



**YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE**

**ISAIAH:**

**THE CLEAREST OLD TESTAMENT WITNESS TO  
YHWH'S ETERNAL, UNIVERSAL, REDEMPTIVE  
PLAN:**

**THE PROPHET AND THE FUTURE**

**CHAPTERS 40-66**

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## **The New American Standard Bible Update — 1995**

### **Easier to read:**

- ▣ Passages with Old English “thee’s” and “thou’s” etc. have been updated to modern English.
- ▣ Words and phrases that could be misunderstood due to changes in their meaning during the past 20 years have been updated to current English.
- ▣ Sentences beginning with “And” have often been retranslated for better English, in recognition of differences in style between the ancient languages and modern English. The original Greek and Hebrew did not have punctuation as is found in English, and in many cases modern English punctuation serves as a substitute for “and” in the original. In some other cases, “and” is translated by a different word such as “then” or “but” as called for by the context, when the word in the original language allows such translation.

### **More accurate than ever:**

- ▣ Recent research on the oldest and best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament has been reviewed, and some passages have been updated for even greater fidelity to the original manuscripts.
- ▣ Parallel passages have been compared and reviewed.
- ▣ Verbs that have a wide range of meaning have been retranslated in some passages to better account for their use in the context.

### **And still the NASB:**

- ▣ The NASB update is not a change-for-the-sake-of-change translation. The original NASB stands the test of time, and change has been kept to a minimum in recognition of the standard that has been set by the New American Standard Bible.
- ▣ The NASB update continues the NASB’s tradition of literal translation of the original Greek and Hebrew without compromise. Changes in the text have been kept within the strict parameters set forth by the Lockman Foundation’s Fourfold Aim.
- ▣ The translators and consultants who have contributed to the NASB update are conservative Bible scholars who have doctorates in Biblical languages, theology, or other advanced degrees. They represent a variety of denominational backgrounds.

### **Continuing a tradition:**

The original NASB has earned the reputation of being the most accurate English Bible translation. Other translations in recent years have sometimes made a claim to both accuracy and ease of reading, but any reader with an eye for detail eventually discovers that these translations are consistently inconsistent. While sometimes literal, they frequently resort to paraphrase of the original, often gaining little in readability and sacrificing much in terms of fidelity. Paraphrasing is not by nature a bad thing; it can and should clarify the meaning of a passage as the translators understand and interpret. In the end, however, a paraphrase is as much a commentary on the Bible as it is a translation. The NASB update carries on the NASB tradition of being a true Bible translation, revealing what the original manuscripts actually say—not merely what the translator believes they mean.

—The Lockman Foundation

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# BRIEF EXPLANATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL RESOURCES USED IN THIS OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY SERIES

## I. Lexical

There are several excellent lexicons available for ancient Hebrew.

- A. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. It is based on the German lexicon by William Gesenius. It is known by the abbreviation BDB.
- B. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, translated by M. E. J. Richardson. It is known by the abbreviation KB.
- C. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay and is based on the above German lexicon.
- D. A new five volume theological word study entitled *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. Van Gemeren. It is known by the abbreviation NIDOTTE.

Where there is significant lexical variety, I have shown several English translations (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) from both “word-for-word” and “dynamic equivalent” translations (cf. Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 28-44).

## II. Grammatical

The grammatical identification is usually based on John Joseph Owens’ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* in four volumes. This is cross checked with Benjamin Davidson’s *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Another helpful resource for grammatical and syntactical features which is used in most of the OT volumes of “You Can Understand the Bible” Series is “The Helps for Translators Series” from the United Bible Societies. They are entitled “A Handbook on \_\_\_\_\_.”

## III. Textual

I am committed to the inspiration of the consonantal Hebrew text (not the Masoretic vowel points and comments). As in all hand-copied, ancient texts, there are some questionable passages. This is usually because of the following:

- A. *hapax legomenon* (words used only once in the Hebrew OT)
- B. idiomatic terms (words and phrases whose literal meanings have been lost)
- C. historical uncertainties (our lack of information about the ancient world)
- D. the poly-semitic semantic field of Hebrew’s limited vocabulary
- E. problems associated with later scribes hand-copying ancient Hebrew texts
- F. Hebrew scribes trained in Egypt who felt free to update the texts they copied to make them complete and understandable to their day (NIDOTTE vol. 1, pp. 52-54).

There are several sources of Hebrew words and texts outside the Masoretic textual tradition.

- 1. The Samaritan Pentateuch
- 2. The Dead Sea Scrolls
- 3. Some later coins, letters, and ostraca (broken pieces of unfired pottery used for writing)

But for the most part, there are no manuscript families in the OT like those in the Greek NT manuscripts. For a good brief article on the textual reliability of the Masoretic Text (A.D. 900’s) see “The Reliability of the Old Testament Text” by Bruce K. Waltke in the NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 51-67.

The Hebrew text used is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* from the German Bible Society, 1997, which is based on the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1009). Occasionally, the ancient versions (Greek Septuagint, Aramaic Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate) are consulted if the Hebrew is ambiguous or obviously confused.



# BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF HEBREW VERBAL FORMS WHICH IMPACT EXEGESIS

## I. Brief Historical Development of Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Shemitic (Semitic) family of southwest Asian language. The name (given by modern scholars) comes from Noah's son, Shem (cf. Gen. 5:32; 6:10). Shem's descendants are listed in Gen. 10:21-31 as Arabs, Hebrews, Syrians, Arameans, and Assyrians. In reality some Semitic languages are used by nations listed in Ham's line (cf. Gen. 10:6-14), Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia.

Hebrew is part of the northwest group of these Semitic languages. Modern scholars have samples of this ancient language group from:

- A. Amorite (*Mari Tablets* from 18<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in Akkadian)
- B. Canaanite (*Ras Shamra Tablets* from 15<sup>th</sup> century in Ugaritic)
- C. Canaanite (*Amarna Letters* from 14<sup>th</sup> century in Canaanite Akkadian)
- D. Phoenician (Hebrew uses Phoenician alphabet)
- E. Moabite (Mesha stone, 840 B.C.)
- F. Aramaic (official language of the Persian Empire used in Gen. 31:47 [2 words]; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4-6; 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and spoken by Jews in the first century in Palestine)  
The Hebrew language is called "the lip of Canaan" in Isa. 19:18. It was first called "Hebrew" in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sirach) about 180 B.C. (and some other early places, cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 205ff). It is most closely related to Moabite and the language used at Ugarit. Examples of ancient Hebrew found outside the Bible are:
  - 1. the Gezer calendar, 925 B.C. (a school boy's writing)
  - 2. the Siloam Inscription, 705 B.C. (tunnel writings)
  - 3. Samaritan Ostraca, 770 B.C. (tax records on broken pottery)
  - 4. Lachish letters, 587 B.C. (war communications)
  - 5. Maccabean coins and seals
  - 6. some Dead Sea Scroll texts
  - 7. numerous inscriptions (cf. "Languages [Hebrew]," ABD 4:203ff)

It, like all Semitic languages, is characterized by words made up of three consonants (tri-consonantal root). It is an inflexed language. The three-root consonants carry the basic word meaning, while prefixed, suffixed, or internal additions show the syntactical function (later vowels, cf. Sue Green, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 46-49).

Hebrew vocabulary demonstrates a difference between prose and poetry. Word meanings are connected to folk etymologies (not linguistic origins). Word plays and sound plays are very common (*paronomasia*).

## II. Aspects of Predication

### A. VERBS

The normal expected word order is VERB, PRONOUN, SUBJECT (with modifiers), OBJECT (with modifiers). The basic non-flagged VERB is the *Qal*, PERFECT, MASCULINE, SINGULAR form. It is how Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons are arranged.

VERBS are inflected to show

1. number—SINGULAR, PLURAL, DUAL
2. gender—MASCULINE AND FEMININE (no NEUTER)
3. mood—INDICATIVE, SUBJUNCTIVE, IMPERATIVE (relation of the action to reality)
4. tense (aspect)
  - a. PERFECT, which denotes completion, in the sense of the beginning, continuing, and concluding of an action. Usually this form was used of past action, the thing has occurred. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says  
“The single whole described by a perfect is also considered as certain. An imperfect may picture a state as possible or desired or expected, but a perfect sees it as actual, real, and sure” (p. 36).  
S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, describes it as,  
“The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependant upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially of Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense” (p. 17, e.g., the prophetic perfect).  
Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, defines this verbal form as:  
“...views a situation from the outside, as a whole. As such it expresses a simple fact, whether it be an action or state (including state of being or mind). When used of actions, it often views the action as complete from the rhetorical standpoint of the speaker or narrator (whether it is or is not complete in fact or reality is not the point). The perfect can pertain to an action/state in the past, present or future. As noted above, time frame, which influences how one translates the perfect into a tense-oriented language like English, must be determined from the context” (p. 86).
  - b. IMPERFECT, which denotes an action in progress (incomplete, repetitive, continual, or contingent), often movement toward a goal. Usually this form was used of Present and Future action.  
J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says:  
“All IMPERFECTS represent incomplete states. They are either repeated or developing or contingent. In other words, or partially developed, or partially assured. In all cases they are partial in some sense, i.e., incomplete” (p. 55).  
Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, says:  
“It is difficult to reduce the essence of the imperfect to a single concept, for it encompasses both aspect and mood. Sometimes the imperfect is used in an indicative manner and makes an objective statement. At other times it views an action more subjectively, as hypothetical, contingent, possible, and so on” (p. 89).
  - c. The added *waw*, which links the VERB to the action of the previous VERB(s).
  - d. IMPERATIVE, which is based on the volition of the speaker and potential action by the hearer.
  - e. In ancient Hebrew only the larger context can determine the authorial-intended time orientations.

- B. The seven major inflected forms and their basic meaning. In reality these forms work in conjunction with each other in a context and must not be isolated.
1. *Qal (Kal)*, the most common and basic of all the forms. It denotes simple action or a state of being. There is no causation or specification implied.
  2. *Niphal*, the second most common form. It is usually PASSIVE, but this form also functions as reciprocal and reflexive. It also has no causation or specification implied.
  3. *Piel*, this form is active and expresses the bringing about of an action into a state of being. The basic meaning of the *Qal* stem is developed or extended into a state of being.
  4. *Pual*, this is the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Piel*. It is often expressed by a PARTICIPLE.
  5. *Hithpael*, which is the reflexive or reciprocal stem. It expresses iterative or durative action to the *Piel* stem. The rare PASSIVE form is called *Hothpael*.
  6. *Hiphil*, the active form of the causative stem in contrast to *Piel*. It can have a permissive aspect, but usually refers to the cause of an event. Ernst Jenni, a German Hebrew grammarian, believed that the *Piel* denoted something coming into a state of being, while *Hiphil* showed how it happened.
  7. *Hophal*, the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Hiphil*. These last two stems are the least used of the seven stems.

Much of this information comes from *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, by Bruce K. Walke and M. O'Connor, pp. 343-452.

Agency and causation chart. One key in understanding the Hebrew VERB system is to see it as a pattern of VOICE relationships. Some stems are in contrast to other stems (i.e., *Qal* - *Niphal*; *Piel* - *Hiphil*)

The chart below tries to visualize the basic function of the VERB stems as to causation.

Voice or Subject	No Secondary Agency	An Active Secondary Agency	A Passive Secondary Agency
ACTIVE	<i>Qal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Piel</i>
MIDDLE PASSIVE	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hophal</i>	<i>Pual</i>
REFLEXIVE/ RECIPROCAL	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Hithpael</i>

This chart is taken from the excellent discussion of the VERBAL system in light of new Akkadian research (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 354-359).

R. H. Kennett, *A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses*, has provided a needed warning:

"I have commonly found in teaching, that a student's chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive many of these fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigor to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word, 'tense' shows, being

to them a matter of secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew's mind.

The name 'tenses' as applied to Hebrew verbs is misleading. The so-called Hebrew 'tenses' do not express the *time* but merely the *state* of an action. Indeed were it not for the confusion that would arise through the application of the term 'state' to both nouns and verbs, 'states' would be a far better designation than 'tenses.' It must always be borne in mind that it is impossible to translate a Hebrew verb into English without employing a limitation (of time), which is entirely absent in the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present, or future, but simply as *perfect*, i.e., complete, or *imperfect*, i.e., as in course of development. When we say that a certain Hebrew tense corresponds to a Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future in English, we do not mean that the Hebrews thought of it as Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future, but merely that it must be so translated in English. The *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form" (preface and p. 1).

For a second good warning, Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, reminds us,

"There is no way of knowing whether modern scholars' reconstruction of semantic fields and sense relations in an ancient dead language are merely a reflection of their own intuition, or their own native language, or whether those fields existed in Classical Hebrew" (p. 128).

#### C. MOODS (MODES)

1. It happened, is happening (INDICATIVE), usually uses PERFECT tense or PARTICIPLES (all PARTICIPLES are INDICATIVE).
2. It will happen, could happen (SUBJUNCTIVE)
  - a. uses a marked IMPERFECT tense
    - (1) COHORTATIVE (added h), FIRST PERSON IMPERFECT form which normally expresses a wish, a request, or self-encouragement (i.e., actions willed by the speaker)
    - (2) JUSSIVE (internal changes), THIRD PERSON IMPERFECT (can be second person in negated sentences) which normally expresses a request, a permission, an admonition, or advice
  - b. uses a PERFECT tense with *lu* or *lule*  
These constructions are similar to SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in Koine Greek. A false statement (protasis) results in a false conclusion (apodosis).
  - c. uses an IMPERFECT tense and *lu*  
Context and *lu*, as well as a future orientation, mark this SUBJUNCTIVE usage. Some examples from J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* are Gen. 13:16; Deut. 1:12; I Kgs. 13:8; Ps. 24:3; Isa. 1:18 (cf. Pp. 76-77).

- D. *Waw* – Conversive/consecutive/relative. This uniquely Hebrew (Canaanite) syntactical feature has caused great confusion through the years. It is used in a variety of ways often based on genre. The reason for the confusion is that early scholars were European and tried to interpret in light of their own native languages. When this proved difficult they blamed the problem on Hebrew being a "supposed" ancient, archaic language. European languages are TENSE (time) based VERBS. Some of the variety and grammatical implications were specified by the letter

WAW being added to the PERFECT or IMPERFECT VERB stems. This altered the way the action was viewed.

1. In historical narrative the VERBS are linked together in a chain with a standard pattern.
2. The *waw* prefix showed a specific relationship with the previous VERB(s).
3. The larger context is always the key to understanding the VERB chain. Semitic VERBS cannot be analyzed in isolation.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, notes the distinctive of Hebrew in its use of the *waw* before PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS (pp. 52-53). As the basic idea of the PERFECT is past, the addition of *waw* often projects it into a future time aspect. This is also true of the IMPERFECT whose basic idea is present or future; the addition of *waw* places it into the past. It is this unusual time shift which explains the *waw*'s addition, not a change in the basic meaning of the tense itself. The *waw* PERFECTS work well with prophecy, while the *waw* IMPERFECTS work well with narratives (pp. 54, 68).

Watts continues his definition

“As a fundamental distinction between *waw* conjunctive and *waw* consecutive, the following interpretations are offered:

1. *Waw* conjunctive appears always to indicate a parallel.
2. *Waw* consecutive appears always to indicate a sequence. It is the only form of *waw* used with consecutive imperfects. The relation between the imperfects linked by it may be temporal sequence, logical consequence, logical cause, or logical contrast. In all cases there is a sequence” (p. 103).

E. INFINITIVE – There are two kinds of INFINITIVES

1. INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES, which are “strong, independent, striking expressions used for dramatic effect. . .as a subject, it often has no written verb, the verb ‘to be’ being understood, of course, but the word standing dramatically alone” J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*” (p. 92).
2. INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, which are “related grammatically to the sentence by prepositions, possessive pronouns, and the construct relationship” (p. 91).

J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, describes the construct state as:

“When two (or more) words are so closely united that together they constitute one compound idea, the dependent word (or words) is (are) said to be in the construct state” (p. 44).

F. INTERROGATIVES

1. They always appear first in the sentence.
2. Interpretive significance
  - a. *ha* - does not expect a response
  - b. *halo* - the author expects a “yes” answer

NEGATIVES

1. They always appear before the words they negate.
2. Most common negation is *lo*’.
3. The term *’al* has a contingent connotation and is used with COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES.
4. The term *lebhilit*, meaning “in order that. . .not,” is used with INFINITIVES.
5. The term *’en* is used with PARTICIPLES.

G. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

1. There are four kinds of CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which basically are paralleled in Koine Greek.
  - a. something assumed to be happening or thought of as fulfilled (FIRST CLASS in Greek)
  - b. something contrary to fact whose fulfillment is impossible (SECOND CLASS)
  - c. something which is possible or ever probable (THIRD CLASS)
  - d. something which is less probable, therefore, the fulfillment is dubious (FOURTH CLASS)
2. GRAMMATICAL MARKERS
  - a. the assumed to be true or real condition always uses an INDICATIVE PERFECT or PARTICIPLE and usually the protasis is introduced by:
    - (1) *'im*
    - (2) *ki* (or *'asher*)
    - (3) *hin* or *hinneh*
  - b. the contrary to fact condition always uses a PERFECT aspect VERB or a PARTICIPLE with the introductory PARTICIPLE *lu* or *lule*
  - c. the more probably condition always used IMPERFECT VERB or PARTICIPLES in the protasis, usually *'im* or *ki* are used as introductory PARTICLES
  - d. the less probable condition uses IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVES in the protasis and always uses *'im* as an introductory PARTICLE

## **ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY**

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, GBS, 1997
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren

NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Parsing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney



## **A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?**

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession, and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal, cultural, or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us attempt to overcome our biases.

### **First Principle**

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship (or when it was edited). The original author had a purpose and a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal, or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide a brief introduction to each book of the Bible.

