to God, is rejected by most people because it doesn't fit with the "up with man," ideology most people adhere to. The new nature believers have been given when God saved us, produces a desire in the hearts of those who love Him, to praise and honor Him with the "fruit of our lips." Verbal expressions of praise to the Lord are ways we can give Him glory and honor. That comes from Gentiles who are "far off," and from Jews who are "near." The ungodly who see to find their own way without God, turn to idolatry and will have to face its consequences. They will never find peace. They will forever be like the flotsam that the sea pushes up after a storm, and will never find rest, nor contentment. That will not be found in the future. It is offered and able to be found in the present and then there will be lasting peace to the troubled soul.

Isaiah 57:17. *"For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart."*

THE WAY OF HIS HEART.

The heart is attracted after the eyes and the ears,
Are turned from right, to some other glittering thing.
Eyes like the shallow beauty and the sounds ear likes to hear
Turn the heart of the careless from what duty brings.
For there are obligations that accompany God's grace -
Truth balances grace with a foundation on which to build -
The blessings of grace are written so heart can easily trace -
The purposes of God that can keep heart always filled.

Heart only can use what comes in through other means.
It responds to information through the gates to the soul.
Then heart takes all of that and forms character that is seen -
By life and by words revealing with what the heart is full.
The way of the heart makes the way of the rest -
All activities seen, start from way down within.
The person who decides what is bad and what is best -
What pleases God and what will lead me to sin.

When God begins a work of recovery or of faith -
He doesn't make the change with ears or with eyes -
But goes to the heart that discerns what He saith.
God goes right to where the essence of man lies -
The heart of the contrite is revived when the Lord
Has the place of supremacy in the heart -
When eyes and ears together bring to heart God's Word -
Then the way of the heart surely will be right.

"Heavenly Father, I want to take the admonition to "keep my heart with all diligence"- really to heart. I know the gates to my heart will always be opened to all that is around. But my heart is really able to be controlled when I yield to the Spirit of God within. I pray I will always be submissive to Him, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 58

HYPOCRISY vs HONESTY

The full-throated sound of the prophet's voice declaring Israel's sins, was like the trumpet of the Lord giving a loud warning to those whose transgressions and sins had to be faced. The self-righteousness of the leaders of the people was being exposed showing what they were really like. They were paying careful attention to the outward religious forms of fasting and worship, but it was all hypocrisy because it was for themselves and to exalt who they thought they were before other people. It was not for the Lord they were fasting and going to the temple. Formal religion had become a substitute for reality and real commitment to God. They went to the temple, practiced self-denial and outward humbling so that on-lookers thought they were holy. Their "repentance for sin" was insincere and their worship was really false worship.

Religious hypocrisy was exposed by the message of Isaiah who made it plain that religious observances have no value if righteousness, faith and love are not there. That kind of hypocrisy hinders prayers, and the outward signs of weakness and humility were not acceptable to the Lord. When our Lord Jesus was here, He spoke plainly to the Pharisees and the people about their fasts, long prayers and public alms-giving, and condemned them for that pretense of humility. It is true that a time of glory is coming in the future, but now sin must be faced and forsaken.

When things are wrong, they must be put right. External religious practices are of no worth at all if people do not judge themselves, deal with sin by confessing and forsaking sin, and turn in faith to the Lord. Forms and traditions that people have attached to their religious life are of no value to God and no benefit to ourselves and other people. We have obligations to people around us, especially those who have real needs. However, the point of helping meet their needs is not so we can feel good about ourselves, but so that those who are in need are fed, clothed and blessed by us because the Lord has blessed us first. All honor goes to our Lord who has given us what is needed to pass on.

In contrast to the hypocrisy of false worship and religious formalism, is the light of fellowship with the Lord that is real, and produces spiritual joy for the sorrowing, spiritual prosperity for the hungry and salvation for the lost. Those who want to be a blessing to others, in honesty and compassion bring spiritual healing to sin-sick souls. Their light shows and blessing breaks out like a refreshing rain. Righteousness comes ahead of blessing, but the Lord Himself goes before and comes after those who have the right motives in what they do. Prayers are answered as fellowship is joined with others in faith. Understanding is given to the hungry souls and they find satisfaction.

When there is fellowship with God and others who are honest, there are no false accusations, no rejection of truth and righteousness. Godly influences that bless people who are sincere and dedicated to the Lord, takes the place of hypocrisy. God gets first place in the hearts of those who show reality by their obedience to divine authority. Spiritual growth and prosperity follow the sincerity and spiritual integrity that is in those who worship God in truth. When the condition is right, guidance from God is there and our souls are strong in faith, and our lives are fruitful. Restoration and revival follow when God gets the right place among His people and in the nation.

Eternal life becomes real to us when we experience light in the darkness, rest in our soul, fruit for our labor, joy in our fellowship with others. There is a real sense of God's presence in the affairs of life. There is recovery to our spiritual heritage that makes life meaningful with fullness of joy. There is an appointed rest that is an opportunity to honor the Lord in our family, our assembly and our community when we do God's things in God's way. Even the unique and special day set apart for God, makes our life with the Lord become more alive in a practical way as we worship, praise, testify and fellowship with the Lord and His people.

True worship is much more than religious ritual. To go to the meetings of the local assembly, to fast and listen to what is read and preached, can all be done without any more reality than going to some secular event. Outward forms may seem pious and meaningful to religious flesh, but that is all it is – flesh. The true worship of God is not hypocritical nor is it for one's self. Worship is for the Lord. It is expressed when there are heart-felt thoughts and words spoken to Him from our hearts in audible thanksgiving and songs of praise and worship. A relationship between us and our Lord Jesus is not some form or ritual. It involves personal expressions that show reality, and there is real compassion and interest in those around us. We are able to respond to the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of other people in the name of the Lord.

Deeds of kindness toward others can be done by anyone, but when the love of God is the motivation, and generosity, kindness and true justice is done as to the Lord, we are able to please Him. He adds to it the anointing that is needed to make it a spiritual work. That brings with it a joy that rises above self-centered feelings of having done something good, and just feeling good about our contribution to a need. Believers who do what they do, "as to the Lord," get a lasting spiritual joy in that our Lord Jesus is glorified. That is like sitting at a feast with those who have gone on before us whose faith was living and real. That is the heritage of the saints. That is much more than Sabbath keeping was to the Jews. There is a meaning and purpose in doing things God's way.

The results of responding to the needs around us, are that light comes out of darkness. The Lord's presence is felt among those who love and serve Him by serving others. There is happiness generated in unhappy times. Real needs of real people are met by real love in real ways. There is a refreshment of souls that brings satisfaction to those who receive from the bounty given, and also in those who count their giving, a privilege to be able to serve. When one empties themselves for others, personal faith seems real to us and we are confident that our God does not fail us. Motive, action and results are all for the glory of God when done in honesty, not hypocrisy.

Isaiah 58:2. *"Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God."*

ORDINANCES OF JUSTICE.