### **Second Principle**

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase, or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing the paragraphing of modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

- A. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
- B. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
- C. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the original text.
- D. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
- E. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

### **Third Principle**

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

### **Fourth Principle**

The fourth principle is to note the literary genre. Original inspired authors chose to record their messages in different forms (e.g., historical narrative, historical drama, poetry, prophecy, gospel [parable], letter, apocalyptic). These different forms have special keys to interpretation (see Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, or Robert Stein, *Playing by the Rules*).

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley  
East Texas Baptist University  
June 27, 1996

# **A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH**

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me.

## **I. Presuppositions**

- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.

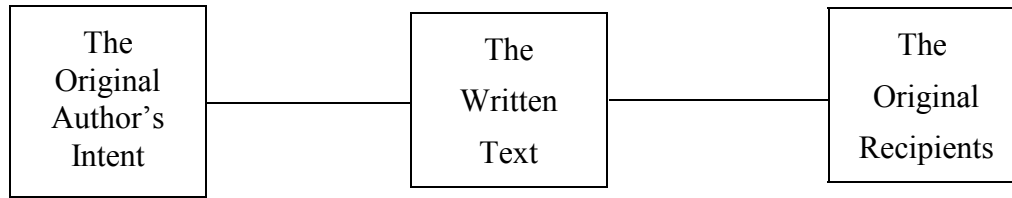
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
  1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
  2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
  3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
  4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
  5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
  6. the words chosen to present the message
  7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

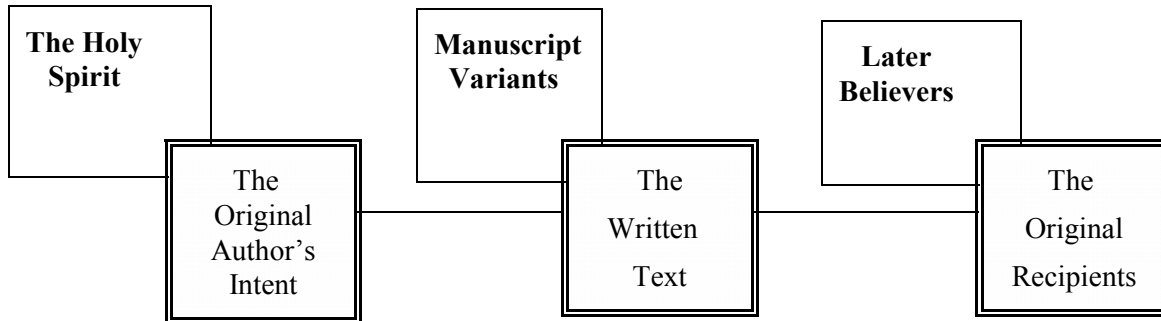
## II. Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components, but to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications, but how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

### III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan and *Cracking Old Testament Codes* by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., published by Broadman and Holman.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text, and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Three areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author's
  - a. historical setting
  - b. literary context

2. the original author's choice of
  - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
  - b. contemporary word usage
  - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
  - a. relevant parallel passages
  - b. relationship between doctrines (paradox)

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights.

A. The first reading cycle

1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
  - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
  - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
  - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
4. Identify the predominant literary genre
  - a. Old Testament
    - (1) Hebrew narrative
    - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
    - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
    - (4) Law codes
  - b. New Testament
    - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
    - (2) Parables (Gospels)
    - (3) Letters/epistles
    - (4) Apocalyptic literature

B. The second reading cycle

1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.

C. The third reading cycle

1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
  - a. the author
  - b. the date
  - c. the recipients
  - d. the specific reason for writing
  - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
  - f. references to historical people and events

3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
  4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
- D. The fourth reading cycle
1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
    - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
  2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
    - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
    - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
    - c. contrasting concepts
  3. List the following items
    - a. significant terms
    - b. unusual terms
    - c. important grammatical structures
    - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
  4. Look for relevant parallel passages
    - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
      - (1) "systematic theology" books
      - (2) reference Bibles
      - (3) concordances
    - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
    - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
  5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
    - a. study Bibles
    - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
    - c. Bible introductions
    - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

#### IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord,"

we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development. Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

#### V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me.

- A. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

"The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."

- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible *as God's word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."

- C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

"No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more



than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

## VI. This Commentary’s Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done “reading cycle #3” check this information.
- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
  - 1. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
  - 2. The New King James Version (NKJV)
  - 3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
  - 4. Today’s English Version (TEV)
  - 5. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author’s thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called “the topic sentence” or “the central idea of the text.” This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- D. Bob’s notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author’s thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
  - 1. literary context
  - 2. historical, cultural insights
  - 3. grammatical information
  - 4. word studies
  - 5. relevant parallel passages
- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
  - 1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”
  - 2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
  - 3. The Today’s English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
  - 4. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.

- F. For those who do not read the original languages, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
1. manuscript variations
  2. alternate word meanings
  3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
  4. ambiguous texts

Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.

- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

# INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH

## I. OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. Isaiah is quoted more often in the NT than any other prophet (over 411 times). His message was one of a radical universal monotheism and a redemptive plan for all creation.
  - 1. one God
  - 2. one world
  - 3. one faith
- B. Isaiah is wonderfully Messianic.
  - 1. the special children of the New Age, chapters 7-14
  - 2. the Servant Songs, 41:1-4; 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12 (possibly 61:1-3)
  - 3. the future Messianic Kingdom (New Age), chapters 56-66. The fall of Genesis 3 is not the last word!
- C. E. J. Young, in *An Introduction to the OT*, states:
  - 1. “The book of Isaiah is rightly considered the greatest of the OT prophecies,” p. 168.
  - 2. “Of all the prophets of Israel, Isaiah understood most completely the mind of God and His plan for the ages,” p. 171.
  - 3. “In spiritual insight he is unsurpassed in all the OT,” p. 172.

## II. THE NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. The book is named after its prophetic spokesman.
- B. The name means “salvation of YHWH” or “YHWH saves.” The Hebrew names that end in “iah” are an abbreviation of YHWH, as are many of the names in English that begin with a “j” and a vowel, example Joshua and Joel.

## III. CANONIZATION

- A. This is the first of the four scrolls of the Latter Prophets.
  - 1. Isaiah
  - 2. Jeremiah
  - 3. Ezekiel
  - 4. the Twelve (minor prophets)
- B. It was accepted early and completely into the sacred writings of the Israelites.

## IV. GENRE

- A. Isaiah’s literary skills surpass all OT prophets. His word plays and poetry are majestic and intriguing. The book is mostly Hebrew poetry (see Appendix One).
- B. It is difficult to sit down and read all of Isaiah at one time. It is difficult to outline the book. This is because Isaiah was a preacher, not just an author or editor. His book records his spoken messages over a long period of time. These are linked together, sometimes

1. by theme
2. by chronology
3. by events which affect Israel
4. by the cultural norms of the Ancient Near East, which are so different from our own
5. by key words and word plays (mostly)

## V. AUTHORSHIP

### A. Jewish views of authorship

1. The Talmud's *Baba Bathra* 15a said Hezekiah and his men wrote (i.e., edited or compiled) Isaiah, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.
2. Ben Sirah, in *Ecclesiasticus* 49:17-25, written about 185 B.C., said, "Isaiah, son of Amoz," wrote the book (1:1; 12:1; 13:1).
3. II Chronicles 32:32 attests to Isaiah's vision, as does the parallel in Kings (II Kgs. 18:19-20:19 tells us about the man).
  - a. He was from a wealthy noble family in Jerusalem, possibly even a cousin to King Uzziah.
    - (1) some evidence that "iah" (as an ending to names), which is an abbreviation of YHWH, was practiced almost exclusively among Judah's royalty
    - (2) Isaiah's access to King Uzziah also lends support to his possible family connection
    - (3) see Talmud, "Meg." 10b
  - b. He married a prophetess (8:3).
    - (1) first son, "Shear-Jashub," which means "a remnant shall return"
    - (2) second son, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz" (8:3), which means "speed the spoil, haste the booty"
  - c. Isaiah had one of the longest prophetic ministries of any of the OT prophets. He was God's spokesman in Judah from the reign of Jotham (742-735 B.C.) to that of Hezekiah (715-687 B.C.) with the possibility of even reaching into the reign of Manasseh (687-642 B.C.); Manasseh was possibly co-regent from 696 B.C.
  - d. If II Chr. 26:22 refers to Isaiah, then he was the official scribe and keeper of the royal chronicles of the king.
  - e. Traditions said he was sawed in two inside a log (cf. *Assumption of Isaiah*) during Manasseh's reign (cf. Heb. 11:37).
4. Moses ben Samuel Ibn Gekatilla, about A.D. 110, said that chapters 1-39 are Isaiah's, but chapters 40-66 were written during the Second Temple period (Persian Period, 538-430 B.C.).
5. Ibn Ezra (A.D. 1092-1167) followed Gekatilla's lead and denied, or at least questioned, chapters 40-66 to the eighth century Isaiah.

### B. Modern scholarship's views of authorship

1. A good historical summary is found in R. K. Harrison's *Introduction to the OT*, Eerdmans, 1969.
2. A good discussion of the technical reasons for asserting two authors can be found in S. R. Drivers' *Introduction to the Literature of the OT*, reprint 1972.
3. No Hebrew or Greek (LXX) manuscripts have ever been found which show a division between chapters 1-39 and 40-66.
  - a. There is a two line space at the end of chapter 33 in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This implies a division at this point, not chapter 39.

- b. There seems to be a parallel structure between 1-33 and 34-66. This dual structure based on the author's own day and then the future, was common in the Hebrew prophets (cf. Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah).
4. Modern scholarship has no unanimity as to how many authors or where to divide the book.

C. Some reasons for the unity of Isaiah

1. Twenty-five terms are found in both sections of Isaiah which are not found elsewhere in the OT (NIV, Intro. to Isaiah, p. 1014).
2. The title "the Holy One of Israel" occurs 13 times in chapters 1-39 and 14 times in chapters 40-66 and only six times in all the other OT books.
3. Jesus, in John 12:38,40, quotes from Isa. 53:1 and 6:10 and attributes both to Isaiah.
4. Passages from Isaiah 40-66 are attributed to Isaiah in Matt. 3:3; 8:17; 12:17; Luke 3:4; 4:17; John 1:23; Acts 8:28; and Rom. 10:16-20.
5. There is no manuscript evidence of a division of the book at chapter 39 (MT, DSS, or LXX).
6. There is no historical mention of a great prophet (Deutero-Isaiah) in the 6th century.

R. K. Harrison, in *Introduction to the OT*, comments on this subject,

"Arguments from literary style were greatly in vogue at the end of the nineteenth century, but in the light of a much wider knowledge of ancient Near Eastern languages they have now assumed a far less important position. The very subjectivity of stylistic considerations had a great appeal for the adherents of the Graf-Wellhausen theory of literary analysis, who saw no inconsistency whatever in perusing material ascribed to a Biblical author, and then denying parts of that very corpus to him because the literary form and vocabulary of each chapter did not happen to be identical. Apparently it did not occur to those early investigators that it was only possible to derive some concept of the style of an ancient author as the result of careful study of all the material ascribed to him, and that subsequent rejection of part or all of that corpus could only be validated on the basis of some rigorous external control" (p. 776).

D. Some reasons for multiple authorship of Isaiah.

1. In chapters 40-66 the name "Isaiah" is not mentioned.
2. Chapters 40-66 do not fit into Isaiah's historical setting.
3. There seems to be a mixing of Isaiah's references to:
  - a. Assyria's invasion, exile, and judgment
  - b. Babylon's invasion, exile, and judgment
4. There are some reasons for theorizing multiple authorship.
  - a. change of historical setting
    - (1) pre-invasion Judah, 1-39
    - (2) exile, 40-55
    - (3) post-exilic Judah, 56-66
    - (4) in Isaiah 1-39 the Temple will never fall, while in 40-66 it apparently has already fallen. The author seems to be in exile.
  - b. change of terms to describe God's chosen
    - (1) Messianic child
    - (2) Suffering Servant

- (3) Israel as
    - (a) wife, 50:1
    - (b) servants of YHWH, 54:17
- 5. Modern conservative scholars
  - a. E. J. Young's statement about chapters 56-66 is helpful, "another possibility is that Spirit-led, editor-collected prophecies from different prophets of the Isaiah school around the basic themes of this section," (p. 188).
  - b. R. K. Harrison's statement, "The present writer holds to the view that Isaiah, like the majority of the other extant prophetic writings, represents an anthology of utterances given at various times, and as such the work merits no different treatment from that accorded the other major OT prophecies. In this connection it is important to note that arguments based upon differences of style or literary expression are immediately vitiated by this approach, since an anthology may be taken quite fairly as representing the total style of the author over the different periods of his creative activity. Justification for describing the work as an anthology in the best sense of that term is furnished by the opening verse of the prophecy, which constitutes a heading for the work, and speaks specifically of the revelatory material that Isaiah the son of Amoz received in visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem in days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. As with all anthologies it is fairly evident that the book contained only a selection of the available prophetic oracles and sermons, and it is highly probable that Isaiah produced considerably more material than has survived in his book. The nature of the prophecy as an anthology is further indicated by the presence of superscriptions in Isa. 2:1 and 13:1, which may have represented, or pointed to the presence of, earlier collections of prophetic utterances," (p. 780).
- 6. The literary style of chapters 40-66 is different from that of chapters 1-39.
- E. Concluding comments about authorship
  - 1. Godly scholars continue to disagree about how our OT book of Isaiah came to be in its current form (cf. DSS and MT). The main emphasis must be placed on its inspiration and trustworthiness in revealing the character and purposes of YHWH.
  - 2. We must reject any presuppositions that deny God's faithful revelation through Isaiah. This also includes the *á priori* rejection of predictive prophecy and the lowering of the OT to an exclusively human, contemporary, historical account.

## VI. DATE

- A. Isaiah is part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century prophets.
  - 1. Jonah, Amos, and Hosea in the Northern Kingdom (Israel), during the reign of Jeroboam II (786-640 B.C.)
  - 2. Isaiah and Micah in the Southern Kingdom (Judah)
- B. He was born in 760's B.C. and was called into prophetic office around 742 B.C. in the year Uzziah died (6:1). Uzziah is also called Azariah (783-742 B.C.).
- C. Isaiah had a long ministry from the closing years of Uzziah (783-742 B.C.) through Jotham (742-735 B.C.), Ahaz (735-715 B.C.), Hezekiah (715-687 B.C.), and into the reign of Manasseh (687-642 B.C.) because Isaiah predicts/records Sennacherib's death in 37:38 (i.e., 681 B.C.).

- D. R. K Harrison states that the book is an anthology of the prophet's writings and sermons over many years through several Judean kings. It was finally compiled and edited after the prophet's death, about 630 B.C.

## VII. HISTORICAL SETTING OF EIGHTH CENTURY PROPHETS

- A. The biblical material is found in
1. II Kings 14:3-17:6
  2. II Chronicles 25-28
  3. Amos
  4. Jonah
  5. Hosea
  6. Isaiah
  7. Micah
- B. The simplest summary of the state of idolatry among God's people can be seen in Hosea.
1. 2:16, "will no longer call Me Baali"
  2. 4:12-14, "... daughters play the harlot . . ."
  3. 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone"
  4. 13:2 "men kiss calves!" (ritual)
- C. Social setting
1. It was a time of economic prosperity and military expansion for both Israel and Judah. However, this prosperity was beneficial only to the wealthy class. The poor were exploited and abused. It almost seems that "the buck and the gun" became idols!
  2. The social stability and property of both Israel and Judah are related to several causes.
    - a. the long and prosperous reigns of Jeroboam II (786-746 B.C.) in the North and Uzziah (783-742 B.C.) in the South
    - b. Assyrians' defeat of Syria by Adad-Nirari III in 802 B.C.
    - c. the lack of conflict between Israel and Judah
    - d. the taxation and exploitation of the trade routes from north to south through the land bridge of Palestine caused rapid economic growth, even extravagance for the wealthy class
  3. The "Ostraca of Samaria," which is dated during the reign of Jeroboam II, seems to indicate an administrative organization much like Solomon's. This seems to confirm the widening gap between the "haves" and "have nots."
  4. The dishonesty of the wealthy is clearly depicted in Amos, who is called "the prophet of social justice." The bribery of the judiciary and the falsification of commercial weights are two clear examples of the abuse that was common apparently in both Israel and Judah.
- D. Religious Setting
1. It was a time of much outward religious activity, but very little true faith. The fertility cults of Canaan had been amalgamated into Israel's religion. The people were idolaters but they called it YHWHism. The trend of God's people toward political alliances had involved them in pagan worship and practices.
  2. The idolatry of Israel is spelled out in II Kgs. 17:7-18.
    - a. In v. 8 they followed the worship practices of the Canaanites.
      - (1) fertility worship (cf. Lev. 18:22-23)
        - (a) high places, vv. 9, 10, 11
        - (b) sacred pillars (Ba'al), vv. 10, 16

- (c) Asherim, v. 16, these were wooden symbols of the female consort of Ba'al. They were either carved stakes or live trees.
  - (2) divination, v. 17. This was condemned in Leviticus 19-20 and Deuteronomy 18.
  - b. In v. 16 they continued the worship of the two golden calves, symbolizing YHWH, set up at Dan and Bethel by Jeroboam I (1 Kgs. 12:28-29).
  - c. In v. 16 they worshiped the astral deities of Babylon: sun, moon, stars, and constellations.
  - d. In v. 18 they worshiped the Phoenician fertility fire god, *Molech*, by sacrificing their children (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5). This practice is called *molech*; it was not the name of the god.
- 3. Ba'alism (cf. W. F. Albright's *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 82ff)
  - a. Our best archaeological source is "Ba'al Epic from Ugarit."
    - (1) It depicts Ba'al as a seasonal dying and rising god. He was defeated by *Mot* and confined to the underworld. All life on earth ceased. But, helped by the female goddess (*Anat*), he rises and defeats *Mot* each spring. He was a fertility deity who was worshiped by imitation magic.
    - (2) He was also known as Hadad.
  - b. *El* is the chief deity of the Canaanite pantheon, but Ba'al's popularity usurped his place.
  - c. Israel was most influenced by Tyrian Ba'alism through Jezebel who was the King of Tyre's daughter. She was chosen by Omri for his son, Ahab.
  - d. In Israel Ba'al was worshiped at local high places. He was symbolized by an uplifted stone. His consort, Asherah, is symbolized by a carved stake symbolizing the tree of life.
- 4. Several sources and types of idolatry are mentioned.
  - a. The golden calves at Bethel and Dan set up by Jeroboam I to worship YHWH.
  - b. The worship of the Tyrian fertility god and goddess at local high places.
  - c. The necessary idolatry involved in political alliances of that day.
- E. Brief summary of the invasions of Assyria and Babylon during the eighth century which affected Palestine.
  - 1. The five eighth-century prophets were active during the rise of the Tigris-Euphrates empire of Assyria. God would use this cruel nation to judge His people, particularly Israel.
    - a. The specific incident was the formation of a trans-Jordan political and military alliance known as the "Syro-Ephramatic League" (735 B.C.). Syria and Israel tried to force Judah to join them against Assyria. Instead Ahaz sent a letter to Assyria for help. The first powerful empire-minded Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.), responded to the military challenge and invaded Syria.
    - b. Later, Assyria's puppet king, Hoshea (732-722 B.C.), in Israel also rebelled, appealing to Egypt. Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.) invaded Israel again. He died before Israel was subdued but his successor, Sargon II (722-705 B.C.), captured Israel's capital of Samaria in 722 B.C. Assyria deported over 27,000 Israelites on this occasion as Tiglath-Pileser had exiled thousands earlier in 732 B.C.
  - 2. After Ahaz's death (735-715 B.C.) another military coalition was formed by the trans-Jordan countries and Egypt against Assyria (714-711 B.C.). It is known as the "Ashdod Rebellion." Many Judean cities were destroyed when Assyria invaded again. Initially Hezekiah supported this coalition, but later withdrew his support.



3. However, another coalition again tried to take advantage of the death of Assyria's powerful king, Sargon II, in 705 B.C., along with the many other rebellions which occurred throughout the Assyrian empire.
  - a. Hezekiah fully participated in this rebellion. In light of this challenge Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) invaded (701 B.C.) Palestine and camped near the city of Jerusalem (II Kings 18-19; Isaiah 36-39), but his army was miraculously destroyed by God.
  - b. There is some question among scholars as to how many times Sennacherib invaded Palestine (e.g., John Bright has one invasion in 701 B.C. and another possible one in 688 B.C., cf. *The History of Israel*, p. 270).
  - c. Hezekiah was spared an Assyrian takeover, but because of his prideful exhibition of the treasures of Judah to the Babylonian delegation, Isaiah predicted Judah's fall to Babylon (39:1-8). Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 587-586 B.C.
4. Isaiah specifically predicted the restoration of God's people under Cyrus II, the Medo-Persian ruler (41:2-4; 44:28; 45:1; 56:11). Nineveh (capital of Assyria) fell in 612 B.C. to Babylon, but the city of Babylon fell in 539 B.C. to Cyrus' army. In 538 B.C. Cyrus issued a decree that all exiled people, including the Jews, could return home. He even provided funds from his treasury for the rebuilding of the national temples. He was a superstitious person and wanted all the gods to favor him.

## VIII. LITERARY UNITS

- A. Brief Outline
  1. Chapters 1-39, the prophet and his day
  2. Chapters 40-66 (or possibly 40-55 and 56-66), the new age
- B. Chapters 1-39, the historical setting in Isaiah's day (pre-exilic)
  1. Chapters 1-6, under Kings Uzziah and Jotham
  2. Chapters 7-14, under King Ahaz
  3. Chapters 15-39, under King Hezekiah (chapters 36-39 are parallel to II Kgs. 18:13-20:19)
- C. Chapters 40-66, the exilic and post-exilic period, are types of the future kingdom
  1. As chapters 1-39 reflect Isaiah's preaching and are obviously oral presentations, chapters 40-55 reflect a new setting. God's judgment has come and now restoration is the major theme. There is also the stylistic hint that these chapters are not so much oral as written.
  2. Chapters 1-39 obviously deal with the Assyrian threat and Babylonian threat in type, specifically in chapters 13-14, 21 and 39. Chapters 40-55 deal with the Persian period and the restoration of God's people to the Promised Land.
  3. The later chapters of Isaiah, 56-66, are eschatological, using historical metaphors from the Ancient Near East to foreshadow the universal monotheistic world worship of YHWH.
- D. The difficulty of outlining Isaiah
 

Most modern scholars divide the book into at least two sections: chapters 1-39 and 40-66. R. K. Harrison: chap. 1-33 and 34-66 because of a gap in DSS text. This obvious division in the DSS between chapters 33 and 34 has given rise to the suggestion that Isaiah was produced by his followers in two volumes. W. H. Brownlee has proposed that the two volumes mirror each other in structure.

	<b>Volume 1</b>	<b>Volume 2</b>
chapters 1-5	ruin and restoration	chapters 34-35
chapters 6-8	biographical material	chapters 36-40
chapters 9-12	agents of divine blessing and judgment	chapters 41-45
chapters 13-23	oracles against foreign powers	chapters 46-48
chapters 24-27	universal redemption and the deliverance of Israel	chapters 49-55
chapters 28-31	ethical sermons	chapters 56-59
chapters 32-33	the restoration of the nation	chapters 60-66

Some outlines focus on the historical setting, while others focus on the Messianic content

	<b>NIV</b>	<b>Leupold</b>
chap. 7-12	“Prophecies occasioned by the Aramean and Israelite threat against Judah”	“Immanuel Book”
chap. 28-33	“Six Woes: Five on the Unfaithful in Israel and One on Assyria”	“The Book of Zion” (the Cornerstone)

Some examples of the uncertainty of literary units (chaps. 1-12)

- a. Outline of chapters 1-12 by E. Y. Young, pp. 211-214
  - (1) 1:1-12:6 Prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem
    - (a) 1:1-31 The great arraignment
    - (b) 2:1-4:6 Messiah’s reign and judgment upon the people
    - (c) 5:1-30 The prevalent iniquities of Judah
    - (d) 6:1-13 Isaiah’s vision of the Lord
    - (e) 7:1-12:6 Prophecies uttered during Ahaz’s reign
- b. Outline of chapters 1-12 by R. K. Harrison, p. 764
  - (1) Prophecies about the ruin and restoration of Judah, chaps. 1-5
  - (2) The call of Isaiah; biographical material, chaps. 6-8
  - (3) Present world empires and their roles, chaps. 9-12
- c. Outline of chapters 1-12 by The NIV Study Bible, p. 1016
  - (1) chapters 1-6
    - (a) Introduction: charges against Judah for breaking the Covenant, ch. 1
    - (b) The future discipline and glory of Judah and Jerusalem, chs. 2-4
      - i Jerusalem’s future blessings (2:1-5)
      - ii The Lord’s discipline of Judah (2:6-4:1)
      - iii The restoration of Zion (4:2-6)
    - (c) The nation’s judgment and exile (ch. 5)
    - (d) Isaiah’s unique commission (ch. 6)
  - (2) chapters 7-12
    - (a) Ahaz warned not to fear the Aramean and Israelite alliance (ch. 7)
    - (b) Isaiah’s son and David’s son (8:1-9:7)
    - (c) Judgment against Israel (9:8-10:4)
    - (d) The Assyrian Empire and the Davidic Kingdom (10:5-12:6)
      - i The destruction of Assyria (10:5-34)

- ii The establishment of the Davidic king and his kingdom (ch. 11)
- iii Songs of joy for deliverance (ch. 12)

## IX. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. Isaiah held Judah to fidelity to the Davidic covenant (II Samuel 7), but he also went back to the original purpose of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3), which was God choosing Israel to choose the world (i.e., Exod. 19:5-6). What a shock this universal reign of YHWH must have been. God will not only restore Israel, but will extend God's redemptive plan to the entire world!
- B. Isaiah specifically predicted the movement of world events in his own day and in the future, leading to the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom through God's Messiah (so too, Micah). This kingdom is holy and universal (so too, Micah). These are both aspects of Isaiah's monotheistic, holy, redemptive Deity.
- C. Isaiah clearly shows the futility of God's people trusting in worldly, fallen, human resources. Deliverance will come from YHWH only!
- D. Isaiah reveals the three most powerful characteristics of God's redemptive plan.
  - 1. the coming Messiah
  - 2. the Messiah as Suffering Servant
  - 3. the universal reign of the Messiah

# ISAIAH 40

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

(Parentheses indicate poetry)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Greatness of God	God's People Are Comforted	The Prophet Is Called to Announce God's Coming	Words of Hope	Prediction of Deliverance
40:1-2 (1-2)	40:1-2 (1-2)	40:1-2 (1-2)	40:1-2 (1-2)	40:1-2 (1-2)
40:3-8 (3-8)	40:3-5 (3-5)	40:3-5 (3-5)	40:3-5 (3-5)	40:3-5 (3-5)
	40:6-8 (6-8)	40:6-11 (6-11)	40:6-8 (6-8)	40:6-8 (6-8)
40:9-11 (9-11)	40:9-11 (9-11)		40:9 (9)	40:9 (9)
			40:10-11 (10-11)	40:10-11 (10-11)
		Creator of the Universe	Israel's Incomparable God	The Majesty of God
40:12-17 (12-17)	40:12-17 (12-14)	40:12-17 (12-17)	40:12-14 (12-14)	40:12 (12)
				40:13-18 (13-18)
	(15-17)		40:15-17 (15-17)	
40:18-20 (18-20)	40:18-20 (18-20)	40:18-20 (18-20)	40:18-20 (18-20)	
				40:19-24 (19-24)
40:21-26 (21-26)	40:21-24 (21-23)	40:21-23 (21-23)	40:21-22 (21-22)	
			40:23-26 (23-26)	
	(24)	40:24 (24)		
	40:25-26 (25-26)	40:25-26 (25-26)		40:25-31 (25-31)
40:27-31 (27-31)	40:27-31 (27-31)	40:27-31 (25-31)	40:27-31 (27-31)	

\*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

**Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.**

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)**

#### ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS**

- A. Isaiah lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., yet Isaiah 40-66 fits into the historical setting of the return from Babylonian exile under Zerubbabel and Joshua in Ezra 1-6, following the decree of Cyrus II in 538 B.C. (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.).
- B. The book of Isaiah is a unity (see introduction). God revealed His future plans to his faithful messenger. I reject the theory of two or three authors. I believe that the book was edited or compiled.
- C. God had not forgotten His covenant promises, but He had established a new covenant by means of exile (cf. Jer. 31:31-34). This new covenant is ultimately defined in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- D. The historical return from Babylon does not exhaust this prophecy. The ultimate focus of chapters 40-66 is the first and second comings of Messiah.  
Chapter 40 forms an introduction to the unique Messianic passages known as "the Servant Songs" (cf. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:14-53:13).
- E. As Isaiah 1-39 deals with Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, chapters 40-66 speak to those who are returning to Judah and Jerusalem. The geography of the audience has changed!
- F. Verses 1-11 serve as an introduction and summary of the entire section. A new day has come!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:1-2

<sup>1</sup>“Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God.

<sup>2</sup>“Speak kindly to Jerusalem;

And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,

That her iniquity has been removed,

That she has received of the LORD’S hand

Double for all her sins.”

**40:1 “Comfort, O comfort”** This term (BDB 636, KB 688, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, PLURAL) is used in chapters 1-39 only three times, but in chapters 40-66 fourteen times (most in *Piel*). It could be the title for this section of Isaiah. It denotes YHWH’s compassionate care and concern (cf. 12:1). The word seems to have developed from the heavy panting of horses. YHWH is grieved that He had to punish His people. The punishment is over. It is not certain if this is because

1. they repented (i.e., Ezekiel 18)
2. YHWH chose to act on their behalf even though they were incapable of true repentance (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

A new day (i.e., new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34) has dawned! It is based on YHWH’s character, not His people’s performance (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3); His ability, not theirs; His eternal redemptive plan of which they are an integral part.

Now one more point on this opening paragraph. The VERBS are PLURAL. So who is YHWH addressing as His spokesperson?

1. multiple prophets (cf. 52:8)
  - a. individual prophets
  - b. a “school” (i.e., followers) of Isaiah
2. angels of the heavenly court (i.e., the “Us” of Isaiah 6:8 and 41:22-23)
3. the LXX adds, “speak, you priests, to the heart of Jerusalem”

Notice the interplay between the SINGULAR (“a voice” of vv. 3 and 6, and the PLURAL VERBS).

There are twelve IMPERATIVES in vv. 1-11. Verses 1-11 are characterized by IMPERATIVES, while vv. 12-17 are characterized by a series of questions which expect a “no” answer.

The doubling of the IMPERATIVE gives emphasis to the action. This was a common literary technique in this section of Isaiah (cf. 51:9,17; 52:1,11; 57:14; 62:10).

▣ **“My people. . .your God”** These are covenant terms (cf. Genesis 12, 15, etc.). The post-exilic Jews wondered if YHWH was still their covenant God.

The title for deity here is *Elohim* (see Special Topic at 40:3) and is usually used for God as creator, provider, and sustainer of all life on this planet. YHWH (cf. v. 2a) is the title normally associated with God as covenant maker (see Special Topic at 52:6), savior, and redeemer.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term *berith* (BDB 136), covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological or cognate definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God's sovereignty and human free-will is clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God's character and actions.

1. creation itself (cf. Genesis 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Genesis 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Genesis 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response.

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)

This same tension involving God's relationship to humanity is addressed in the "new covenant." The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezekiel 18 with Ezek. 36:27-38 (YHWH's action). Is the covenant based on God's gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue between the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship with YHWH lost in Genesis 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God's character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God's law becomes an internal desire instead of an external law code. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God's reflected image. The problem was not God's covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Romans 7; Galatians 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

▣ **"says"** There are several VERBS (i.e., several different speakers) used in this chapter related to proclaiming God's new message.

1. speak – BDB 180, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, v. 2
2. call out – BDB 894, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, vv. 2,6
3. calling – BDB 894, *Qal* ACTIVE IMPERATIVE
4. lift up your voice – BDB 926, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, v. 9
5. say – BDB 55, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 9

This functions as a second call of Isaiah (cf. chapter 6). The "they will not hear. . ." is now changed to "speak to them."

**40:2 "kindly"** This is לֹבֵב, a "love word" from the root "heart" (לֵב, BDB 523, KB 516, cf. Gen. 34:3; 50:21; Jdgs. 19:3; Ruth 2:13; Hos. 2:14). The Bible uses close, intimate, human relationships to describe God's love and relationship with humanity. This is a form of accommodation to human language.



NASB, NKJV	“warfare”
NRSV	“has served her term”
TEV	“suffered long enough”
NJB	“period of service”
JPSOA	“term of service”
REB	“term of bondage is served”

The NOUN (BDB 838, here FEMININE but usually MASCULINE) can mean

1. war
2. warfare (Dan. 10:1)
3. service of Levites (i.e., Num. 4:3,23,30,35,39,43)
4. hard service (cf. Job 7:1; 14:14; Isa. 40:2)

Israel was to be a “kingdom of priests” (cf. Exod. 19:5-6), but their rebellion turned “service” to God into the “hard service” of enduring God’s judgment (Assyrian and Babylonian exiles).

▣ **“iniquity has been removed”** This means “penalty of iniquity has been accepted as paid off (BDB 953, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. Lev. 1:4; NASB marginal note; TEV).

▣ **“from the LORD’S hand”** YHWH gave Israel a full and complete judgment. The invasion and exile was not the power of Assyria (i.e., 8:7; 10:5) nor Babylon but from YHWH. The ancient eastern worldview was that when countries went to war, their gods fought and the most powerful one won, but this is not reality. Israel was defeated and exiled because of her sin against YHWH. He brought the judgment.

The word “hand” is a Semitic idiom for agency.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: HAND (ILLUSTRATED FROM EZEKIEL)

The word “hand” (BDB 388) has several connotations and usages.

1. literal (i.e., hand of a human)
  - a. symbol of the entire person, 3:18; 18:8,17; 33:6,8
  - b. symbol of human weakness, 7:17,27; 21:7; 22:14
  - c. symbol of foreign enemies, 7:21; 11:9; 16:39; 21:31; 23:9,28; 28:10; 30:12; 34:27; 38:12; 39:23
  - d. literal hand, 8:11; 12:7; 16:11; 37:17,19,20
  - e. symbol of false leaders’ power, 13:21,22,23; 34:10
  - f. symbol of a nation, 23:31,37,42,45; 25:14; 27:15; 28:9; 30:10,22,24,25; 31:11; 39:3
2. anthropomorphic of deity
  - a. reception of revelation, 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1 (2:9 is another metaphor—scroll on a hand)
  - b. YHWH’s power in judgment, 6:14; 13:9; 14:9,13; 16:27; 20:33; 25:7,13,16; 35:3; 39:21
  - c. YHWH Himself (His personal Presence), 20:22
  - d. YHWH’s power to deliver, 20:34 (possibly key usage from Exodus, cf. 3:20; 4:17; 6:1; 7:19; 13:3)
3. anthropomorphic of Cherubim, 1:8; 8:3; 10:7,8,12,21
4. anthropomorphic of destroying angels, 9:1-2; 21:11



5. symbol of a pledge or oath, 17:18; 20:5(twice),6,15,23,28; 36:7; 44:12; 47:14
6. symbol of joy, 25:6
7. anthropomorphic of an angel, 40:3,5; 47:3

▣ **“double for all her sins”** This is not mathematical but poetical for a full and complete amount (cf. Jer. 16:18; Rev. 18:6; for positive sense see Isa. 61:7; Zech. 9:12). Mercy came after a complete judgment (i.e., Lev. 26:40-45).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:3-8**

<sup>3</sup>A voice is calling,  
“Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;  
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.  
<sup>4</sup>Let every valley be lifted up,  
And every mountain and hill be made low;  
And let the rough ground become a plain,  
And the rugged terrain a broad valley;  
<sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
And all flesh will see *it* together;  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”  
<sup>6</sup>A voice says, “Call out.”  
Then he answered, “What shall I call out?”  
All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.  
<sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,  
When the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
Surely the people are grass.  
<sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,  
But the word of our God stands forever.