They made their own ordinances to please the people,
More concerned about suitability than fundamental integrity:

"Make it easy for them to fulfill their obligations" -
"Make them feel comfortable in difficult situations."

"Fasting is good, God links it together with faith -
Make sure everyone knows we believe in what's good."
"Set a time and a day when there is no work allowed,
You can fast out in public to be seen by the crowd."

But God says it differently, He wants us to fast from sin -
Take the burdens of others and carry them yourself.
Break the yokes of oppression that have so many bound -
Take your bread and feed the hungry wherever they are found.

God says to clothe the naked, many are afraid and cold.
Look around you and see is there some urgent need near you -
Take what belongs to you and use it to meet the needs of others -
The oppressed and burdened, the cold and hungry also are your brothers.

To fast is not an ordinance to make people think a lot of me -
It is to be a practice of mine to use what God has given.
Then the fast becomes what God intended - an ordinance of justice -
That in the end result people will experience what the grace of God is.

"O God of all mankind: may the needs of others never leave me careless or callous toward them and my responsibility to them. To fast without a spiritual reason is probably a form of hypocrisy. Help given to those in need using what has been given to me by Thee is far more important. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 59

SIN vs SALVATION

The people of Judah apparently became concerned about what was going to happen to them after the Assyrians had conquered the northern tribes of Israel and emptied that country of Jews by dispersing them to all parts of the empire. Other people were made to move in to Israel and ultimately became known as "Samaritans." That was a mixture of nationalities that the Jerusalem Jews looked down on. "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." When those Jews of Judah began to feel threatened, they had been accusing God of not responding to their calls for help and deliverance from the enemies who were threatening to defeat them. Isaiah responds to that by making them face up to what was wrong with them.

In the first verses of this chapter there is a description of the appalling moral breakdown of the Jewish society, likely descriptive of the times of Manasseh. So, the reply comes from God through Isaiah that the problem is not that God is not able or willing to respond. He is not weak or deaf, and He certainly can see as well. Their own iniquities and sins made it impossible for Him to help them. They would not do justly to each other, so they couldn't expect God to protect them because He is separate from sin of any kind. The heart of mankind is deceitful and desperately wicked. God is holy and He cannot excuse or ignore sin. Sin and perfect righteousness cannot mix nor even be together. Sin cuts people off from God who does not tolerate sin in any way.

Therefore, there is a wall of separation that people make so they can cut themselves off from fellowship and life with God. They don't want God to reign over them, and they deliberately turned away from Him. The long list of sins in the first part of this chapter is like the list in Romans chapter three. The deception of serpents and spider's webs give us the idea of treachery; being trapped and poisoned. The contrast of the web of a spider and the silk of a worm is made. One is used to trap and destroy, and the other to clothe and beautify. God looks the other way when people choose to sin. They only want God to rescue them from the trouble they cause themselves. The wickedness of the lives of people in the past and present creates a barrier between sinners and the Savior that will forever remain if they die in their sins. When that happens, they will be lost forever because of their own choice to reject the Lord. Hell was prepared for willful and sinful angels who followed Satan. The lake of fire is the place of mans' choosing when God's mercy and forgiveness is offered but rejected.

The description of those people who turned away from the Lord is they were like snakes – vipers, that use their bodies for wickedness. But nothing is hidden from the eyes of God. The consequences of this depravity, was made plain to them. They will become victims themselves who made victims of others. All their independence will be taken from them and they would become poverty-stricken oppressed people who will have no justice shown toward them. They will be in spiritual and national darkness, and will have nothing but desolation.

There is a terrible lament made by those who want what they want, on their own terms. They have no ability to do what is right even if they wanted to because righteousness and sin do not coexist. Righteousness and sin are not like taps that can be turned on or off at will. It is one or the other that we must choose. We cannot do both. Those who try that are like blind people who grope for what they cannot do nor want to see. They are as helpless as dead people, and as impatient as a hungry bear. They know what is wrong, and why God does not answer their calls, but they keep on doing the same things over and over. They want justice but do not want to show justice to others. They want truth to be told to them, but they do not want truth in themselves.

As the prophecy continues, it seems like the people of Judah and Jerusalem finally faced up to their sin and wickedness. Even when they attempted to do what was right, they confessed their own personal guilt, but it was falsehood, and they would become victims of other evil people who would dominate that land. No wonder God was displeased with them and all He saw. There was not one man on earth who could save lost sinners. The moral and spiritual failure of the Jews distressed (wondered) Him, because there was no one able to be a mediator between sinful Israel and divine holiness.

“The Lord saw it.” This section of the prophecy brings to us the subject of rescue and salvation. No one could provide salvation, so He provided salvation for sinners Himself. He became the Mediator by bringing salvation with “His arm.” By acting on behalf of others by taking their place Himself, salvation for sinners could be achieved. Our Lord Jesus Christ came in perfect holiness and spotless righteousness of life. He provided justice that satisfied every claim laid against lost sinners who came to Him in faith and accepted Him personally as Savior and Lord. He could do that because His righteousness, even in His manhood, was absolute and pure. There was no dart of the enemy that could penetrate the perfections of His righteousness, or have any effect on Him and the salvation He brought. He defeated all foes. There was never an impure thought that crossed His mind. The garments of His holiness separated Him from all evil that surrounded Him even when He was here found in fashion as a man. God's demands from us, were met and fully paid for by Him who brought us deliverance in an amazing act of grace.

The second time our Lord Jesus Christ comes, “the enemy” that will come in as a “flood,” will be defeated and God's people will be delivered. God will defend His people and Israel will be brought into blessing by their “Kinsman-Redeemer,” who is one of their own people. The result of His mercy and grace is that He is able to defeat every foe because of His authority, strength, glory and power that is infinite, and has been used for our salvation. The fear of the Lord will cover the whole world when those enemies face the One whose “banner” of holiness is lifted up to declare the defeat of all the powers of men and hell. In glory the Redeemer will be manifest in all His glory, and the

covenant made with Israel so long ago, will be established. Witnesses will testify of God's greatness, with lips that once were unclean but are cleansed so they are able to speak holy words.

Isaiah 59:2. *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear."*

SEPARATED.

A stretched-out hand able to reach every person -
An opened ear that can hear everyone's cry.
An arm bringing salvation - imputed righteousness to sustain him -
Everything provided to bring each and every sinner nigh.

But no! For some reason sin has a greater attraction -
The faces of men turn and they go away from God.
There is iniquity and defilement in every action -
And lips that lie - it is impossible to believe their word.

Evil has taken over - iniquities have taken the ascendancy -
Their trust is in vanity and aggression is in every deed -
No peace is to be found - in self is their dependency -
To judgment and justice none of them give heed.

They started on this terrible downward path only for selfish gain -
Looking for pleasure and power - ignoring the path to peace.
The farther away from God they go - the greater the increase of pain,
On this path of evil separation, they are going farther away from grace.