**40:3 “Clear the way”** This VERB (BDB 815, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) basically means “turn,” but here it is used in a specialized sense of “clear the path of objects” (cf. 40:3; 42:16; 49:11; 57:14; 62:10; Mal. 3:1).

The concept of “a highway of holiness” on which God’s people (returning exiles) came to Him (i.e., to His temple) is recurrent in Isaiah (cf. 11:16; 26:7; 35:8; 42:13).

In this context it is YHWH Himself who is returning to His people. They are to prepare the way, which denotes a spiritual/physical preparation.

This verse was John the Baptist’s self-designation (cf. Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6). This section is reflected in Zech. 14:10, where leveling of the physical terrain to Jerusalem is used as a metaphor for access to God (cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5,6). It could be characterized as “prepare the road” (note parallel line).

▣ **“the LORD”** This is a reference to YHWH. See Special Topic below.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

### A. *El* (BDB 42, KB 48)

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
3. In the Bible *El* is often compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
  - a. *El-Elyon* (“God Most High,” BDB 42 & 751 II), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
  - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself,” BDB 42 & 909), Gen. 16:13
  - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God of all compassion” or “God of the mountain,” BDB 42 & 994), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
  - d. *El-Olam* (“the Everlasting God,” BDB 42 & 761), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
  - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant,” BDB 42 & 136), Jdgs. 9:46
4. *El* is equated with
  - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
  - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father”
  - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
  - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
  - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31;
  - f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
  - g. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
  - h. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
  - i. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
  - j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
  - k. “might” in Isa. 10:21
  - l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
  - m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
  - n. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56
5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El*, *Elohim*, *YHWH*, repeated)

### B. *Elyon* (BDB 751, KB 832)

1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
  - a. *Elohim* – Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
  - b. *YHWH* – Gen. 14:22; II Sam. 22:14
  - c. *El-Shaddai* – Ps. 91:1,9
  - d. *El* – Num. 24:16

- e. *Elah* – used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
- 3. It is often used by non-Israelites.
  - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
  - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
  - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
  - d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)
- C. *Elohim* (PLURAL), *Eloah* (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry (BDB 43, KB 52)
  - 1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
  - 2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 3:6; 20:3). Abraham’s family were polytheists (cf. Josh. 24:2).
  - 3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
  - 4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7.
  - 5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for Deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 104).
 

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH, as in Psalm 14 (*Elohim*, vv. 1,2,5; YHWH, vv. 2,6; even *Adon*, v. 4).
  - 6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
  - 7. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
    - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
    - b. This may refer to the angelic council, with whom God meets in heaven and who does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
    - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods, and from the NT Jesus is God the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).
- D. YHWH (BDB 217, KB 394)
  - 1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant-making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Psalm 103).
 

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4-3:24 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.
  - 2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families)

knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).

- a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
  - b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
  - c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
  - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
  - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
  - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
  - g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:21), meaning “the ever-living, only-living One”
  - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67). The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form.
    - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah, BDB 219, cf. Exod. 15:2; 17:16; Ps. 89:8; 104:35)
    - (2) *Yahu* (“iah” ending of names, e.g., Isaiah)
    - (3) *Yo* (“Jo” beginning of names, e.g., Joshua or Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combination terms, here are some.
- a. *YHWH – Yireh* (YHWH will provide, BDB 217 & 906), Gen. 22:14
  - b. *YHWH – Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer, BDB 217 & 950, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 15:26
  - c. *YHWH – Nissi* (YHWH is my banner, BDB 217 & 651), Exod. 17:15
  - d. *YHWH – Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you, BDB 217 & 872, *Piel* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 31:13
  - e. *YHWH – Shalom* (YHWH is Peace, BDB 217 & 1022), Jdgs. 6:24
  - f. *YHWH – Sabaoth* (YHWH of hosts, BDB 217 & 878), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets
  - g. *YHWH – Ro‘I* (YHWH is my shepherd, BDB 217 & 944, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 23:1
  - h. *YHWH – Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness, BDB 217 & 841), Jer. 23:6
  - i. *YHWH – Shammah* (YHWH is there, BDB 217 & 1027), Ezek. 48:35

▣ **“in the wilderness”** Ezekiel saw God’s glory leaving the Temple in Jerusalem and moving east (cf. Ezek. 10:18-19; 11:22-23; 43:1-3). God went with the exiles and this verse refers to His returning to Judah and Jerusalem.

**40:4** This context refers to a preparation by God’s people for His return to Jerusalem. He will be accompanied by the returning exiles. He will protect, provide, and care for them (cf. vv. 9-11). This is an extension and description of making a highway in the wilderness. It is metaphorical for people easily and freely coming to God. God has provided a new way (i.e., the new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34). This new way is depicted as the new exodus

1. here from physical exile
2. metaphorically for the end-time

**40:5 “the glory of the LORD”** The glory of the Lord is another link to Isaiah 6 (i.e., v. 3). Chapter 40 is functioning as a second call to Isaiah. See note at v. 25.

This is an allusion to “the cloud of glory” which appeared in the exodus and wilderness wanderings as a symbol of God’s personal presence. The rabbis called it the *Shekinah*, from the Hebrew term “to dwell.” The returning Jews needed the reassurance of God’s continuing personal presence (cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19). A new exodus has come!

For “glory” see Special Topic at 42:8.

▣ **“all flesh will see *it* together”** “Flesh” (BDB 142) means human persons (cf. v. 7). This is the universal element (i.e., 49:6; 51:4-5; 52:10) which is so characteristic of Isaiah.

▣ **“the mouth of the LORD has spoken”** This is the Hebrew idiom for the power of the spoken word of YHWH (cf. v. 8; Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,26 and Isa. 55:11).

**40:6 “Call out”** See note at 40:1.



NASB	“he answered”
NKJV	“he said”
NRSV, NJB	“I said”
TEV	“I ask”
REB, LXX,	
DSS	“I asked”

Notice that two voices are involved. Following DSS, LXX it seems to be an angel/spirit speaking to Isaiah.

▣ **“all flesh is grass”** This recurrent metaphor refers to the frailty and transitoriness of human corporal existence compared to the eternity of God (cf. Gen. 6:3; Job 10:4; 14:1-2; Ps. 78:39; 90:5-6; 103:15-18; I Pet. 4:24-25).

To whom is the voice speaking?

1. all humans
2. world powers

It seems to be God’s message to human governments. They may be temporarily powerful, but in time and in reality (i.e., in light of God’s power) they are not!!

▣ **“loveliness”** This is translated from the Hebrew word *hesed* (cf. BDB 338, I, #4). This term is often used of God’s covenant love and loyalty.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*HESED*)

This term has a wide semantic field. The BDB characterizes it this way (338-339).

- A. Used in connection to human beings
  - 1. kindness to fellow men (e.g., I Sam. 20:14; II Chr. 24:22)
  - 2. kindness toward the poor and needy (e.g., Micah 6:8)
  - 3. affection (cf. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 6:4)
  - 4. appearance (cf. Isa. 40:6)
- B. Used in connection to God
  - 1. covenant loyalty and love
    - a. “in redemption from enemies and troubles” (e.g., Jer. 31:3; Ezra 7:28; 9:9)
    - b. “in preservation of life from death” (e.g., Job 10:12; Ps. 86:13)
    - c. “in quickening of spiritual life” (e.g., Ps. 119:41,76,88,124,149,159)
    - d. “in redemption from sin” (cf. Ps. 25:7; 51:1)
    - e. “in keeping the covenants” (e.g., II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32)
  - 2. describes a divine attribute (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Micah 7:20)
  - 3. kindness of God
    - a. “abundant” (e.g., Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8)
    - b. “great in extent” (e.g., Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)
    - c. “everlasting” (e.g., I Chr. 16:34,41; II Chr. 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11)
  - 4. deeds of kindness (e.g., II Chr. 6:42; Ps. 89:2; Isa. 55:3; 63:7; Lam. 3:22)

**40:7-8** All of the VERBS are PERFECT (i.e., completed action) except the concluding statement, “the word of our God stands forever” (IMPERFECT).

This was the truth that the returning exiles needed. It seemed that God’s word of care and protection had failed! However, the problem was not God’s word, but God’s sinful people!

**40:7 “breath”** This Hebrew term *ruah* (BDB 924) can mean “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit.”

### SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE

- I. The Greek terms
  - A. *pneō*, to blow
  - B. *pnoē*, wind, breath
  - C. *pneuma*, spirit, wind
  - D. *pneumatikos*, pertaining to the spirit
  - E. *pneumatikōs*, spiritually
- II. Greek philosophical background (*pneuma*)
  - A. Aristotle used the term as the life force that develops from birth until self-discipline
  - B. The Stoics used the term as synonymous to *psuchē*, (soul) even *nous* (mind) in the sense of the five physical senses and the human intellect
  - C. Greek thought – the term became equivalent to divine action (i.e., divination, magic, occult, prophecy, etc.)

### III. Old Testament (*ruah*)

- A. The actions of the monotheistic God (i.e., Spirit, used about 90 times in the OT)
  - 1. positive, Genesis 1:2
  - 2. negative, I Sam. 16:14-16,23; I Kgs. 22:21-22; Isa. 29:10
- B. The God-given life force in humanity (i.e., God's breath, cf. Gen. 2:7)
- C. The Septuagint translates *ruah* by *pneuma* (used about 100 times in the LXX)
- D. In later rabbinical writings, apocalyptic writing and the Dead Sea Scrolls, influenced by Zoroastrianism, *pneuma* is used of angels and demons

### IV. New Testament (*pneuma*)

- A. God's special presence, power, and equipping
- B. The Spirit is connected to God's activity in the church
  - 1. prophecy
  - 2. miracles
  - 3. boldness to proclaim the gospel
  - 4. wisdom (i.e., the gospel)
  - 5. joy
  - 6. bring in the new age
  - 7. conversion (i.e., wooing and indwelling)
  - 8. Christlikeness
  - 9. special gifts of ministry
  - 10. prays for believers

The Spirit awakens mankind's desire for fellowship with God, for which they were created. This fellowship is possible because of the person and work of Jesus, God's Messiah. The new spiritual awakening leads to Christlike living, serving, and trusting.

- C. Best understood as a spiritual continuum with the Holy Spirit on one end and mankind as a physical creature of this planet, but also a spiritual creature in God's image, at the other end.
- D. Paul is the NT author who develops a theology of the Spirit/spirit.
  - 1. Paul uses Spirit to contrast flesh (i.e., sin nature)
  - 2. Paul uses spirit to contrast the physical
  - 3. Paul uses Spirit/spirit to contrast human thinking, knowing, and being
- E. Some examples from I Corinthians
  - 1. the Holy Spirit, 12:3
  - 2. the power and wisdom of God conveyed through the Holy Spirit, 2:4-5
  - 3. God's actions in the believer
    - a. new mind-set, 2:12; 14:14,32
    - b. new temple, 3:16; 6:19-20
    - c. new life (i.e., morality), 6:9-11
    - d. new life symbolized in baptism, 12:13
    - e. one with God (i.e., conversion), 6:17
    - f. God's wisdom, not the world's wisdom, 2:12-15; 14:14,32,37
    - g. spiritual giftedness of every believer for ministry, chapters 12 and 14

4. the spiritual in contrast to the physical, 9:11; 10:3; 15:44
  5. spiritual realm in contrast to physical realm, 2:11; 5:5; 7:34; 15:45; 16:18
  6. a way of referring to a human's spiritual/inner life as distinct from one's physical body, 7:34
- F. Humans live in two realms by creation (i.e., the physical and the spiritual). Mankind fell from intimacy with God (Genesis 3). Through Christ's life, teachings, death, resurrection, and promised return, the Spirit woos fallen humans to exercise faith in the gospel, at which point they are restored to fellowship with God. The Spirit is that personal part of the Trinity which characterizes the New Age of righteousness. The Spirit is God the Father's agent and the Son's Advocate in this "age." A problem exists because the new age has occurred in time, while the old age of sinful rebellion still exists. The Spirit transforms the old into the new, even while they both exist.

**40:8 "the word of our God stands forever"** God's promises are sure, even amidst divine discipline (cf. Ps. 103:17-18; Isa. 55:8-11; 59:21; Jer. 29:10; Matt. 5:17-20; 24:35). This statement is the confident faith hope/assurance of every believer.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:9-11**

- <sup>9</sup>**Get yourself up on a high mountain,  
O Zion, bearer of good news,  
Lift up your voice mightily,  
O Jerusalem, bearer of good news;  
Lift *it* up, do not fear.  
Say to the cities of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"**
- <sup>10</sup>**Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might,  
With His arm ruling for Him.  
Behold, His reward is with Him  
And His recompense before Him.**
- <sup>11</sup>**Like a shepherd He will tend His flock,  
In His arm He will gather the lambs  
And carry *them* in His bosom;  
He will gently lead the nursing ewes.**

**40:9 "O Zion. . .O Jerusalem"** Both of these terms refer to Jerusalem. The Temple was built on Mt. Moriah but the term "Zion" (another hill in the city where David built his palace) is an idiom for the whole city.

Who do these personifications refer to?

1. God's prophets
2. God's Levitical teachers
3. the herald of the new age (i.e., John the Baptist)

Does this refer to

1. return from Babylonian exile (i.e., 52:7-9; 62:10-12)
2. Maccabean victories
3. the first coming of Jesus (Isa. 62:11 quoted in Matt. 21:50)



4. the second coming of Jesus (Isa. 40:10; 62:11, alluded to in Rev. 22:12)

There is a fluidity between (1) God's promise of restoration to Israel and (2) the new age in Christ. Here is where the mega-narrative must include the NT. Jesus fulfills these hopes, but the two comings of Christ (Savior, later King) causes a twofold fulfillment. These prophecies of the eschaton are still future. They were surely not fulfilled in the return of Zerubbabel and Joshua in 539 B.C. and not in the lifetime of Jesus of Nazareth.

Just one more thought, the paragraph, vv. 9-11, is the proclamation of a "watchman" to a city of an approaching group/person/army. However, notice the powerful one (i.e., God) comes, not as an invader but as a compassionate Shepherd. He comes to save, protect, and provide. The Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 23) returns to His land/people whom He abandoned in Ezekiel 8-10!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY ARE THE END-TIME EVENTS SO CONTROVERSIAL?**

Through the years of my study of eschatology I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of the gospel! Believers cannot affect God's eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the gospel mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an end-time culmination of the promises of God. The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several biblical paradoxes.

1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
2. the tension between the Bible's monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)
3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises ("if . . . then") and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind's redemption
4. the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models
5. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future
6. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first.

Let us discuss these tensions one at a time.

#### **FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)**

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world.

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezekiel 37-39; Daniel 7-12; Zechariah)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; II Corinthians 5; I Thessalonians 4-5; II Thessalonians 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope (“the mystery of Christ,” cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God’s acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God’s promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham’s call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
2. In the OT the enemies of God’s people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Revelation 21-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are
  - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
  - b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
  - c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19)
  - d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., “Israel,” cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., “kingdom of priests,” cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus’ or Paul’s eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John’s way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God’s commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

**SECOND TENSION** (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7,14,18,21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen.1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Genesis 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Romans 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. Rev. 1:6; II Pet.2:5,9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

### **THIRD TENSION** (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The "if. . .then" pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one "horn of the dilemma," God's faithfulness or human effort, God's sovereignty or mankind's free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God's OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isaiah 53), not Israel! God's ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God's covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Galatians 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Romans 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

### **FOURTH TENSION** (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models)

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thessalonians 2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillments of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark.13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4-5; and II Thessalonians 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text . . . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic

communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes” (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

“Today’s readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine ‘what will happen when,’ thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message” (p. 35).

#### **FIFTH TENSION** (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel (but note Rev. 22:16).

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ’s first coming, and then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ’s offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ’s comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Daniel 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Daniel 7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign’s manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of the Messiah (cf. Revelation 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ’s reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus’ preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Revelation 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Revelation 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

#### **SIXTH TENSION** (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus’ return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)

2. the revelation of “the man of Sin” (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2; Rev. 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Rev. 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

### CONSISTENCY AND BALANCE

It must be said that the different schools of modern eschatological interpretation all contain half truths. They explain and interpret well some texts. The problem lies in consistency and balance. Often there is a set of presuppositions which use the biblical text to fill in the pre-set theological skeleton. The Bible does not reveal a logical, chronological, systematic eschatology. It is like a family album. The pictures are true, but not always in order, in context, in a logical sequence. Some of the pictures have fallen out of the album and later generations of family members do not know exactly how to put them back. The key to proper interpretation of Revelation is the intent of the original author as revealed in his choice of literary genre. Most interpreters try to carry their exegetical tools and procedures from other genres of the NT into their interpretations of Revelation. They focus on the OT instead of allowing the teachings of Jesus and Paul to set the theological structure and let Revelation act as illustrative.

I must admit that I approach this commentary on Revelation with some fear and trepidation, not because of the curse of Rev. 22:18-19, but because of the level of controversy the interpretation of this book has caused and continues to cause among God’s people. I love God’s revelation. It is true when all men are liars (cf. Rom. 3:4)! Please use this commentary as an attempt to be thought provoking and not definitive, as a sign post and not a road map, as a “what if,” not a “thus says the Lord.” I have come face to face with my own inadequacies, biases, and theological agenda. I have also seen those of other interpreters. It almost seems that people find in Revelation what they expect to find. The genre lends itself to abuse! However, it is in the Bible for a purpose. Its placement as the concluding “word” is not by accident. It has a message from God to His children of each and every generation. God wants us to understand! Let us join hands, not form camps; let us affirm what is clear and central, not all that may be, might be, could be true. God help us all!

▣ **“good news”** This is the VERB בָּשַׂר (BDB 142, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) which means “bear glad tidings.” Here it denotes the merciful message of YHWH’s redemption and acceptance (cf. 40:9 [twice]; 41:27; 52:7 [twice]; Nahum 1:15). Paul quotes Isa. 52:7 in Rom. 10:15 and relates it to Christ (Rom. 10:16 quotes Isa. 53:1). The gospel of Jesus Christ is characterized as “good news” in the NT.

▣ **“do not fear”** This VERB (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is JUSSIVE in meaning, referring to Jerusalem (i.e., God’s people). Sin causes fear! How often God says this to His people! (cf. 41:10,13,14; 43:1,5; 44:2,8 [different words]; 51:7,12; 54:4,14).

▣ **“Say to the cities of Judah”** Those who hold to a later, post-exilic writer instead of Isaiah have trouble explaining this reference because all of the cities were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II in 586 B.C.

▣ **“Here is your God”** God is with His people! The wait is over (cf. 25:9; 26:8; 33:2; 40:31; 49:23; 51:5; 60:9)!

**40:10 “the Lord GOD”** Literally this is “*Adonai* YHWH,” which is literally translated “Lord, LORD” cf. Ps. 110:1). “Lord” is the Hebrew word *adon*, which denotes master, owner, husband, lord.

▣ **“With His arm ruling for Him”** This is a Semitic anthropomorphic idiom (see Special Topic at 41:2) for divine action and power. From Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5; and Micah 5:2-5a, we know this refers to the agency of the Messiah (cf. Psalm 110).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH**

This is taken from my commentary note at Daniel 9:6. The difficulty in interpreting this verse is because of the possible meanings associated with the term Messiah or anointed one (BDB 603).

1. used of Jewish kings (e.g., I Sam. 2:10; 12:3)
2. used of Jewish priests (e.g., Lev. 4:3,5)
3. used of Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1)
4. #1 and #2 are combined in Psalm 110 and Zechariah 4
5. used of God’s special coming, Davidic King to bring in the new age of righteousness
  - a. line of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10)
  - b. house of Jesse (cf. II Samuel 7)
  - c. universal reign (cf. Psalm 2; Isa. 9:6; 11:1-5; Mic. 5:1-4ff)

I personally am attracted to the identification of “an anointed one” with Jesus of Nazareth because of

1. the introduction of an eternal Kingdom in Daniel 2 during the fourth empire
2. the introduction of “a son of man” in Dan. 7:13 being given an eternal kingdom
3. the redemptive clauses of Dan. 9:24, which point toward a culmination of fallen world history
4. Jesus’ use of the book of Daniel in the NT (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14)

### ▣ **“His reward is with Him**

**And His recompense before Him”** This exact phrase is also found in Isa. 62:11 and alluded to in Rev. 22:12.

Verse 10 is speaking of the personal presence of Deity (41:10a). Emmanuel has come (cf. 7:14)!

**40:11 “Like a shepherd”** YHWH, the mighty (cf. v. 10), is also a Shepherd (cf. Psalm 23; 80:1; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:11-16). Notice that also in Ezek. 34:23, YHWH appoints His Messiah to represent Himself! Jesus is the “good Shepherd” (cf. John 10). He is the “wounded” shepherd of Zechariah 11-12 and Isa. 52:13-53:12.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:12-17**

<sup>12</sup>**Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,  
And marked off the heavens by the span,  
And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure,  
And weighed the mountains in a balance  
And the hills in a pair of scales?**

<sup>13</sup>**Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,  
Or as His counselor has informed Him?**

<sup>14</sup>**With whom did He consult and *who* gave Him understanding?  
And *who* taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge  
And informed Him of the way of understanding?**

<sup>15</sup>Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,  
And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales;  
Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.

<sup>16</sup>Even Lebanon is not enough to burn,  
Nor its beasts enough for a burnt offering.

<sup>17</sup>All the nations are as nothing before Him,  
They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.

**40:12-17** As verses 9-11 describe the message of YHWH's personal presence as Savior, verses 12-17 describe Him as Creator.

1. measured the waters (i.e., controller and organizer of original water of chaos), v. 12
2. designed the atmosphere of this planet, v. 12
3. ordered the dry land ("calculated the dust" and "weighed the mountains. . .hill" [Hebrew parallelism]), v. 12
4. directed the Spirit as agent, without counsel, vv. 13-14
5. in comparison with God's creative power and intellect, humans are nothing (cf. vv. 6-8, this is similar to Job 38-41), vv. 15-17

**40:12 "Who has measured the waters"** All of the VERBS of v. 12 are PERFECT (i.e., completed action). This is a series of questions which expect a "no" answer. It is similar to the book of Job 38-41, where God answered Job's questions by asserting His sovereignty and authority. Verse 12 is very similar to 41:26.

Notice the parallelism.

1. measured – BDB 551, KB 547]
2. marked off – BDB 1067, KB 1733
3. calculated – BDB 465, KB 463
4. weighed – BDB 1053, KB 1642

These are all metaphorical actions of the Creator. The creation account of Genesis 1 is also imagery of God's control, ordering and maintaining the universe. A new good book is John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*.

**40:13-14** The "who" of these verses may link back to the PLURALS of vv. 1-3. If so, they relate to the heavenly council. These angelic servants can be seen in

1. the "Us" passages of Genesis 1 and 6
2. I Kings 22:19-23
3. Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6,7
4. Daniel 7:10,26

**40:13 "Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD"** Verses 13 and 14 are parallel. This is not a Trinitarian passage but an OT passage, much like Genesis 1:2, which speaks of "the Spirit" as God's presence (see Special Topic at v. 7).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY**

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity in unified contexts. The term "trinity," first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.



- A. the Gospels
  - 1. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
  - 2. John 14:26
- B. Acts – Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
- C. Paul
  - 1. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
  - 2. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
  - 3. II Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14
  - 4. Gal. 4:4-6
  - 5. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
  - 6. I Thess. 1:2-5
  - 7. II Thess. 2:13
  - 8. Titus 3:4-6
- D. Peter – I Pet. 1:2
- E. Jude – vv. 20-21

A plurality in God is hinted at in the OT.

- A. Use of PLURALS for God
  - 1. Name *Elohim* is PLURAL, but when used of God always has a SINGULAR VERB
  - 2. “Us” in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
- B. The Angel of the Lord was a visible representative of Deity
  - 1. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
  - 2. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
  - 3. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
  - 4. Zechariah 3:1-2
- C. God and His Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
- D. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12
- E. The Messiah and the Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10
- F. All three are mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The Deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers.

- 1. Tertullian – subordinated the Son to the Father
- 2. Origen – subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
- 3. Arius – denied Deity to the Son and Spirit
- 4. Monarchianism – believed in a successive chronological manifestation of the one God as Father, Son, and Spirit

The Trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material

- 1. the full Deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, and was affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea (cf. John 1:1; Phil. 2:6; Titus 2:13)

2. the full personality and Deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed in A.D. 381 by the Council of Constantinople
3. the doctrine of the Trinity is fully expressed in Augustine's work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

**40:14 “And *who* taught Him in the path of justice”** Notice the parallelism. “Path” is the OT background to the NT concept of “The Way,” which was used of the early church in Acts. This speaks of biblical faith as lifestyle fellowship with God.

For “justice” see Special Topic below. This verse in essence is asserting monotheism.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDGE, JUDGMENT, AND JUSTICE IN ISAIAH**

This is a widely used term (BDB 1047) in the Old Testament. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 214, has characterized its distribution and significance.

1. Pentateuch, 13%, human judges
2. History books, 34%, human leaders
3. Wisdom Literature, 22%, divine activity
4. Prophets, 31%, mostly divine activity

Note the following chart.

<b>YHWH as Judge</b>	<b>Messiah as Judge</b>	<b>Israel's Ideal Judges</b>	<b>Israel's Actual Judges</b>
2:4	9:7	1:17,21,23	3:2
3:14	11:3,4	26:8	5:7
4:4	16:5	56:1	10:2
5:16	32:1	58:2,8	59:4,9,11,14,15
28:6,17,26	40:14		
30:18	42:1,3,4		
33:5,22	51:4,5		
61:8	53:8		
66:16			

Israel was to reflect YHWH's character to the nations. She failed, so YHWH raised one “ideal” Israelite to fulfill His personal revelation to the world (i.e., the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, cf. Isa. 52:11-53:12)!

▣ This verse in essence is asserting monotheism. See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM**

The concept of “monotheism” (one and only one God), not just the “high god” of polytheism or the good god of Iranian dualism (Zoroastrianism), is unique to Israel (Abraham, 2000 B.C.). There is one rare exception briefly in Egypt (Amenhotep IV, also known as Akhenaten, 1367-1350 or 1386-1361 B.C.).

This concept is expressed in several phrases in the OT.

1. “no one like YHWH our *Elohim*,” Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 33:26; I Kgs. 8:23
2. “no other besides Him,” Deut. 4:35,39; 32:39; I Sam. 2:2; II Sam. 22:32; Isa. 45:21; 44:6,8; 45:6,21
3. “YHWH is one,” Deut. 6:4; Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; I Tim. 2:5; James 2:19
4. “none like thee,” II Sam. 7:22; Jer. 10:6
5. “Thou alone are God,” Ps. 86:10; Isa. 37:16
6. “Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me,” Isa. 43:10
7. “there is no other; besides Me. . .there is no other,” Isa. 45:5,6,22
8. “there is none else, no other God,” Isa. 45:14,18
9. “there is none except Me,” Isa. 45:21
10. “there is no other; . . .there is no one like Me,” Isa. 46:9

It must be admitted that this crucial doctrine has been revealed in progressive ways. The early statements could be understood as “henotheism” or practical monotheism (there are other gods, but only one god for us, cf. Exod. 15:11; 20:2-5; Deut. 3:28; 5:7; 6:4,14; 10:17; 32:12; I Kgs. 8:23; Ps. 83:18; 86:8; 136:1-2).

The first texts that begin to denote a singularity (philosophical monotheism) are early (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; 33:26). The full and complete claims are found in Isaiah 43-46 (cf. 43:11; 44:6,8; 45:7,14,18,22; 46:5,9).

The NT alludes to Deut. 6:4 in Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 2:5; and James 2:19. Jesus quotes it as the first commandment in Matt. 22:36-37; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27. The OT, as well as the NT, asserts the reality of other spiritual beings (demons, angels), but only one creator/redeemer God (YHWH, Gen. 1:1).

Biblical monotheism is characterized by

1. God is one and unique (ontology is assumed, not specified).
2. God is personal (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8).
3. God is ethical (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-10).
4. God created humans in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (i.e., #2). He is a jealous God (cf. Exod. 20:2-3).

From the NT

1. God has three eternal, personal manifestations (see Special Topic: The Trinity at 8:11)
2. God is perfectly and completely revealed in Jesus (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:2-3)
3. God’s eternal plan for fallen humanity’s redemption is the sacrificial offering of His only Son (Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:6-11; Hebrews)

**40:15-17 “the nations are like a drop from a bucket. . .a speck of dust on the scales. . .all nations are as nothing before Him”** This is an emphasis on God’s power (cf. Jer. 10:10), not on His lack of care or compassion for the nations. YHWH sent Jesus for the redemption of the whole human race. However, rebellious nations will be judged (cf. 17:13; 29:5,7).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB'S EVANGELICAL BIASES

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelicalism (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezekiel 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-31), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)! The NT gospel, not Israel, is the key to Scripture.

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture. I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

**40:16** The point of this verse is that even a place (i.e., Lebanon) which is heavily forested and full of wild animals would not provide an adequate sacrifice to the greatness of Israel's covenant God. For a similar extravagant attempt at an adequate sacrifice note I Kgs. 8:63.

#### 40:17

NASB "meaningless"

NKJV "worthless"

NRSV, NJB "emptiness"

This word, תָּרוֹ (BDB 1062), is used of the formless earth in Gen. 1:2 (cf. Isa. 34:11; 45:18; Jer. 4:23). It is also used of the non-existence of idols (I Sam. 12:21; Isa. 41:29; 44:9).

Isaiah uses it in this same chapter for the nothingness of human rulers (i.e., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and all enemies of God's people). Human organization and power are incomparable to YHWH's power and plan.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:18-20

<sup>18</sup>To whom then will you liken God?

Or what likeness will you compare with Him?

<sup>19</sup>As for the idol, a craftsman casts it,

A goldsmith plates it with gold,

And a silversmith fashions chains of silver.

<sup>20</sup>He who is too impoverished for such an offering

Selects a tree that does not rot;

He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman

To prepare an idol that will not totter.

**40:18-20** This section deals with the folly of idolatry similar to Isa. 44:9-20 and 46:1-7.

▣ "To whom then will you liken God" This is the expression (cf. v. 25; 46:5; Exod. 8:10; 15:11; I Sam. 2:2; Mic. 7:18) of the Jews' major theological affirmation which we call monotheism (cf. Deut. 6:4-5). See Special Topic at v. 14.

#### 40:19

NASB "fashions"

NKJV, NRSV,

NJB "casts"

TEV "set"

**REB**                “fits”  
**JPSOA**            “forging”

This VERB (BDB 864,, KB 1057) is used twice and refers to smelting metal into a specific form (cf. 41:7; 46:6). The NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 1000 prefers “forging” rather than the common translation “casting,” because of the Hebrew synonymous parallelism (see Appendix One: Introduction to Hebrew Poetry).

**40:20 “a tree”** This word (BDB 781) is used of a type of wood out of which idols are made (cf. 44:19; 45:20; Hos. 4:12). It may have been an especially hard wood but in time it will decay!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:21-26**

<sup>21</sup>**Do you not know? Have you not heard?**  
**Has it not been declared to you from the beginning?**  
**Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?**  
<sup>22</sup>**It is He who sits above the circle of the earth,**  
**And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers,**  
**Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain**  
**And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.**  
<sup>23</sup>**He *it is* who reduces rulers to nothing,**  
**Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless.**  
<sup>24</sup>**Scarcely have they been planted,**  
**Scarcely have they been sown,**  
**Scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth,**  
**But He merely blows on them, and they wither,**  
**And the storm carries them away like stubble.**  
<sup>25</sup>**To whom then will you liken Me**  
**That I would be *his* equal?” says the Holy One.**  
<sup>26</sup>**Lift up your eyes on high**  
**And see who has created these *stars*,**  
**The One who leads forth their host by number,**  
**He calls them all by name;**  
**Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of *His* power,**  
**Not one *of them* is missing.**

**40:21-26** This strophe is theologically related to vv. 12-17. They both describe God as Creator, all else is small and significant in comparison. He is the only reality, the only truth, the only living One! Idols have no existence and humans have existence only by His will! But amazingly He wills to know us, forgive us, and fellowship with us! What a God, who is like Him?

**40:21 “Do you not know”** This series of questions, like v. 28, is meant to remind the Jews of God’s previous revelations to them.

☐ **“from the foundations of the earth”** In context this is another allusion to creation. Interestingly, a similar phrase is repeated five times in the NT referring to YHWH’s actions before creation.

1. Matt. 25:34 – “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world”
2. John 17:24 – “for You did love Me before the foundations of the world”
3. Eph. 1:4 – “He chose us in Him before the foundations of the world”
4. I Pet. 1:19-20 – He was foreknown before the foundation of the world”

5. Rev. 13:8 (possible object)
  - a. “everyone whose name has not be written from the foundation of the world”
  - b. “the Lamb who has been slain before the foundation of the world”

God was active before, in, and after physical creation. He was active in Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Israel, and Christ for the redemption of all humans (see Special Topic at 40:15)!

**40:22 “It is He who sits above the circle of the earth. . .curtain. . .tent”** This is a common ancient Middle Eastern concept (cf. 42:5; Job 9:8; Ps. 104:2; Jer. 10:12; 51:15; Zech. 12:1). In the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, heaven is described as a “skin.” In the Rig Veda heaven is described as “stretched out like a hide.” This is simply a metaphorical way of speaking of the vault of the heaven (i.e., the atmosphere of this planet) above the earth. It is the language of metaphor.

The term “curtain” (BDB 201) is used in this sense only here. The word means “to crush” (cf. 40:15, “fine dust”). Apparently it can also refer to something “thin” (KB 229, i.e., the dome that covers the earth). Remember interpreters look at

1. the context
2. the Semitic root
3. cognate languages

but #1 has priority!

**40:25 “the Holy One”** See full note at 6:3 (vol. 11A). This title is another purposeful connection between the first call of Isaiah, where he is told Israel will not listen until destruction (cf. 6:9-11) and this second call, where he is told to “speak kindly” to her. She will listen now!

**40:26 “Lift up your eyes. . .see”** These are both *Qal* IMPERATIVES. Notice the parallel lines of v. 26 a,b.

☐ **“And see who has created these stars. . .He calls them by name. . .not one of them is missing”** It is very significant in light of Babylonian astral worship that God is depicted as the only creator, sustainer, and manipulator of the heavenly bodies (cf. Gen. 1:16; Ps. 8:3; Jer. 31:35).

The term “created” in v. 26 is the Hebrew term *Bara*. It is used in Genesis 1 of God creating. It is never used of anything or anyone except the creation of God. It occurs 20 times in Isaiah 40-66 (cf. 40:26,28; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1,7,15; 45:7[twice],8,12,18[twice]; 48:7; 54:16[twice]; 57:19; 65:17,18[twice]).