The Lord wanted to bring them abundant blessing -
He knows what is at separation's awful end.
His ultimate aim is in grace to save them -
To them the message of good news He sends.

But there is that awful, distant and dark separation -
There is a great distance between darkness and light -
That only comes when there is true reconciliation -
Men must turn from wrong and then chose the right.

God is ready and always willing to receive them -
There is a great distance that their sin has caused.
When any person repents and willingly comes to Him -
That great separating gulf is finally crossed.

"I thank Thee O Father, that through Christ has come the way back to Thee that I could never make myself. The barrier of sin has been bridged by His sacrifice and there is no need of separation for anyone. I thank Thee the Holy Spirit convicted me of sin and brought me to understand the words of the Gospel that brought me salvation. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 60

PEACE FINALLY, GLORY TO GOD!

The righteousness of life that is needed for true fellowship with God and effective testimony to the world, is beyond our capability to produce by ourselves. In these last chapters of Isaiah's prophecy, he emphasizes the fact that it is God alone who is able to make people righteous. This the fundamental point of the Gospel. What we cannot do for ourselves, and no one else can do for us, God can, and did, for us. The darkness that permeated the history of Israel will turn to light, and the mourning of the Jews for hundreds of generations, will become praise and salvation world-wide.

The world's darkness will be overcome by the light of Israel, and it happened to a certain degree when our Lord Jesus Christ was born, "A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." However, His own rejected Him then, but that Light was turned on, and the church has been reflecting His light world-wide since He left right up until this time. "Ye are the light of the world," gives us a sense of the worth the Lord places on believers who testify to His saving grace whenever and wherever they preach the Gospel. That awareness of who we are and why we are

still here challenges His people to conduct their lives in a holy and righteous way because everything we do reflects on Him. It is our responsibility to reflect Him before people around us in all we do.

Redeemed people who love the Lord, want other people to come to Him and be saved. Those who appreciate the fact that He gave His life for us because He loved us, love Him in return, and hopefully that love is a bright light to show the reality of the Gospel. People who have tried to be saved by their own efforts, have failed. However, when they repent of their sins and trust Christ alone as their Savior, they receive a glory that doesn't fade away like man-made and human glory.

The Lord's first coming was like a sunrise over a dark world. Since then, both Jews and Gentiles have been blessed through the Gospel message being preached, and are saved when they believe it. All the blessings that evaded Israel through the past, will someday come to the nation in the future. All of God's promises to that nation, and are still waited for, will come to pass in His time when people and conditions are ready to receive their fulfillment. Those who are converted from among the nations of the world, will bring their offerings of thanksgiving and appreciation to the Lord. This includes sons and daughters (converted Jews) who have been dispersed among the Gentile nations. Both will come to worship the Lord at the new temple in Jerusalem.

In the coming millennium, Jews and Gentiles will be as one in fellowship when Jerusalem becomes the capital city of the world. The Messiah/King will be supreme over every government on earth and will not allow rebellion to go unpunished. There will be a great contrast between Israel in the millennium, and the Jews in the time of Isaiah. There will be glory for God and righteousness instead of contempt. Where there was poverty in the time of Isaiah, there will be wealth in the millennial kingdom. Righteousness will take the place of injustice and peace instead of war. The glory of God will be so obvious that the very wall will be called "Salvation," and the gates to the city will be called "Praise." Godliness will be normal rather than apostasy. Instead of only a very few believers, there will be a great number that are like a mighty nation.

Jews who for many generations have been mixed among the nations all over the world, will return to their ancestral homeland and will receive, revere and respect their Messiah who will reign. God's judgment because of righteous, legal and just wrath was always meant to be temporary with the view to promoting change in the behavior of the people. When that truly happens and their behavior toward the Lord is real and evident, His favor will be upon them. God's favor was always meant to be eternal. Many people in many nations who have responded to the Gospel that came when the "Light shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not," will be saved by God's grace. Israel itself will be nurtured by the nations in the millennium when they bring much of what they have to be given to sustain Israel.

Repentance and faith in the Lord will bring recovery and exaltation to those who have been previously persecuted. The people of Israel will be called righteous when they turn to their Messiah and own Him as their Savior and Lord. As a result, they will have righteousness imputed to them in the same way the children of God today are made righteous by God, before God. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, gives us a new nature that is godly in both attitude and conduct. We who are believers in this time of grace, get a jump-start on all God will be doing in a more inclusive way in the future.. "This may be the dawning of that day."

Isaiah 60:15. *"Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee. I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations."*

ETERNAL EXCELLENCY.

Days, years, generations - many centuries have passed -
Gone to slavery, obscurity - near annihilation.
Their name has become a word of derision rather than honor
Their home a battleground - blood has soaked the ground in every generation.

Forsaken and hated? Yes, Israel has been alone so long -
It is a wonder to the world they have survived.
Not just survival, but the central occupation of many -
Some never satisfied until they are driven into the sea.

How have they managed to continue to exist?
Miracles through the centuries performed by God alone -
No one else can ever be credited with loving them -
God set His love upon them - gave His promise of blessing.

Again, David's throne will be filled - with Perfect Righteousness.
Again, the nations of the world will wonder - at the Messiah of Israel.
Again, world leaders will make their way to Jerusalem - to the King of kings.
Israel is remade in honor and reflected glory - an Eternal Excellency.

Nations of the world will be blessed because of this Eternal Excellency -
Joy will come to many generations because of the Eternal Excellency -
Prosperity world-wide; deserts blossoming like a rose - Eternal Excellency.
Peace finally comes world-wide - the Redeemer makes Israel, Eternal Excellency.

The walls that have seen so much death is called, "Salvation."
The entrances to David's city where deep bitterness reigned -
Are witnesses to such glory, they will be known as "Praise."
Eternal Excellency has become the joy of many nations.

"I am not sure the word to use is "enthusiasm," O God, or if there is some other way to better express my anticipation of the future day when Israel finally has peace and the Lord reigns. After all the generations of Israelis that have gone through so much pain - I wonder if this is the one that will see the promised glory. In anticipation I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 61

THE GOSPEL OF JOY

The opening speaker of this chapter is our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Messiah of Israel, but not yet accepted by them as their Savior and Lord. When He came to them at His first coming, they rejected Him openly as a nation of people. This chapter makes it plain that the righteousness needed by every person in order to make us acceptable to God, comes only from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Anointed One of Israel. The opening words of this chapter were what the Lord Jesus read when He stepped into the public and began preaching the Gospel in "the acceptable year of the Lord." This life-transforming Gospel message was proclaimed by Him when He was here and has been preached by those appointed by Him down through the centuries until now. This is the same message preached by faithful men today.