☐ **“Not one of them is missing”** This is a Hebrew idiom which means “not one of them fails to report to muster.” God controls the stars and planets. They are not gods.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:27-31**

<sup>27</sup>Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel,

“My way is hidden from the LORD,

And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”?

<sup>28</sup>Do you not know? Have you not heard?

The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth

Does not become weary or tired.

His understanding is inscrutable.

<sup>29</sup>He gives strength to the weary,

And to *him who* lacks might He increases power.

<sup>30</sup>Though youths grow weary and tired,

And vigorous young men stumble badly,

<sup>31</sup>Yet those who wait for the LORD  
 Will gain new strength;  
 They will mount up *with* wings like eagles,  
 They will run and not get tired,  
 They will walk and not become weary.

**40:27 “My way is hidden from the LORD,**

**And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”** The Jews (i.e., “O Jacob. . .O Israel”) felt that YHWH had abandoned them (cf. 49:14). YHWH had hid His face from them for a period (cf. 1:15; 8:17; 54:8; Romans 9-11).

**40:28** Notice the titles for God.

1. the Everlasting God – Gen. 21:33 and note Exod. 15:18; Deut. 32:40; Ps. 90:2; Jer. 10:10
2. the LORD – YHWH (see Special Topic at 40:3)
3. the Creator – (this has been the thrust of chapter 40)
4. also called “the Holy One” in v. 25

The God of promise is now again the God of presence!

▣ **“Does not become weary or tired”** This is a Hebrew idiom which means “He does not lose patience.”

There is a word play related to “tiredness,” “weariness” in vv. 28-31.

1. v. 28 – weary, BDB 419, KB 421  
           tired, BDB 388, KB 386
2. v. 30 – weary, BDB 419, KB 421  
           tired, BDB 388, KB 386
3. v. 30 – stumble, INFINITIVE and IMPERFECT VERB (BDB 505, KB 502)
4. v. 31 – tired, BDB 388, KB 386  
           weary, BDB 419, KB 421

YHWH brings strength and stability to those who wait and trust! The vitality of YHWH is transferred to His people (cf. vv. 29-31). They are potent because He is potent!

▣

**NASB “inscrutable”**

**NKJV “no searching His understanding”**

**NRSV “unsearchable”**

**NJB “beyond fathoming”**

The Hebrew word (BDB 350) basically means to search out. Here it is negated (cf. Job 5:9; 9:10; 36:26; Ps. 145:3). Paul expresses the same truth in Rom. 11:33 and quotes Isa. 40:13-14.

God is in control! His ways are sure and thought through. There are no surprises, no mistakes! He loves us, He is with us, He is for us (cf. vv. 29-31)!

**40:29 “He gives strength to the weary”** YHWH comforts the very ones He judged (cf. 41:10; Ps. 107:9; Jer. 31:25). This is very similar to Jesus’ statement, “Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” in Matt. 11:28-30.

**40:30 “vigorous young men”** This refers to the young men chosen for military service.

▣ **“stumble badly”** This is a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Niphal* IMPERFECT of the same root (BDB 505, KB 502), which intensifies the concept.

**40:31 “wait”** This is a Hebrew word (BDB 875, KB 1082) that speaks of active anticipation. It is used of farmers waiting for a crop (cf. Isa. 5:4,7). It is used of robbers waiting in ambush (cf. Ps. 56:6; 119:95). God’s people wait for Him (cf. 8:17; 25:9; 30:18; 33:2).

▣ **“Will gain new strength”** This VERB (BDB 322, KB 321, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) means

1. to exchange – Lev. 27:10
2. to change – Gen. 31:7,41; 35:2
3. to cause to succeed – Isa. 40:31

▣ **“like eagles”** The Jewish Study Bible (p. 864) says there was a popular belief that when eagles molted they gained new strength (cf. Ps. 103:5).



# ISAIAH 41

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel Encouraged	Israel Assured of God's Help	The Trial of the Nations (41:1-42:4)	God's Assurance To Israel	Cyrus, the Instrument of Yahweh
41:1-4 (1-4)	41:1 (1)	41:4 (1)	41:1 (1)	41:1-7 (1-7)
	41:2-4 (2-4)	41:2-10 (2-10)	41:2-4 (2-4)	
41:5-16 (5-16)	41:5-7 (5-7)		41:5-7 (5-7)	Israel, Chosen and Protected by Yahweh
	41:8-10 (8-10)		41:8-10 (8-10)	41:8-20 (8-20)
	41:11-13 (11-13)	41:11-13 (11-13)	41:11-13 (11-13)	
	41:14-16 (14-16)	41:14-16 (14-16)	41:14-16 (14-16)	
41:17-20 (17-20)	41:17-20 (17-20)	41:17-20 (17-20)	41:17-20 (17-20)	
	The Futility of Idols		The LORD's Challenge to False Gods	The Futility of Idols
41:21-24 (21-24)	41:21-24 (21-24)	41:21-24 (21-24)	41:21-24 (21-24)	41:21-29 (21-29)
41:25-29 (25-29)	41:25-29 (25-29)	41:25-29 (25-29)	41:25-29 (25-29)	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. In this chapter YHWH displays His power and sovereignty by calling Cyrus II (Persia, cf. vv. 2,25) to take over the rule of the Fertile Crescent from Babylon. This regime change will show
  1. YHWH's plan of deliverance for His people (i.e., return from exile)
  2. YHWH's judgment of the idols of the peoples who cannot hear, see, or act
- B. Chapter 41 has an extensive number of commands used as a rhetorical literary device.
  1. directed to the "coastlands," v. 1
    - a. "listen to Me" – BDB 361, KB 357, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
    - b. "let the peoples gain new strength" – BDB 322, KB 321, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
    - c. "let them come forward" – BDB 620, KB 670, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
    - d. "let them speak" – BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
    - e. "let us come together for judgment" – BDB 897, KB 1132, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
  2. directed to "one from the east" (i.e., Cyrus II), v. 2 – BDB 921, KB 1190, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
  3. the coastlands speak to each other, "be strong" – BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
  4. YHWH speaks to His people
    - a. "do not fear" – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (also note vv. 13, 14)
    - b. "do not anxiously look about you" – BDB 1043, KB 1609, *Hithpael* JUSSIVE
  5. YHWH (and the heavenly council) as Judge calls the idols to court (vv. 21-24)
    - a. "present your cases" – BDB 897, KB 1132, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
    - b. "bring forward your strong arguments" – BDB 620, KB 670, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
    - c. "let them bring forth" – BDB 620, KB 670, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
    - d. "let them declare to us" – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
    - e. "as for the former events, declare what they were" – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
    - f. "that we may consider them" – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
    - g. "that we may know their outcome" – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
    - h. "announce to us what is coming" – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
    - i. "declare the things that are going to come forward" – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
    - j. "that we may know that you are gods" – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
    - k. "do good" – BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
    - l. "do evil" – BDB 949, KB 1269, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
    - m. "that we may anxiously look about us" – BDB 1043, KB 1609, *Hithpael* COHORTATIVE
    - n. "and fear together" – BDB 431, KB 432 (or BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* COHORTATIVE), *Qal* JUSSIVE
  6. YHWH gives His verdict on the idols in vv. 25-29
    - a. "who has declared this" – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
    - b. "that we may say, 'he is right'?" – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but in a COHORTATIVE sense
    - c. "when I look, there is no one" – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* JUSSIVE

- C. There is a metaphorical trial where the nations are called to account (vv. 1,21) because instead of repentance in the face of YHWH's presence, power and prediction, they make new idols.
- D. Notice the number of times "I" is used. YHWH chooses to act. This is similar to Ezek. 36:27-38.
- E. The new exodus from exile is described in agricultural terms as it was in Isaiah 35. The promises of Deuteronomy 27-29 are now realized.
- F. Israel has been restored to covenant status by YHWH's mercy and power.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:1-4

<sup>1</sup>**"Coastlands, listen to Me in silence,  
And let the peoples gain new strength;  
Let them come forward, then let them speak;  
Let us come together for judgment.**

<sup>2</sup>**Who has aroused one from the east  
Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet?  
He delivers up nations before him  
And subdues kings.  
He makes them like dust with his sword,  
As the wind-driven chaff with his bow.**

<sup>3</sup>**He pursues them, passing on in safety,  
By a way he had not been traversing with his feet.**

<sup>4</sup>**Who has performed and accomplished it,  
Calling forth the generations from the beginning?  
'I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He.'**"

**41:1** Verse 1 is a literary technique used often in the OT (i.e., a court scene, cf. 1:18-20; 43:26; 50:8; Hosea 4; Micah 6; see Appendix Two). YHWH brings the nations, and in v. 21, their idols before His judgment seat.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "coastlands"

TEV "distant lands"

NJB, REB "coasts and islands"

The word (BDB 15) means "coast" or "region." Isaiah uses it often to refer to Gentile nations in the Mediterranean area (cf. 11:11; 24:15; 40:1,5; 41:1; 42:4,10,12; 49:1; 51:5; 59:18; 60:9; 66:19).

It is parallel to "peoples" (BDB 522, cf. 49:1). It seems that the nation of Edom is used as a symbol for all "rebellious nations" (i.e., 34:5-17; 63:1-6; Jer. 49:7-22; Lam. 4:21-22; Ezek. 25:12-14; 35:1-15; Obadiah, Mal. 1:2-4). In Isaiah this term often stands for Gentile nations, like Philistia and Phoenicia (cf. 23:2-6).

▣ **"in silence"** This is another term related to a court scene (cf. Hab. 2:20; Zech. 2:13). There is nothing to say in light of YHWH's presence and power.

▣ **“gain new strength”** It is surprising that the same VERB (BDB 322, KB 321, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) used of God’s people in 40:31 is now used for “the peoples” (i.e., Gentiles).

▣ **“come forward”** This VERB, “draw near” (BDB 620, KB 670, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) can be used of priests approaching YHWH in sacrifice and worship, but here it is approaching the judge for a defense (cf. 34:1; 48:16).

**41:2 “one from the east”** This refers to Cyrus II (cf. “one from the north,” v. 25). He is mentioned specifically by name in Isa. 44:28; 45:1. Cyrus II

1. became King of Anshan in 558 B.C.
2. gained control of Media in 550 B.C.
3. controlled Lydia in 546 B.C.
4. controlled Babylon in 539 B.C.
5. issued a decree in 538 B.C. that all the deported people groups exiled by Assyria and Babylon could go home, including the Jews

▣ **“Whom He calls in righteousness”** The JPSOA translates this by uniting the thoughts of lines 1 and 2, “who has roused a victor from the east.”

The Jewish Study Bible (864) mentions that the Targums translate this so as to refer to Abraham whom YHWH called from Ur of the Chaldees. The military part of v. 2 would then refer to Genesis 14, Abraham’s defeat of the kings.

▣ **“to His feet”** It must be remembered that the Ark of the covenant was viewed as the footstool for YHWH’s feet and, thereby, His presence. This is an anthropomorphic phrase.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)**

- I. This type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)
  - A. Physical body parts
    1. eyes – Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
    2. hands – Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
    3. arm – Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Num. 11:23; Deut. 4:34; 5:15
    4. ears – Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
    5. face – Exod. 32:30; 33:11; Num. 6:25; Deut. 34:10; Ps. 114:7
    6. finger – Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
    7. voice – Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10
    8. feet – Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
    9. human form – Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
    10. the angel of the Lord – Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
  - B. Physical actions
    1. speaking as the mechanism of creation – Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
    2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden – Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Hab. 3:15
    3. closing the door of Noah’s ark – Gen. 7:16
    4. smelling sacrifices – Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21

5. coming down – Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
6. burying Moses – Deut. 34:6
- C. Human emotions (some examples)
  1. regret/repent – Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
  2. anger – Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:5; 7:4; 29:20
  3. jealousy – Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
  4. loathe/abhor – Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19
- D. Family terms (some examples)
  1. Father
    - a. of Israel – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 31:9; Hos. 11:1
    - b. of the king – II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
    - c. metaphors of fatherly action – Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:6-14; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17
  2. Parent – Hosea 11:1-4
  3. Mother – Ps. 27:10; Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 (analogy to nursing mother)
  4. Young faithful lover – Hosea 1-3

## II. Reasons for the use of this type of language

- A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
- B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover)
- C. Though necessary at times (i.e., Gen. 3:8), God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5)
- D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

## ▣ “He” Notice all the things that YHWH does for Cyrus II.

1. arouses from the east
2. calls in righteousness
3. delivers up nations before him
4. subdues kings
  - a. like dust
  - b. like chaff

Verse 3 describes the swiftness of his victories. Verse 4 describes the Lord who accomplishes the victories for His own purposes of redemption and restoration for His people.



<b>NASB</b>	<b>“subdues”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“rule over”</b>
<b>NRSV, JPSOA</b>	<b>“tramples”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“victory”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“subjects”</b>
<b>REB</b>	<b>“overthrowing”</b>

The problem is the rare VERB (BDB 921, KB 1190, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE). It does not seem to fit the context, so the various options. The VERB must refer to Cyrus.

#### 41:3

**NASB** “traversing with his feet”  
**NJV** “he had not gone with his feet”  
**NRSV, NJB** “scarcely touching the path with his feet”  
**REB** “swifter than any traveler on foot”  
**JPSOA** “no shackle is placed on his feet”

The Hebrew is ambiguous. The ancient versions did not understand it.

1. LXX – “the way of his feet shall proceed in peace”
2. Peshitta – “he shall not pass that way on foot”
3. DSS – “they do not discern the path of his feet”

Most modern English translations see it as a metaphor of speed. However, the JPSOA translates the word “path” as “shackles” from an Old Aramaic root. It could refer to new territory (NET Bible).

**41:4 “Calling forth the generations from the beginning”** This is an idiom for YHWH’s control of time and history (cf. 40:21; 41:26; 44:7; 45:21). YHWH directs creation, the call of Abraham, and his seed for His purposes. OT predictive prophecy is the strongest evidentiary basis for the inspired Bible!

▣ **“I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He”** There is a series of Hebraic terms and forms used here to describe God.

1. “the LORD” comes from the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14, see Special Topic at 40:3)
2. “the first and the last” (cf. Isa. 44:6)
3. “I am He” reflects the term “YHWH” (cf. Isa. 43:10; 46:4; John 8:57-58; 13:9)

Collectively, these terms seem to reflect that God is the only-living, ever-living God (see Special Topic: Monotheism at 40:14). They are used for Jesus, YHWH’s Messiah in Rev. 1:8,17; 22:13.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:5-17**

<sup>5</sup>The coastlands have seen and are afraid;  
The ends of the earth tremble;  
They have drawn near and have come.

<sup>6</sup>Each one helps his neighbor  
And says to his brother, “Be strong!”

<sup>7</sup>So the craftsman encourages the smelter,  
*And he who smooths metal with the hammer encourages him who beats the anvil,*  
Saying of the soldering, “It is good”;  
And he fastens it with nails,  
*So that it will not totter.*

<sup>8</sup>“But you, Israel, My servant,  
Jacob whom I have chosen,  
Descendant of Abraham My friend,

<sup>9</sup>You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth,  
And called from its remotest parts  
And said to you, ‘You are My servant,  
I have chosen you and not rejected you.

<sup>10</sup>Do not fear, for I am with you;  
Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,  
Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

<sup>11</sup>Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored;  
Those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish.

<sup>12</sup>You will seek those who quarrel with you, but will not find them,  
Those who war with you will be as nothing and non-existent.

<sup>13</sup>For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand,  
Who says to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you.'

<sup>14</sup>Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel;  
I will help you," declares the LORD "and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

<sup>15</sup>Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges;  
You will thresh the mountains and pulverize *them*,  
And will make the hills like chaff.

<sup>16</sup>You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away,  
And the storm will scatter them;  
But you will rejoice in the LORD,  
You will glory in the Holy One of Israel."

**41:5 "The ends of the earth"** This second line is parallel to "the coastlands," see note at v. 1. They both refer to the whole "known" Mediterranean and Near Eastern world.

**41:6-7** The Hebrew VERB "make strong" (BDB 304, KB 302) is used three times in these verses.

1. *Qal* IMPERATIVE – be strong, v. 6
2. *Piel* IMPERFECT – encourage, v. 7
3. *Piel* IMPERFECT – fastens it, v. 7

The nations looked to each other's deity for help, but in vain, for their gods could not see, hear, or act!

**41:8 "But you, Israel, My servant"** There has been much discussion over the term "My servant." It seems to be used in three distinct ways in the OT.

1. for an individual like the king or a prophet (cf. Num. 12:7)
2. for the nation of Israel (cf. Isa. 42:19; 44:21)
3. ultimately for the ideal Israelite, the Messiah (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:13)

In the book of Isaiah the second and third options are often merged.

▣ **"I have chosen"** This VERB (BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* PERFECT) is an emphasis on God's election (cf. v. 9; 43:10; 44:1,2; 49:7; Deut. 7:6; 14:2). In the OT election was for service (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6), while in the NT election is for salvation which leads to service.

▣ **"Descendant of Abraham My friend"** Note YHWH's call and promise in Genesis 12,15,22. This foundational Patriarchal covenant is emphasized by Paul in Romans 4 and Galatians 3. Abraham is also called YHWH's friend in II Chr. 20:7; James 2:23. They talked face to face in Genesis 18.

**41:9 "You whom I have taken. . .called"** Both VERBS are PERFECTS (i.e., completed action).

1. taken – BDB 304, KB 302, *Hiphil* PERFECT
2. called – BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT

Also note the synonymous parallelism between

1. from the ends of the earth

2. its remotest parts

In context this refers to the places that Assyria resettled (i.e., exiled) the Israelites (722 B.C.) and Babylon resettled the Judeans (605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.).

▣ **“I have chosen you and not rejected you”** Judah felt that God had rejected them because of the exile and destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The VERB “reject” (BDB 549, KB 540, *Qal* PERFECT, NEGATED) is used in Lev. 26:44, where YHWH promises not to totally cut off His people because of their sin and covenant breaking. The question comes, how is this promise affected by the NT? It seems to me there are two main options.

1. Israel still has a crucial place in end-time events (i.e., Romans 9-11).
2. God’s people have always been those who trust Him and live for Him. In the OT this referred to the seed of Abraham, but also Melchizedek (Genesis 14); Job (Job 1); Jethro (Exodus); Caleb (Joshua); Uriah (II Samuel 11); and others who were not Israelites. In the NT this is widened to all believing Gentiles (i.e., Rom. 2:28-29; Galatians 3).

**41:10 “Do not fear”** This is a very common word from YHWH to His people (cf. vv. 13,14; 43:1,5; 44:2,8; 51:7,12; 55:4,14).

Notice why they should not fear.

1. YHWH is personally with them
2. YHWH is their covenant God
3. He will strengthen them
4. He will help them (vv. 10,14)
5. He will uphold them (vv. 10,13)
6. all who oppose them will
  - a. be shamed
  - b. be dishonored
  - c. be brought to nothing (vv. 11-12)
  - d. perish

▣ **“for I am with you”** There is no stated VERB in this phrase (see NKJV). There is an obvious intended word play (cf. v. 13) between the meaning of the needed VERB (I am) and the name for God, YHWH (I Am that I Am, cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 40:3. There is no greater promise in all the Bible (cf. Matt. 28:20; Acts 18:20).



NASB	<b>“Do not anxiously look about you”</b>
NKJV, Peshitta	<b>“be not discouraged”</b>
NRSV, REB	<b>“do not be afraid”</b>
TEV	<b>“let nothing terrify you”</b>
NJB	<b>“do not be alarmed”</b>
LXX	<b>“wander not”</b>

The Hebrew VERB (BDB 1043, KB 1609) in the *Hithpael*, means “gaze not about (in anxiety).”

It is possible that the VERB is from another root (נָתַח), which is found in Ugaritic, meaning “fear” (NET Bible, p. 1250, #21).

**41:11 “all those. . .those who contend”** Remember that God has promised blessings to those who bless His people and curses to those who curse them (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered that Israel’s strength, trust, and hope was in YHWH, not in themselves.



Notice how the returning Israelites' opponents are characterized.

1. all those who are angered at you, v. 11
2. those who contend with you, v. 11
3. those who quarrel with you, v. 12
4. those who war with you, v. 12

Also notice their fate.

1. will be shamed, v. 11
2. will be dishonored, v. 11
3. will be as nothing, v. 11
4. will perish, v. 11
5. will not be found, v. 12
6. will be as nothing, v. 12
7. will be non-existent, v. 12

**41:14 “you worm Jacob, you men of Israel”** This reference to Jacob as being a worm is not a derogatory term, but seems to be a metaphor for his helplessness (cf. Job 25:6; Ps. 22:6) without God's aid, similar to the imagery of Ezek. 16:6.

▣ **“your Redeemer”** This (PARTICIPIAL title, cf. 43:14) reflects the Hebrew term *Go'el* (BDB 145, KB 169). This Hebrew term referred to the “kinsmen redeemer” or “avenger.” It is used of one who buys a near relative back from slavery or a prisoner of war (cf. the example of Boaz in Ruth 4:1ff).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM**

### **I. OLD TESTAMENT**

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept.

1. *Ga'al* (BDB 145, I), which basically means “to free by means of a price paid.” A form of the term *go'el* adds to the concept a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf. Leviticus 25:27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:14; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes “the redeemer” (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Pro. 23:11; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).
2. *Padah* (BDB 804), which basically means “to deliver” or “to rescue”
  - a. the redemption of the firstborn (Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17)
  - b. physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption (Ps. 49:7,8,15)
  - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion (Ps. 130:7-8)

B. The theological concept involves several related items.

1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment.
  - a. physical
  - b. social
  - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration.
  - a. of the nation of Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
  - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)

3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *gaal* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go'el*, BDB 145).
4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms.
  - a. Father
  - b. Husband
  - c. Near Kin Redeemer/Avenger

Redemption was secured through YHWH's personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

## II. NEW TESTAMENT

A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept.

1. *Agorazō* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
2. *Exagorazō* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the "curse" of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law. Cf. Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21)! In Jesus, God's justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!
3. *Luō*, "to set free"
  - a. *Lutron*, "a price paid" (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus' own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
  - b. *Lutroō*, "to release"
    - (1) to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21)
    - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people (Titus 2:14)
    - (3) to be a sinless substitute (I Pet. 1:18-19)
  - c. *Lutrōsis*, "redemption," "deliverance," or "liberation"
    - (1) Zacharias' prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
    - (2) Anna's praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
    - (3) Jesus' better, once offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
4. *Apolytrōsis*
  - a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)
    - (1) Luke 21:28
    - (2) Romans 8:23
    - (3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
    - (4) Hebrews 9:15
  - b. redemption in Christ's death
    - (1) Romans 3:24
    - (2) I Corinthians 1:30
    - (3) Ephesians 1:7
    - (4) Colossians 1:14

5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14) which links “release” to Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice, the one who dies for “all” (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).

B. The theological concept in the NT.

1. Mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
2. Mankind’s bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Galatians 3) and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).
3. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Romans 6).
4. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are “near kin” who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).
5. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., Medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God’s word and God’s justice with God’s love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!
6. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and personal intimacy with the Triune God. Our resurrected bodies will be like His (cf. I John 3:2). He had a physical body, but with an extra dimensional aspect. It is hard to define the paradox of I Cor. 15:12-19 with I Cor. 15:35-58. Obviously there is a physical, earthly body and there will be a heavenly, spiritual body. Jesus had both!

▣ **“the Holy One of Israel”** This is a favorite title for Deity in Isaiah (cf. 1:4; 5:19; 10:17,20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19,23; 30:11,12,15; 31:1; 37:23; also in the second part of Isaiah, 40:25; 41:14,16,20; 43:3,14,15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9,14). Because He is “holy,” His people should be holy (cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16).

This title, in a sense, expresses the impossible tension of a sinful, fallen people conforming to a holy standard. The Mosaic Covenant was impossible to keep (cf. Acts 15; Galatians 3; Hebrews). The old covenant was a way to show the impossibility of humans to conform to God’s standard, yet He was with them, for them, preparing them for His answer to their fallen condition. He does not lower His standard, but provides it through His Messiah. The new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) is a covenant of faith and repentance, not human performance, though it issues in Christlikeness (cf. James 2:14-26). God wants a people who reflect His character to the nations (cf. Matt. 5:48).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION**

The NT asserts that when sinners turn to Jesus in repentance and faith, they are instantaneously justified and sanctified. This is their new position in Christ. His righteousness has been imputed to them (cf. Rom. 4). They are declared right and holy (a forensic act of God).

But the NT also urges believers on to holiness or sanctification. It is both a theological position in the finished work of Jesus Christ and a call to be Christlike in attitude and actions in daily life. As salvation is a free gift and a cost-everything lifestyle, so too, is sanctification.

### Initial Response

Acts 20:23; 26:18  
Romans 15:16  
I Corinthians 1:2-3; 6:11  
II Thessalonians 2:13  
Hebrews 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:12  
I Peter 1:12

### A Progressive Christlikeness

Romans 6:19  
II Corinthians 7:1  
Ephesians 1:4; 2:10  
I Thess. 3:13; 4:3-4,7; 5:23  
I Timothy 2:15  
II Timothy 2:21  
Hebrews 12:14  
I Peter 1:15-16

**41:15-16** Israel's enemies are described as "mountains" (BDB 249) and "hills" (BDB 148) which will be "threshed," which is an agricultural term for harvesting (cf. Micah 4:13; Hab. 3:12). This is Hebrew poetry, be careful of literalism!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:17-20**

<sup>17</sup>**"The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none,  
And their tongue is parched with thirst;  
I, the LORD, will answer them Myself,  
As the God of Israel I will not forsake them.**

<sup>18</sup>**I will open rivers on the bare heights  
And springs in the midst of the valleys;  
I will make the wilderness a pool of water  
And the dry land fountains of water.**

<sup>19</sup>**I will put the cedar in the wilderness,  
The acacia and the myrtle and the olive tree;  
I will place the juniper in the desert  
Together with the box tree and the cypress,**

<sup>20</sup>**That they may see and recognize,  
And consider and gain insight as well,  
That the hand of the LORD has done this,  
And the Holy One of Israel has created it."**

**41:17-20** These verses reflect God's presence and blessing which bring abundance in nature (cf. Deuteronomy 27).

**41:19** For a good resource for identifying ancient plants and animals see UBS *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:21-24**

<sup>21</sup>**"Present your case," the LORD says.  
"Bring forward your strong arguments,"  
The King of Jacob says.**

<sup>22</sup>“Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place;  
As for the former *events*, declare what they *were*,  
That we may consider them and know their outcome.  
Or announce to us what is coming;

<sup>23</sup>Declare the things that are going to come afterward,  
That we may know that you are gods;  
Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together.

<sup>24</sup>Behold, you are of no account,  
And your work amounts to nothing;  
He who chooses you is an abomination.

**41:21** This is a court scene (cf. v. 1).

☐ **“The King of Jacob says”** This title occurs only here. YHWH was the ideal King of the Covenant people (cf. 44:6; I Sam. 8:7). Jacob’s name (i.e., Israel) represents all the Covenant people, all thirteen tribes (cf. 45:4).

**41:22-24** This refers to the national gods. God calls on them to act or predict or do anything, but they cannot because they are vanity or nothingness (vv. 24,28-29).

**41:23** This verse is one of the places where the compilers of the MT recognized a Hebrew variant and suggested a change.

The MT has “see,” 23c (*qere*, וּנְרָא, BDB 906, *Qal* IMPERFECT, NKJV, Leupold), but they suggest “fear” (*ketiv*, וּנְרָא, BDB 431, *Qal* IMPERFECT, NASB). The UBS Text Project gives “see” a B rating (some doubt).

**41:24 “abomination”** See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOMINATIONS**

“Abominations” (BDB 1072) can refer to several things:

1. things related to Egyptians:
  - a. they loathe eating with Hebrews, Gen. 43:32
  - b. they loathe shepherds, Gen. 46:34
  - c. they loathe Hebrew sacrifices, Exod. 8:26
2. things related to YHWH’s feelings toward Israel’s actions:
  - a. unclean food, Deut. 14:2
  - b. idols, Deut. 7:25; 18:9,12; 27:15
  - c. pagan spiritists, Deut. 18:9,12
  - d. burning children to *Molech*, Lev. 18:21-22; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:9,12; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17-18; 21:6; Jer. 32:35
  - e. Canaanite idolatry, Deut. 13:14; 17:4; 20:17-18; 32:16; Isa. 44:19; Jer. 16:18; Ezek. 5:11; 6:9; 11:18,21; 14:6; 16:50; 18:12
  - f. sacrificing blemished animals, Deut. 17:1 (cf. 15:19-23; Mal. 1:12-13)
  - g. sacrificing to idols, Jer. 44:4-5
  - h. remarrying a woman who you have previously divorced, Deut. 24:2

- i. women wearing man's clothes (possibly Canaan worship), Deut. 22:5
- j. money from cultic prostitution (Canaanite worship), Deut. 23:18
- k. Israel's idolatry, Jer. 2:7
- l. homosexuality (possibly Canaanite worship), Lev. 18:22; 20:13
- m. use of false weights, Deut. 25:16; Pro. 11:1; 20:23
- n. food laws violated (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 14:3
- 3. Examples in Wisdom Literature:
  - a. Proverbs 3:32; 6:16-19; 11:1,20; 12:22; 15:8,9,26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 21:27; 28:9
  - b. Psalms 88:8
  - c. Job 30:10
- 4. There is a recurrent eschatological phrase "abomination of desolation," which is used in Daniel (cf. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It seems to refer to three different occasions (multiple fulfillment prophecy):
  - a. Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the interbiblical Maccabean period (cf. I Macc. 1:54,59; II Macc. 6:1-2)
  - b. the Roman general (later Emperor), Titus, who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20)
  - c. an end-time world leader called "the man of lawlessness" (cf. II Thess. 2:3-4) or "the Antichrist" (cf. I John 2:18; 4:3; Revelation 13)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:25-29**

- <sup>25</sup>**I have aroused one from the north, and he has come;  
From the rising of the sun he will call on My name;  
And he will come upon rulers as *upon* mortar,  
Even as the potter treads clay."**
- <sup>26</sup>**Who has declared *this* from the beginning, that we might know?  
Or from former times, that we may say, "*He is right!*"?  
Surely there was no one who declared,  
Surely there was no one who proclaimed,  
Surely there was no one who heard your words.**
- <sup>27</sup>**Formerly *I said* to Zion, 'Behold, here they are.'  
And to Jerusalem, 'I will give a messenger of good news.'**
- <sup>28</sup>**But when I look, there is no one,  
And there is no counselor among them  
Who, if I ask, can give an answer.**
- <sup>29</sup>**Behold, all of them are false;  
Their works are worthless,  
Their molten images are wind and emptiness.**

**41:25 "have aroused one from the north"** This again refers to Cyrus II (cf. v. 2; 44:28; 45:1). The only direction that one could come into Palestine from the Fertile Crescent was from the north because the desert was directly to the east (i.e., "from the rising of the sun").

▣ **“he will call on My name”** This may refer to II Chr. 36:22-23 or Ezra 1:1-2.



NASB	<b>“he will come upon rulers”</b>
NKJV	<b>“he will come against princes”</b>
NRSV, TEV,	
NJB	<b>“he shall trample on rulers”</b>
REB	<b>“he marches over rulers”</b>
JPSOA	<b>“he has trampled rulers”</b>

The MT has the common VERB “come” (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT) which, translators assume from context, means “step on.” The UBS Textual Project suggests another possible root.

1. יִבֹּא – he will come/step on
2. יִבֹּט – he will tread upon

However, it put #1 in the text but gave it a “C” rating (considerable doubt). The NET Bible likes option #2 (p. 1251 #18).

**41:26** YHWH shows His existence and power by His prophesied acts in history (cf. 43:9; 45:21).

**41:27 “here they are”** This seems to refer to true prophets, as vv. 28 and 29 refer to false prophets and the tragedy of people turning to helpless idols.

# ISAIAH 42

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Promise Concerning His Servant	The Servant of the LORD	The First Servant Song	The LORD's Servant	First Song of the Servant
42:1-4 (1-4)	42:1-4 (1-4)	42:1-4 (1-4)	42:1-4 (1-4)	42:1-9 (1-9)
		God's Glorious Victory		
42:5-9 (5-9)	42:5-9 (5-9)	42:5-9 (5-9)	42:5-7 (5-7)	
	Praise the LORD		42:8-9 (8-9)	
			A Song of Praise	Song of Victory
42:10-13 (10-13)	42:10-13 (10-13)	42:10-13 (10-13)	42:10-13 (10-13)	42:10-17 (10-17)
The Blindness of the People	Promise of the LORD's Help		God Promises to Help His People	
42:14-17 (14-17)	42:14-17 (14-17)	42:14-17 (14-17)	42:14-15 (14-15)	
		Israel, the Blind and Deaf Servant (42:18-43:7)	42:16-17 (16-17)	
			Israel's Failure to Learn	Israel's Blindness
42:18-22 (18-22)	42:18-20 (18-20)	42:18-25 (18-25)	42:18-20 (18-20)	42:18-25 (18-25)
	Israel's Obstinate Disobedience			
	42:21-22 (21-22)		42:21-22 (21-22)	
42:23-25 (23-25)	42:23-25 (23-25)		42:23-25 (23-25)	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

#### 1. First paragraph



2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is the first of the special poems addressed to or about YHWH's Servant.
  1. 42:1-4 or 42:1-7 or 42:1-9
  2. 49:1-6 or 49:1-7 or 49:1-13
  3. 50:4-9 or 50:4-11
  5. 52:13-53:12
 Exactly where the first three stop is debatable.
- B. The Servant has both a corporate (i.e., Israel) and individual (i.e., the Messiah) orientation. Only context and/or description of the Servant's actions can differentiate the two. In a theological sense the Messiah is the "ideal Israelite" or "the Priest" of the kingdom of priests (see the NT book of Hebrews).
- C. The Aramaic translations and commentaries called the Targums assert that the Servant is the Messiah. He will be an individual Israelite accomplishing YHWH's will for the nation and the world. As Cyrus II was an instrument in the hand of YHWH for a new exodus/deliverance (i.e., return from exile), so too, will the Messiah bring a spiritual exodus or return from the alienation of the Fall (Genesis 3). He will restore the damaged image of God in mankind and allow for the intimate fellowship of Eden to be restored!
 

Cyrus was a sword to the world (cf. 41:6) but the Messiah will be a light (cf. 42:6). Light is a metaphor for spiritual deliverance (cf. 49:6).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:1-4

- <sup>1</sup>**"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;  
My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights.  
I have put My Spirit upon Him;  
He will bring forth justice to the nations.**
- <sup>2</sup>**He will not cry out or raise *His voice*,  
Nor make His voice heard in the street.**
- <sup>3</sup>**A bruised reed He will not break  
And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;  
He will faithfully bring forth justice.**
- <sup>4</sup>**He will not be disheartened or crushed  
Until He has established justice in the earth;  
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law."**

**42:1 "Behold"** These two "beholds" (BDB 243, cf. 41:29 and 42:1) contrast the lifeless idols of the nations with YHWH's activity, God's choice versus the nation's choice (cf. 41:29).

As in chapter 40, the question is asked “to whom is YHWH speaking?” It could be

1. the prophet
2. the heavenly council
3. just a literary technique for YHWH to express His thoughts to His covenant people

▣ **“My Servant”** This was a title of respect and calling (BDB 713).