The first three verses have to do with the work of God through the Gospel. The next six verses teach the work of God's people to others. The final two verses give the results of the message of the Gospel. When the Lord Jesus Christ read this passage in public, He stopped before the final line that speaks about the future "day of vengeance." His work on earth at that time was prophesied in the early part of these verses, and He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." However, the first and second coming of the Lord are linked. Blessing came first, and then justice and judgment will come at the next appointed time. It will be at that time Israel will become a "kingdom of priests," as God has originally intended. The righteousness of Christ will be imputed to them in the future in a way similar to what He has imputed to us now when we are saved.

In the first verse the Spirit of the Lord empowered Him to make the message of the Gospel plain to the meek. Those are humble people who recognize their own sin and their need of the Savior. There are many broken-hearted people in the world who live in a condition of constant remorse and guilt. When repentance for sin is real and they take responsibility for their own sin before God, the Lord can bind up those deep wounds in the same way the good Samaritan bound the wounds of the fallen traveler. Liberty for the captives frees those who are addicted to sin by a power far greater than the chains imposed by any person or substance. There is true consolation for those who had sorrow and were hopeless.

The "acceptable year of the Lord" had come, perhaps like the year of jubilee, when slaves were freed and life began anew for those who had been in want. Now there was power given by the Lord to live, set free from sin and all its claims; to live holy and righteously before the Lord. For those who would not submit to the Lord nor accept what He was willing to give them, there is righteous judgment and vengeance on the unrepentant who will not face their own need of a Savior.

"Trees of righteousness" are planted by the Lord Himself, and are rooted and nurtured by Him to display the splendor of His holiness and goodness. There is beauty where the ashes of a wasted life once were. There is the oil of real joy

where once there was sadness as sin took its toll on the human soul. There is the balm of promise as we look into the future with praise in our hearts, all of which demonstrates the blessings of our salvation now and forever.

New life in Christ that has come to us through the Gospel, rebuilds that which has been ruined as far as Israel is concerned, replacing that which they lost so long ago when they rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. We who were strangers to grace and to God, and dead in trespasses and sin, have been given new life in Christ. Gentile converts serving in the Kingdom are willing to submit to Jewish apostles and the Jewish scriptures that have been made available to us. We have the "double" blessing of being in God's family and having the Lord Jesus with us. We are able to join in the work of the Lord and service for the eternal God, with those who were the first in the kingdom of God.

There will be a time come when believing Jews will be "Priests of the Lord," and "Ministers of God." Insincerity will have no place in the kingdom. The Lord loves justice and is able to make those who trust in Him, righteous in fact as well as in profession. The people of Israel will someday rejoice in what Christ will make possible for them, because they will be able to finally be fruitful here on earth. They are linked by covenant with God that will give them an influential place among the nations, and He will give them peace. Born-again believers today rejoice and respond to the promises of God. We have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ has been shed upon us. We are able to enjoy sweet fellowship with our Savior presently as we "walk with the Lord in the light of His word."

In the New Covenant, all believers are priests who represent the Lord in our place and time. True representatives of the Lord read His word with a desire to understand it, practice its teaching and then minister to others as representatives

of our Savior. We know that all injustice is taken care of by Him who is holy, righteous and perfectly just in every action He takes. So, His people will joy in the triumph of righteousness over evil. The day of joy and gladness ahead for the earthly people of God will be like the day when the bride of Christ, is united at His return for His church. The reuniting of the Son of David with His people will be like a wedding day. There will be joy and gladness when the will of God is done "on earth as it is in heaven." He will then be known as the King, the Priest and the Bridegroom by all the people on earth.

Isaiah 61:3. *"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified."*

GIVE THEM.

Instead of the bitter ashes and long centuries of persecution -

The beauty of being undeniably loved is on them as a crown.

Instead of the tears of mourning because of fierce opposition -

Gladness fills the homes and hearts of a nation long trodden down.

Instead of despair that comes from deep within, thinking all is lost -

True righteousness, like a stand of beautiful trees, now exalts the nation.

From ancient places long forgotten, destroyed by sin's great cost -

Rise new buildings and homes for families who were vagabonds for generations.

In a different way and for different reasons similar blessings came to me -

For I have been given, and many others like me, the helmet of salvation.

Instead of the guilt and grief of sin, there is rejoicing as we sing -

And there has been experienced the truth of God's Word - worthy of acceptance.

The future holds many great promises in spite of the darkness of the day -

And the sorrows of this present life give way to God's healing balm.

Joy has taken the place of fear and instead of complaint there's praise -

The spirit of heaviness has fled, while taking its place is a great calm.

The garment of righteousness fits just right for those who live by faith -

Hearts are warmed in fellowship when in prayer and the Word, we're fed.

Evidence of, and the effects of grace, are displayed on believers' face -

And the members of the Body coordinate, guided by the Living Head.

Like a stand of trees or a fruitful orchard, the saints do demonstrate -

The grace and faithfulness of God, to those who on Christ believe -

For all the world to see if they will, is the Christ who our sins did take -

And our lives are calm in the midst of storms for we have Him received.

“From my heart O God, I give thanks for the change Thou dost make in the souls and lives of those who come to Thee by faith in Christ. May we all represent the grace of God in unmistakable ways so those who do not know Thee will come to believe on Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 62

ZION RESTORED

God’s promise to redeem Israel and bring them back to Himself, continues to be written about in Isaiah’s prophecy. The time will come when Zion is back again with the Lord in holy fellowship as “Beulah.” God will give a new name to them indicating a new relationship begun with them, similar to the way He gave a new name to Jacob. From the name that means “crooked; a supplanter,” to Israel, which means “a prince with God,” is about as different as a name-change can get. From “Forsaken,” to “Hephzibah” (My delight is in thee), and from “Desolate,” to “Beulah” (married) is a totally new outlook on the people of Israel in God’s eyes. In that day, the Lord will delight in His earthly people as a bridegroom delights in His bride. Zion will be a visible display to the world of the righteousness of Christ. Israel will truly be a holy nation.

The true bride of Christ today, the church, is a “a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” that has been redeemed from all iniquity. Our role in the world today is that of a bride preparing for the wedding day, and as servants calling out to those who are indifferent to the One who wants them to share eternal life with them. So, we go into the world and preach the Gospel, in essence saying, “Come, for all things are now ready!”

There will be faithful prophets/preachers in the coming tribulation who will intercede for the Jews and preach the Gospel to them. Many will be saved through their preaching, and many will be killed because of their faith in Christ during that time. Those thousands of faithful preachers will be telling of the day when Jerusalem will be a place of praise not contrition and contention. They will assure the Jews that the covenant between God and Abraham will come to pass, and those who put personal faith in the coming Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, will be saved eternally. Those preachers will be “watchmen,” faithful trusted people who will preach and pray with urgency and persistence, until the kingdom of God is established on earth.

It is the grace of God alone that makes it possible for anyone to be saved. His grace will also be the reason such a future restoration will happen. There will be a holy beauty conferred upon God’s people by the Messiah of Israel in that day. How grateful we should be as believers today, that we have been made righteous by Christ Himself, and as holy people can have fellowship now with our Savior and Lord. We can call the Almighty God, “Abba, Father,” and approach Him in confidence in our Savior’s precious name.

In the coming day of which Isaiah was prophesying, there will not be any more invasions of Israel, or famines that claim the lives of those who belong to the Messiah. The “standard,” that will be lifted high, will be the ensign of the finished work of Christ on the cross. They will be saved by accepting the work of Christ on their behalf the same as born-again people of all ages. People living in Jerusalem in the time of the millennium, will be called, “The holy people.” That is a very different description of them from what they were in the time of Isaiah and the prophets who came after him. They were unholy people, idol worshippers who were in bondage to those who would come and conquer them. They had turned away from the Lord and would suffer the consequences of idolatry and apostasy.

Isaiah could look ahead and see what would happen in the future, and like all faithful preachers, he warned the people that the promise of sin to give something for nothing is an empty promise, because by its nature, sin takes, not gives. More than that it takes from any of us what we should never give. The contrast to that is that righteousness, when invested, brings forth much more than it takes. Investing in righteousness produces far more than it costs, because the Lord guarantees it.

During the dangerous years of the tribulation, those who preach the Gospel will faithfully serve the Lord by warning the people. They will keep them looking ahead and beyond things happening at the moment, to the fulfilling of the Lord’s promised, victorious return, and victory over their enemies. The lives of God’s people will no more be an on-going struggle of survival because of the impact of sin. In that day the people of the Lord will live fulfilled lives as they serve the Lord. In the restored Zion, they will be called, “the redeemed of the Lord, sought out, a city not forsaken.”

Isaiah 62:11. *“Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh’ Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.”*

THY SALVATION COMETH.

Brightness shines from their righteousness, now very easily seen -
Salvation obviously comes where only darkness was previously seen.

As a lamp that burns, glowing brightly to show the lost their way -
Walking in light is necessarily more about what we do, then words we say.

God's glory is seen wherever His chosen people are found -
The name of Jesus is known all the whole world around.
His redeemed are a crown of glory kept in the Master's hand -
A diadem of honor, His people are through all the land.

Every eye will see in His people the glory of the Lord -
Finally, after so long a time, attention is paid to His Word.
Salvation has finally come to pass for His chosen nation -
No longer is Israel known as the land of desolation.

Similarly, we wait today though not for the salvation of the soul -
The salvation of our bodies will be a fact when the Lord Himself will come.
Far more important than all of this is the "Salvation of God" Himself -
The joy that will accompany His coming is greater than can be told or felt.

"In the day to come, Father God, I am sure there will be delight in Thy heart when finally, the Lord Jesus Christ is recognized by all the world as the Mighty Son of God. What joy it will be to see the suffering of Israel at an end and the Lord Himself their King. What joy it will be to be a part of the Bride of Christ and to fulfill the plans of God for all the eternal ages. I praise Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 63

PROMISES, PRAISE, PRAYER

The early verses of this chapter tell how God will keep His promise to make Israel the "holy people, redeemed of the Lord," referred to at the end of the previous chapter. He will conquer those who captured them, and are still arrayed against them. Judgement and justice will be carried out by the Lord alone in the appropriate time and way. The divine judgment inflicted on "Edom," an enemy from the east, is a reference to the rebellious world that is hostile to God and to God's people. When our Lord is victorious at Armageddon, this question will be raised. "Who is He that cometh from Edom?"

When God intervenes to deal with the ungodliness of the world in justice and righteousness, it is "His own arm" that brings salvation from the wickedness of the tribulation. His divine intervention will bring holy judgment on the Christ-rejecting, God-hating, Gospel spurning world. The remnant of Israel will be in hiding and fear will have gripped the hearts of everyone when the victorious Lord steps into the view of the whole world. When that happens, the people of Israel will say, "Who is this that cometh from Edom; garments stained in crimson red?" We will be able to join with all the saints of the ages and shout and sing, "'Tis the Lord, the King of glory; 'Tis the Lord, O wonderous story!"

The phrase, "I have trodden the winepress alone," is a reference to the judgment of God carried out on the enemies of Israel. That is something He alone is able to do. It is applied sometimes to the sufferings of our Lord Jesus when He was here the first time. It is true He was alone in suffering in His soul in the garden of Gethsemane. He was alone when standing before the high priest and the council. He was alone before Pontus Pilate. He was alone before Herod. He was alone on the cross. There was judgment there and He emerged victorious over our foes of sin, hell and death. In this context though, it is looking ahead to the Victorious One who emerges from Armageddon to be seen and accepted by His own earthly people, Israel.

Isaiah sings a song of praise and thanksgiving for the "lovingkindness" of the Lord toward His people. The refining process of God's people is difficult at the time, but in the end, and it will come to an end, it produces the "peaceable fruits of righteousness." The lovingkindness of the Lord, and His multiplied acts of grace, are nothing new. It is all of those wonders of God toward us, that keeps us from being consumed by all that is going on around us. God has always kept faith with His people, even though we fail and, in some cases, reject and deny Him. God chose Israel as the people of earth to show a special separating love toward. Even though He did, and His love is unchanging and eternal, their rebellion against Him has consequences. The ungratefulness of Israel is remembered, and so the Lord has had to chasten His rebellious people.

God's love is His nature. God is love. The value He has established on the objects of His love: Israel as a nation; the world of people who can love Him in return; and individuals who love Him in return, is firm and unchanging. However, His righteous wrath does not overlook sin and evil in those He loves. There is the chastening hand of love on those who know Him and can love Him in return if they will but fail; and sin, as the unwanted action of their lives. There is the righteous and just judgment of holiness against evil, when the wicked choose to continue in sin and rejection of the God of love. The consequences of sin come on Christ-rejectors; not because they were not loved, but because they spurned that love, and in some cases, denied even the existence of God.

In the book of Isaiah, the Holy Spirit is mentioned more than in any other Old Testament book. In Isaiah 11:2. He brings wisdom, knowledge and the fear of the Lord. In 32:15, the Holy Spirit brings abundance and in 34:16 it is the Holy Spirit who carries out the word of God. He is the Counselor in 40:13, and is in the Servant of Jehovah in 42:1. He makes the children of God thrive, 44:3-5; sent Isaiah to prophesy, 48:16; appointed him and the Lord Jesus to preach the Gospel, 61:1. In this chapter the Holy Spirit is grieved by God's people verses ten and eleven, and then in verse fourteen gives rest. The ungratefulness of the people of God was remembered, and so Isaiah reminded them the Lord had to chasten His rebellious people. Those among them who were genuinely repentant made their appeal to God to come again to His people. They recognized Abraham and Jacob would disown them for their ways, but they plead for God to "look down" and show mercy to them.

The Holy Spirit gave individual Jewish believers understanding so they could live for God, and serve Him acceptably. Sometimes people expect God to do for them what they should be doing for themselves but don't want to. Even if they are responsible to meet needs and are able to do it, they want God to do it for them. Some people will actually say, "Why does God allow people to do that? Why doesn't He stop them before they do wrong?" It is quite common for unbelievers to think that God is to blame for their sin, because He allowed them to go ahead and do what they know is wrong. Their idea of God is that He is their servant, rather than their Lord and Master.

The remnant of people who made this appeal for divine intervention, admitted their forefathers, men of faith, would have been appalled at what their progeny had become. If we are not careful, we will find ourselves and those who follow us getting farther and farther from God and not willing to admit it. We can never blame God for allowing us to sin but must take responsibility for our own actions, our own sin and our own guilt because of sin. God made us with the ability to make moral decisions. If that was not so, there would be no way for love to be demonstrated or mercy to be shown. Grace has provided what brings delight to us who do not deserve the least of His mercies.

Isaiah 63:1. *"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?"*

COMING FROM EDM.

The constant enemy that has for many ages proved ceaselessly implacable -
From the first generation until the present time been totally incompatible.
Edom, through the first-born has been morally and spiritually unreliable -
Trying to drive Israel into the sea using every means to them available.

Presently in the middle-east - Edom is demanding once again -
That the nations all around that area insists Israel submit to them.
Never will Edom accept the Messiah who by His death defeated sin -
But when the Christ is revealed, they will fear His presence then.

A glimpse into the future shows us retribution will come to pass -
The constant unrelenting warfare will surely be ended at last.
Once the Lord from heaven is revealed, things will happen fast -
Edom will be trampled and destroyed - bitterness a thing of the past.

The Lord will be seen in His glory, revealed there before all -
From kings to the poor, all to hills and rocks will call.
One after the other, on their knees men will fall -
Everyone has an appointment in God's judgment hall.

Garments are stained with the blood of vengeance, not redemption -
Edom and Bozrah find no place for any reconciliation.
For Israel and those God called, now they have full salvation -
It will all be made plain at the time of the Lord's revelation.

"A look ahead Father, makes me fear for those of Esau's seed. The force of their hatred seems so terrible that it is a wonder Israel has survived even until now. When the tribulation comes, I pray that many of the Israelis will turn to Christ early. Be glorified, O God, in Thy people now and during those hard times. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 64

PRAYER FOR GOD'S HELP CONTINUES

The words of this chapter are a continuation of those in the last part of the previous chapter. Isaiah as a representative of Israel, pleads for the Lord to step in and force the world to submit to His holiness and supreme

authority as the Sovereign of the universe. The words are like the cry of a person in anguish of soul and physical pain at the same time. It is a desperate cry for God to come down in mighty power and deliver His people. In the words of the first verses, he refers to the way God came down in Israel's past to Mt. Sinai, and the effect it had on the Israelites who trembled in fear at the evidence of God's presence.

It is when this is a reality in a troubled soul, that our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed as the Savior. The troubled soul has faced their own sin and acknowledge their own guilt before God. There are no more comparisons with other people, and no protestations of innocence or personal worth, that would make God obligated to save them. In contrast, there is real repentance for sin on the part of the penitent sinner, and it is then the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to them as their personal Savior and God saves them.

It is hard for people to admit to their own unworthiness of any of God mercies toward them. We are helpless in ourselves to deal with our sin problem that separates us from God. We don't have either the right or the ability to grasp what it is to put faith in our Lord Jesus. It is the entrance of God's word into the soul that gives light to the darkness of a troubled soul, and then it is the Holy Spirit of God that gives the light of life. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

In the words of the prophecy in this passage, those who are righteous on earth are astounded and grieved at the contempt people in general have for God. Those who know the Lord recognize their responsibility to obey and love the Lord if the Lord is going to answer their prayer for the nation. They also admit that Israel, and mankind in general, pretend to be righteous, but their righteousness is as "filthy rags." People are self-seeking instead of seeking for the Lord.

Those in Israel who know they are guilty as a people of forsaking and rejecting the Lord, make their plea for divine intervention on the promise of God to their forefathers and to the nation as His chosen people. The remnant of Judah took the position of real confession of sin, self-judgment and true repentance before God. They know there is no reason for God to help them. They have no righteousness. There has been no faithfulness to God and they have no merit of their own to recommend them as worthy of help or deliverance.

It is the same for individuals today, as it will be for Israel in the future or as it was for them in the past. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." There is absolutely no way to justify sin. There is no way for sin to be covered up as if it is not serious. Honest confession from the heart for sin and the fairness of judgment for sin is the only way to find the mercy we need. Then the exceeding riches of God's grace will bring a clarity of understanding as to what our Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross. It was there He was "made sin for us" so that we could be made righteous and acceptable before God.

As Isaiah prophesied, the land of Judah became desolate and the temple was burned with fire. It wouldn't be until the days of Nehemiah that the walls of Jerusalem would be rebuilt and the city become a safe habitation. The remnant of people in that past day, asked God to look upon the scenes of devastation, and have pity on them. Would He please show compassion for them, not because of who they were but because of who He is?

Isaiah 64:1. *"Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow at thy presence."*

COME DOWN.

The righteous all over the world are grieved at the depths of contempt
Appealing for divine intervention to stop contempt for God Himself
He who moves mountains until they weep hot red tears
And boils the waters of rivers until living things are cooked
Also makes the earth tremble at His choosing
Moves the water of the sea away from normal places
And returns them to places not before visited
Is held in contempt by men only temporarily
Finally, vindication comes, when God Himself comes down
And justice reigns supreme.

The righteous of Israel who have repented and turned
Turned to God Himself, and make their plea on the basis of covenant
Covenant made by God and His earthly chosen
Purposes and promises to be fulfilled when grace -
Grace after judgment is passed, that testifies to His love
Undeserved love simply because God is love
His appearance so intense that it burns like fire
And mercy alone saves them from annihilation
Our righteousness is nothing at all compared to infinite holiness

We appeal to Him to come down on the basis of His righteousness alone.

“O God, I know the day is coming when all will be shown for what it really is. The days of sinning will be past when Thy justice will really be the authority of the whole earth. I await the days when Christ is revealed in glory. Hasten the day - in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Isaiah 65

JUDGMENT AND SALVATION

These final chapters of the book of Isaiah brings to a great conclusion the different sections of the prophecy and, in a way, give an overview of the whole book. The cause of coming judgment on the people of Judah, the captivity and exile and then the return of to the promised land has all been prophesied. The remnant and the future including the tribulation, the millennium and the eternal future are all referred to.

He begins with the Gentiles seeking for the Lord who previously had no connection with God as a people, only with occasional individuals such as Naaman, Rahab, Ruth and some others. But now a time is coming when people who are not “called by My name” will seek for, and find the Lord. Because of their response to the Gospel, they will come into the blessings of salvation. The Jews, who as a recognized people who God has chosen, rejected the Savior and the Gospel, and would not accept the fact that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. The consequences of their superior attitude towards other people because they knew they were a chosen people, made them accept the practice of superficial and hypocritical religion. They apparently thought they could do what they want as far as God was concerned, and it would make any difference. After all, God made a covenant with the Jews beginning with Abraham, and surely, He wouldn't let anything happen to us. They didn't think other people would seek the Lord and be accepted by Him.

The people of Israel and Judah began to worship idols in defiance of God, and yet thought their hypocrisy would be overlooked. Self-serving practices, manipulation of the truth to suit our own opinions, hypocrisy that meets our desires rather than God's commands in His word, are an abomination to the Lord. That attitude was why the tribes of Israel were conquered by the Assyrians and the tribe of Judah and those linked with them were carried away captive to Babylon. That same attitude had arisen to the place where, in the time our Lord Jesus Christ was here, full-blown hypocrisy was evident again in the Jews, especially among their leaders. So, captivity came again and the Jews were taken away from Palestine by the Romans after the first century AD.

Israel in Isaiah's time had become contaminated by the idolatrous people and nations around them. They would not separate from the world and its system, and so became like them. Separation in the lives of God's people involves personal separation, business separation, cultural separation, political separation and religious separation. When the people of God today try to win other people to Christ by being like them as much as possible, they usually fail in their endeavor. For a person to stand out in a godly way that is unique to consistent Christianity, gives clarity to what it means to be saved from sin and for heaven. To compromise righteousness, modesty, honor, reputation or any other character traits, is to be a loser to the world and in the world. A believer doesn't not fit in with the practice of sin, even if they think they do. One person said to another in a bar where they were drinking, “What do you think about (and he mentioned a particular sin in which he was involved).” The Christian believer answered, “I don't do that because I am a Christian.” “Well, what are you doing here then?” was the scoffing and mocking reply.

A marriage between a believer and unbeliever is only able to be 2/3 shared. The spirit of the unbeliever is dead to God. There is nothing in them that responds to the forgiveness of sin and the gratitude the Holy Spirit within puts in the heart of a child of God. Business yokes are difficult if the Christian wants to maintain legal integrity and financial honesty, when the other partner in business is willing to “cut-corners.” In the political life of the world, laws are changed to suit the present practices of an immoral society. The child of God is committed to the unchanging standards of God's law. In the area of religion, the child of God who wants to please the Lord, will submit to the word of God and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, rather than change biblical standards to become “seeker friendly” or “more acceptable” to those who don't care what the Bible says. The reason people try to adapt to the religious world system, is to hopefully get people “to come to church.” Bible-believing Christians want to get people to come to Christ.

In Judah, God's people had disobeyed God's word, worshipped idols, got involved with the occultic practices that were around them, and rejected the dietary laws of the Lord. In spite of that rejection of the Lord, they still thought they were superior to other people. Intellectual superiority does not have the same authority and impact as moral superiority. The Lord Jesus made that plain when he was here. He told the people of His day that those who are like children inherit the kingdom of heaven. He also warned of the hypocrisy of those who impose strict laws and rules of their own opinion on those they led in religious matters.

God, through Isaiah, made it clear that He would make sure justice is carried out. We don't have to make those kinds of judgments when hard questions arise, because we don't know what is in the hearts of people. We don't know what an absolutely just decision would be when it comes to punishment for sin. We leave that to God, and thank His for His mercy to us. How gracious it was for the Lord to give to a remnant of true believers in Judah, time to prepare for the future disasters that were coming. Most of the "grapes" were spoiled, shriveled and beyond recovery, but rather than destroy the whole "cluster," it was to be kept because there were a few individual "grapes" that were good. From that small few, will come a whole new seed of the people of Israel in the future. Those who forsook the Lord; rejected and rebelled against Him; will perish in the terrible times of coming judgment. They did not want God; they wouldn't listen to His word; they chose evil. They arrogantly practiced evil in defiance of the Lord. So, they will get the result of their choices.

In contrast to those apostate Jews are those who are "spiritual Israel." The unbelievers will suffer famine and drought, thirst and despair. Then they will suffer the torments of hell and "howl for vexation of spirit." Spiritual Israel will find blessing and satisfaction. They will sing for joy. They will even have a new name – "Christians." When scriptural disciplinary action is to be carried out by God's people today, clear guidance is given in the New Testament. We are responsible to adhere to those guidelines and leave the results to God. God has preserved a remnant all through the periods of His dealing with mankind. There was a remnant before the exile, and one after. Not all who returned were "servants" of the Lord. That is true today as well. Among all of Christendom and the religions of the world, there are still those who seek to follow the Lord and practice the teachings of scripture. They do what they do as "unto the Lord, and not unto men."

At the end of the chapter, there is a preview of the millennium on earth. In the past when God called, His people did not answer. In the future when He calls, they will answer even while the call is being made. We seek to have a clear understanding of prophetic messages, but are often limited by our own experiences or lack of them. We may not be able to have a real clear understanding of each event or each analogy, but we can get the big picture when we are guided by the Holy Spirit to "compare scripture with scripture." What is written in one place, may be clarified by reading in one or more other portions of the word of God. Loyalty to our Lord makes it possible for those who love the Lord, to have hope in Him and in the future, no matter what is happening all around us. There are those today who are part of the believing remnant. It is in the Lord and His promises such people find their joy and hope.

When our Lord returns unbelievers will be purged from the earth. We know that the "new heavens and new earth" will come after the millennium is over, but perhaps as it is used here, it may be a foreshadowing of that eternal future. Our Lord will reign as the Great King and there will be then; the peace, plenty and safety that we long for now. Those who prepared for the coming King in the time of opportunity will experience in reality, what we are now only faintly aware of. The effects of that change will not only be on the earth, but on the creation itself and the creatures of earth.

Looking beyond the promise for the people of Israel, we see the "new heavens and the new earth" referred to in Revelation, in which there will be eternal glory. During the millennium, babies will be born and old people will die. After the millennium and the final battle, we will be ushered into an eternal future that defies explanation in mere human terms. The millennium gives us a glimpse into what God has prepared for those that love Him. But that is beyond what "eye has seen or ears heard, nor has it even entered into the heart of man (imagination) the things that God has prepared for them that love Him!"

Isaiah 65:15. *"And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name."*

ANOTHER NAME.

Israel professed holiness saying, "I am holier than thou"
Israel practiced abominations while claiming holiness - hypocrisy!
Israel has been preserved by God for the sake of a few true believers
Israel has those within her people who are being prepared for future blessings
Israel forsook the Lord and His commands for their own pleasure
Israel has been set aside as His servants for servants called by "another name"

Another people are called "My Servants"
Another name is given to these servants - the name "Christian"
Another time has come with changes far reaching
Another description is given - "New heavens and a new earth"
Another mind is given in which the past is not remembered
Another attitude comes of rejoicing instead of weeping
Another sound of praise instead of grief
Another time has come when a child is one hundred years old
Another way of life when there is shelter and plenty for all
Another incentive is that work is profitable and enjoyable
Another nature is given to animals

God has moved to make fundamental changes
God has judged His people who have forsaken Him
God has preserved some as a remnant to fulfill His promises
God has called from all over the world a people for His name
God has called His servants by another name
God has chosen to bless those who bless "The God of Truth"
God has chosen to begin anew with the people on earth
God will bring all He has promised to pass

"O God, when these changes come according to Thy plans, may we all be able to give Thee all the glory and praise due to Thee. We are those of another name who are privileged to serve Thee and be called Thy servants. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Isaiah 66

A GLORIOUS REVIEW

This final chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah is like an overview, or a review, of the important subjects written about in the whole book. We are reminded of who God is: high and lofty beyond our comprehension; so supreme to anything that we can conceive in our finite minds, that we are stuck for words. No description can be made of God, so when we speak of Him in an effort to explain Him and His work, we have to speak in terms of the negative: not limited, no comparison etc. He is greater than the greatest person in mortal human history. He is mightier than all the combined powers in heaven and earth. His love and mercy surpass that of any loving parent or just judge. So, we speak of Him as "greater than...," "higher than..." "Earth is His "footstool;" "heaven" is merely the throne He sits on. Since heaven is His throne, what must hell be like? He "inhabits eternity." No wonder every believer in Him, is in awe when we speak to Him and call Him, "Abba Father!" But thankfully, we can approach Him, "in our Savior's precious name. We Thy children here assembling, access to Thy presence claim."

He knows who we are and He knows our limitations, and yet He cares for us. In His grace, in this concluding message of Isaiah, He sums up what is important to Him, and why it should be important to us. The holiness of God and His glory are really the overriding theme of this book. In grace He reaches out to those who are true believers of the remnant of Israel in time past, and also to believers in this present age who know Him and love Him. In His holiness He warns those who ignore, despise and reject Him, of what is ahead of them, and every Christ-rejector.

We are then given some brief glimpses of His glory revealed to the world after the tribulation and the battle of Armageddon are passed. Then at the conclusion, we are given a look forward to the wonders of the new heavens and new earth that are beyond the ability to describe. Briefly then, the subjects of this chapter are to lift up the humble; judge all the people; destroy the wicked; gather the believers together; and then establish the new heavens and the new earth.

The omnipresence of God in the universe, and yet the fact that he dwells in the hearts of the humble and contrite people who reverence and respect Him, defies our natural understanding. However, it brings a joyful response from those who tremble at His word, and are committed to keeping it. We know, when it is real to us, and practiced in our lives, it becomes a living word to our hearts from our gracious Father. It is not just a book to be studied and discussed. Religious rituals and mere external responses to the Lord in worship and obedience is condemned by Him and abhorrent to Him. To counterfeit what God intends to be real worship from the hearts and minds of His people, is insulting to the will of God. It is the same as saying my way is better than God's way. The sacrifices of external compliance as a form of religious service, is an abomination to the Lord. When something is done in the name of the Lord, but to please people; that must be detestable to the One who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Those who try to manipulate divine order to suit themselves, will fail.

On the other side of things, is the fact that the believing remnant of Jews will be delivered from the bondage which has kept Jews separated for centuries. All that will change quickly when the national restoration of Israel is completed under the Messiah. That will take place in a short time like the birth of a child. A nation will be born in a day. There will yet be a lot of pain for them during the tribulation. Since the last exile in 150 AD or thereabouts, during the last part of the Roman occupation, Jews have been scattered everywhere. Around one hundred years ago, a movement started that has gradually developed to where it is today. Israel has become a recognized nation by most people in the world for the last seventy plus years. However, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth, that coming will bring rejoicing in Jerusalem and to all who look for the coming of the kingdom of peace.

During that time, there will be plenty to satisfy the need of all the people on earth. From the ground there will come all that is needed as great areas of earth that haven't produced food, will release its abundance. There will also be peace when the anxious souls of those who have suffered for so long, will find their rest in the Lord. There will be control in the kingdom as the servants of the Lord will be at rest spiritually and will have the joy of the Lord filling their

spirits. The hand of the Lord will give guidance and direction because of the blessings of communion that will be shared by the Lord with His people.

For those who reject the Lord and want everything on their own terms: the conduct of their lives, the practice of religion to suit themselves and their lifestyle; they will be righteously judged by the Lord. The judgment of the nations will result in those who had rejected the Lord, persecuted His people, and gone their own way – in being sent away into everlasting punishment. They will be consigned to hell.

The glory of God will be seen by the world. Those who will escape the judgment of the tribulation and the battle of Armageddon, and survive the terrible times of righteous judgment on a Christ-rejecting world system, will be sent out to the nations. They will declare to the nations what has happened and there will come peace on earth. Jews are presently returning to Israel gradually, and others will go there in times to come. When the nation has finally gathered to the Lord Jesus Christ, not just to their nationalistic hopes and pride; everything will be brought in the focus of the will of God, not the will of the people. There will be no need of sacrifices as types, because the Lord will be there Himself. Offerings they will bring will be of gratitude and thanksgiving.

The whole drama as it unfolds will conclude with the final times of terrible judgment. Then a glorious kingdom will be established for one thousand years. The battle of Gog and Magog will be the final rebellion of Satan and his hosts, who will be cast into the lake of fire. The end of the millennium will usher in the new heavens and new earth that has long been looked for, and righteousness and holiness will be the normal way of life. That will be a final, permanent and unchanging condition and state of those who are redeemed. Those who will be damned, are those who insisted on their own ways and rejected God and His way. The choices they make condemns them to face and experience the eternal consequences of those choices.

Isaiah 66:1-2. *“Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”*

A SUMMARY.

For reasons of their own they chose to follow outward form -
Arrogant external compliance was the accepted norm -
To make those looking or following their unsatisfactory leadership
Think their spurious sacrifices were spiritual and real worship.

In their hearts they went their ways forgetting God and honor -
Not caring for murders and idolatry they committed - for this they didn't bother -
Thinking for some foolish reason God did not care or know -
That their sin would find them out and their hypocrisy would show.

Society urges us to be assertive and seriously affirm ourselves -
Freedom and right to choose has costs, when it puts God on a shelf.
Judgment is bound to come, for God will bring the wicked down -
Every secret will be brought to light when God's judgment will be shown.

God will lift up the humble who have reverence for God and truth -
The time is clearly coming when He establishes new heaven and earth.
All the believers will come together and follow in God's way -
God has shown us mercy who will respond to all He has to say.

Isaiah had the foresight to respond to the Spirit's teaching -
And wrote down for our learning the prophecies far-reaching.
It is highest wisdom for me to learn all the prophecies mean -
Seriously considering God is revealing future things unseen.

“I know the Holy Spirit has unfolded to us much of what is yet to happen, O God. May I never take lightly prophecy that has clearly to be fulfilled. Give me wisdom to act with care and discretion in view of the future events that seem about to come to pass. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”