1. It was used in a collective sense
  - a. the Patriarchs as a group – Deut. 9:27
  - b. the prophets – II Kgs. 9:7; 17:13; Ezra 9:11; Jer. 7:25; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4
  - c. Israel – Ps. 105:6; 136:22; Isa. 41:8-9; 42:18-19; 44:1,2,21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3; Jer. 30:10; 46:27,28
  - d. the Septuagint adds a phrase to v. 1, which makes it refer to national Israel (“Jacob is my servant, I will help him; Israel is my chosen”)
2. It was used in an individual sense
  - a. Abraham – Gen. 26:24; Ps. 105:6
  - b. Job – Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:7,8
  - c. Isaac – Gen. 24:14
  - d. Jacob – I Chr. 16:13; Ps. 105:6; Ezek. 28:25
  - e. Moses – Exod. 14:31; Num. 12:7-8; Deut. 34:5; Josh. 1:1-2,7,13,15
  - f. Joshua – Josh. 24:29; Jdgs. 2:8
  - g. Caleb – Num 14:24
  - h. David – Ezek. 37:25
  - i. Zerubbabel – Hag. 2:23
  - j. Solomon – I Kgs. 3:8
  - k. Isaiah – Isa. 20:3; 44:26
  - l. Jesus – Matt. 12:15-21 quotes Isa. 42:1-4

▣ **“whom. . .I”** Notice the things YHWH has done and will do for His special servant.

1. whom I uphold, v. 1
2. in whom My soul delights, v. 1
3. I have put My Spirit upon Him, v. 1

▣ **“He will. . .”** Notice the things the servant will do (series of IMPERFECT VERBS).

1. bring forth justice to the nations (i.e., universal implication, cf. vv. 1; 4b,c)
2. will not cry out, v. 2
3. will not raise His voice, v. 2
4. will not make His voice heard in the street, v. 2
5. will not break a bruised reed, v. 3
6. will not extinguish a dimly burning wick, v. 3
7. will faithfully bring forth, v. 3
8. will not be disheartened, v. 4
9. will not be crushed, v. 4
10. will establish justice in the earth, v. 4

▣ **“My chosen one”** This term (BDB 103, KB 119) denotes YHWH’s choice of people, places, groups to serve Him.

1. corporate choices
  - a. the seed of the Patriarchs – Deut. 4:37; 10:15
  - b. Israel – Deut. 7:7; Ps. 135:4; Isa. 44:1; Ezek. 20:5

- c. the people – I Kgs. 3:8
- d. the tribe of Judah – I Chr. 28:4; Ps. 78:68
- e. Levites – I Chr. 15:2; II Chr. 29:11
- 2. individuals
  - a. Abraham – Neh. 9:7
  - b. Jacob – Ps. 135:4
  - c. Aaron – Num. 16:5; 17:5; Ps. 105:26
  - d. David – I Sam. 10:24; 16:8,9,10; Ps. 78:70
  - e. Solomon – I Chr. 29:1
  - f. Zerubbabel – Hag. 2:23
- 3. places (i.e., temple) – Deut. 12:5,11,14,18,21,26; 14:23,24,25

▣ **“My soul delights”** This is similar to the title used by the Father for Jesus, “My Beloved” (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5).

▣ **“I have put My Spirit upon Him”** This refers to the Servant being anointed and equipped for a task (cf. 11:2; 59:21; 61:1). See Special Topic: “Spirit” (*pneuma*) in the Bible at 40:7.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT**

In the OT “the Spirit of God” (i.e., *ruach*) was a force which accomplished YHWH’s purpose, but there is no hint that it was personal (i.e., OT monotheism). However, in the NT the full personality and personhood of the Spirit is documented:

- 1. He can be blasphemed (cf. Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:29)
- 2. He teaches (cf. Luke 12:12; John 14:26)
- 3. He bears witness (cf. John 15:26)
- 4. He convicts, guides (cf. John 16:7-15)
- 5. He is called “who” (i.e., *hos*) (cf. Eph. 1:14)
- 6. He can be grieved (cf. Eph. 4:30)
- 7. He can be quenched (cf. I Thess. 5:19)

Trinitarian texts (here are three of many) also speak of three persons.

- 1. Matt. 28:19
- 2. II Cor. 13:14
- 3. I Pet. 1:2

The Spirit is linked to human activity.

- 1. Acts 15:28
- 2. Rom. 8:26
- 3. I Cor. 12:11
- 4. Eph. 4:30

At the very beginning of Acts the Spirit’s role is emphasized. Pentecost was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Jesus always had the Spirit. His baptism was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Luke prepares the church for a new chapter of effective ministry. Jesus is still the focus, the Spirit is still the effective means and the Father’s love, forgiveness, and restoration of all humans made in His image is the goal!

▣ **“He will bring forth justice”** See Special Topic at 40:14.

▣ **“to the nations”** Notice the universal implications of this phrase and vv. 4b and c, 6c and d, 10-12! Of all the prophets of Israel, it is Isaiah who saw the inclusion of the Gentiles in YHWH’s future kingdom most clearly!

**42:2 “He will not cry out or raise *His voice*”** This is either

1. linked with 53:7, which refers to Jesus’ trial
2. a description of His quiet style of ministry
3. a reference to a prayer for help which the Servant does not require (cf. 65:14)

The etymology of this term strongly favors #3.

**42:3 “A bruised reed. . .a dimly burning wick”** This describes a ministry of compassion, understanding, and patience to those who have somehow been wounded and stressed (cf. 57:15).



NASB, NRSV,

NJB “faithfully”

NKJV, LXX “truth”

JPSOA “the true way”

The Hebrew root is נָאֵם (BDB 52) and occurs only here. The UBS Text Project gives an “A” rating to “truth” and not “for nations” (cf. NEB). Both “truth” and “faithful” are in the semantic range of the root’s meaning.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (נָאֵם)**

### **I. Opening Statement**

It needs to be stated that the use of this theological concept, so crucial to the NT, is not as clearly defined in the OT. It is surely there, but demonstrated in key selected passages and persons.

The OT blends

- A. the individual and the community
- B. the personal encounter and covenant obedience

Faith is both personal encounter and daily lifestyle! It is easier to describe in a person than in a lexical form (i.e., word study). This personal aspect is best illustrated in

- A. Abraham and his seed
- B. David and Israel

These men met/encountered God and their lives were permanently changed (not perfect lives, but continuing faith). Testing revealed weaknesses and strengths of their faith encounter with God, but the intimate, trusting relationship continued through time! It was tested and refined, but it continued as evidenced by their devotion and lifestyle.

### **II. Main root used**

- A. נָאֵם (BDB 52)

1. VERB

- a. *Qal* stem – to support, to nourish (i.e., II Kgs. 10:1,5; Esther 2:7, the non-theological usage)

- b. *Niphal* stem – to make sure or firm, to establish, to confirm, to be faithful or trustworthy
  - (1) of men, Isa. 8:2; 53:1; Jer. 40:14
  - (2) of things, Isa. 22:23
  - (3) of God, Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; Jer. 42:5
- c. *Hiphil* stem – to stand firm, to believe, to trust
  - (1) Abraham believed God, Gen. 15:6
  - (2) the Israelites in Egypt believed, Exod. 4:31; 14:31 (negated in Deut. 1:32)
  - (3) Israelites believed YHWH spoke through Moses, Exod. 19:9; Ps. 106:12,24
  - (4) Ahaz did not trust in God, Isa 7:9
  - (5) whoever believes in it/him, Isa. 28:16
  - (6) believe truths about God, Isa. 43:10-12
- 2. NOUN (MASCULINE) – faithfulness (i.e., Deut. 32:20; Isa. 25:1; 26:2)
- 3. ADVERB – truly, verily, I agree, may it be so (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; I Kgs. 1:36; I Chr. 16:36; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 11:5; 28:6). This is the liturgical use of “amen” in the OT and NT.
- B. אֱמֶת (BDB 54) FEMININE NOUN, firmness, faithfulness, truth
  - 1. of men, Isa. 10:20; 42:3; 48:1
  - 2. of God, Exod. 34:6; Ps. 117:2; Isa. 38:18,19; 61:8
  - 3. of truth, Deut. 32:4; I Kgs. 22:16; Ps. 33:4; 98:3; 100:5; 119:30; Jer. 9:5; Zech. 8:16
- C. אֱמוּנָה (BDB 53), firmness, steadfastness, fidelity
  - 1. of hands, Exod. 17:12
  - 2. of times, Isa. 33:6
  - 3. of humans, Jer. 5:3; 7:28; 9:2
  - 4. of God, Ps. 40:11; 88:12; 89:1,2,5,8; 119:138

### III. Paul’s use of this OT concept

- A. Paul bases his new understanding of YHWH and the OT on his personal encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9; 22; 26).
- B. He found OT support for his new understanding in two key OT passages which use the root אָמַן.
  - 1. Gen. 15:6 – Abram’s personal encounter initiated by God (Genesis 12) resulted in an obedient life of faith (Genesis 12-22). Paul alludes to this in Romans 4 and Galatians 3.
  - 2. Isa. 28:16 – those who believe in it (i.e., God’s tested and firmly placed cornerstone) will never be
    - a. Rom. 9:33, “put to shame” or “be disappointed”
    - b. Rom. 10:11, same as above
  - 3. Hab. 2:4 – those who know the faithful God should live faithful lives (cf. Jer. 7:28). Paul uses this text in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11 (also note Heb. 10:38).

### IV. Peter’s use of the OT concept

- A. Peter combines
  - 1. Isa. 8:14 – I Pet. 2:8 (stumbling block)

2. Isa. 28:16 – I Pet. 2:6 (cornerstone)
3. Ps. 118:22 – I Pet 2:7 (rejected stone)
- B. He turns the unique language that describes Israel, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” from
  1. Deut. 10:15; Isa. 43:21
  2. Isa. 61:6; 66:21
  3. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6
 and now uses it for the church’s faith in Christ

V. John’s use of the concept

A. Its NT usage

The term “believe” is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*), which can also be translated “believe,” “faith,” or “trust.” For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd’s commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term “believe” are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

B. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *eis* means “into.” This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus
  - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
  - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45, 48; 12:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
  - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
  - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
  - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
  - f. into Light (John 12:36)
  - g. into God (John 14:1)
2. *en* means “in” as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
3. *epi* means “in” or “upon,” as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5, 24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6
4. the DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
5. *hoti*, which means “believe that,” gives content as to what to believe
  - a. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
  - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
  - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
  - d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
  - e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
  - f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
  - g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
  - h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)

- i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, “I Am” (John 8:24; 13:19)
- j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
- k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)

#### VI. Conclusion

Biblical faith is the human response to a Divine word/promise. God always initiates (i.e., John 6:44,65), but part of this Divine communication is the need for humans to respond.

A. trust

B. covenant obedience

Biblical faith is

1. a personal relationship (initial faith)
2. an affirmation of biblical truth (faith in God’s revelation)
3. an appropriate obedient response to it (daily faith)

Biblical faith is not a ticket to heaven or an insurance policy. It is a personal relationship. This is the purpose of creation and humans being made in the image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) of God. The issue is “intimacy.” God desires fellowship, not a certain theological standing! But fellowship with a holy God demands that the children demonstrate the “family” characteristic (i.e., holiness, cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:15-16). The Fall (cf. Genesis 3) affected our ability to respond appropriately. Therefore, God acted on our behalf (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38), giving us a “new heart” and “new spirit,” which enables us through faith and repentance to fellowship with Him and obey Him!

All three are crucial. All three must be maintained. The goal is to know God (both Hebrew and Greek senses) and to reflect His character in our lives. The goal of faith is not heaven someday, but Christlikeness every day!

Human faithfulness is the result (NT), not the basis (OT) for a relationship with God: human’s faith in His faithfulness; human’s trust in His trustworthiness. The heart of the NT view of salvation is that humans must respond initially and continually to the initiating grace and mercy of God, demonstrated in Christ. He has loved, He has sent, He has provided; we must respond in faith and faithfulness (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 and 10)!

The faithful God wants a faithful people to reveal Himself to a faithless world and bring them to personal faith in Him.

**42:4 “. . .until. . .”** This seems to imply that a “crushing” (i.e., 52:13-53:12) will take place but at an appointed time.

▣ **“in the earth. . .the coastlands”** These are in a parallel relationship and, therefore, are synonymous. This again is a reference to Gentile nations. See note at 41:4.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:5-9**

**<sup>5</sup>Thus says God the LORD,  
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
Who spread out the earth and its offspring,  
Who gives breath to the people on it  
And spirit to those who walk in it,**

<sup>6</sup>“I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness,  
 I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,  
 And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,  
 As a light to the nations,  
<sup>7</sup>To open blind eyes,  
 To bring out prisoners from the dungeon  
 And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.  
<sup>8</sup>I am the LORD, that is My name;  
 I will not give My glory to another,  
 Nor My praise to graven images.  
<sup>9</sup>Behold, the former things have come to pass,  
 Now I declare new things;  
 Before they spring forth I proclaim *them* to you.”

**42:5-9** This section is very similar to 40:12-17, which emphasizes YHWH as Creator and Sovereign of physical creation.

**42:5 “God the LORD”** These are two names for Deity (see Special Topic at 40:3).

1. *El* – the general name for Deity in the Ancient Near East (BDB 42). Here it has the DEFINITE ARTICLE
2. YHWH – the covenant name for Deity from the VERB “to be” (BDB 217)

▣ **“created”** This VERB (BDB 135, KB 153, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is used uniquely of God’s creating (cf. Gen. 1:1).

▣ **“the heavens”** See Special Topic below.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: HEAVEN

The Hebrew term (BDB 1029, translated “heaven,” “sky,” “firmament,” “air”) can refer to several things (i.e. a series of domes or spheres of creation):

1. In Gen. 1:8-20 it refers to the atmosphere above the earth where clouds move and birds fly.
2. This dome (cf. Gen. 1:6,20; Isa. 40:22; 42:5) above the earth is where God sends the rain (i.e., “windows of heaven,” cf. Ps. 78:23-29; Mal. 3:10 or “the water jars of heaven,” cf. Job 38:37).
3. This dome is where the stars dwell and planets move (two dimensional). It could refer to all the created cosmos (tens of billions of galaxies).
4. Above this dome is the abode of God (i.e. the third or seventh heaven). It is the highest heaven (e.g., Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27,30,32; Ps. 2:4; 148:4; Isa. 66:1).
5. The theological emphases
  - a. God is the creator of everything.
  - b. He controls creation (i.e., light and dark, rain and drought).
  - c. He creates and places the night lights (sun, moon, stars, planets, comets).
  - d. There are spheres or realms of reality:
    - 1) earth



- 2) above the earth
- 3) invisible/angelic (cf. Col. 1:16)
- 4) God's presence and abode
- e. they are all connected and controlled by His will



**NASB** "offspring"  
**NKJV, NRSV** "that which comes from it"  
**TEV** "all that lives there"  
**NJB** "what comes from it"  
**JPSOA** "what it brings forth"

The term (KB 993) has two orientations.

1. plants – Job 31:8; Isa. 34:1; 42:5
2. humans (metaphor of descendants) – Job 5:25; 21:8; 27:14; Isa. 22:24; 44:3; 48:19; 61:9; 65:23

Notice the series of "Who"

1. created the heavens
2. stretched them out
3. spread out the earth
4. spread out its offspring
5. gives "breath" (*nephesh*, BDB 675) to the people on it
6. gives "spirit" (*ruah*, BDB 924) to those who walk in it

If they are meant to form a chain like Genesis 1, then plants are the probable meanings. If they are a type of synonymous parallelism then people are the focus. Life, not just matter, is from YHWH. He is the ever-living, only-living God!

**42:6-7** These verses describe what YHWH is doing for His covenant people. He chose them for a purpose (see Special Topic at 40:15).

1. called (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT) them in righteousness
2. held them by the hand (BDB 304, KB 302, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE)
3. watched over them (BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
4. appointed them as a covenant people (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
  - a. as a light to the nations
  - b. to open blind eyes
  - c. to bring out prisoners

Abraham's seed was both

1. a kingdom of priests
2. a King/Priest (Messiah, cf. Psalm 110)

who came to deliver the world from the darkness and prison of sin (Genesis 3).

There is some doubt about the Hebrew root of #3

1. protect (צַר) – NASB, NKJV, NRSV
2. form (צָר) – NJB, JPSOA, REB

Notice what the Messiah/Servant will accomplish.

1. government in righteousness (cf. 9:6-7; 11:3-4)
2. worldwide reign (cf. 45:22; 49:6; 52:10; Micah 5:4)

3. open blind eyes (cf. 29:18; 32:3; 35:5)
4. release prisoners (cf. 61:1)

**42:8 “I am the LORD, that is My name”** This is the covenant name of God. See Special Topic at 40:3.

▣ **“My glory”** This is a difficult term (BDB 458) to define. In 6:3 it fills the whole earth. In 40:5 it will be revealed to the whole earth. In a sense it represents YHWH’s personal presence.

In the NT YHWH’s glory is fully revealed in the person of the Messiah, Jesus (cf. John 1:14; 11:4,40; 17:4).

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (*DOXA*)**

The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. Believers’ glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. 1:29-31; Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*, BDB 458) was originally a commercial term relating to a pair of scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod. 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. John 12:45; 14:8-11; Col.1:15; Heb. 1:3). The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous.

1. it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”
2. it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God
3. it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-21). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.

▣ **“I will not give My glory to another”** See Isa. 40:18-26, which speaks of YHWH’s reality and the idols’ non-reality.

**42:9 “new things. . .new song”** The term “new” (BDB 294) is a recurrent theme in Isa. 43:19; 48:6; 62:2; 65:17; 66:33 and also in the NT book of the Revelation.

▣ **“Before they spring forth I proclaim *them* to you”** This also goes back to 40:18-26, where YHWH asks the idols to make a prediction to show their reality and they could not, but YHWH can!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:10-13**

- <sup>10</sup>Sing to the LORD a new song,  
*Sing His praise from the end of the earth!*  
 You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it.  
 You islands, and those who dwell on them.
- <sup>11</sup>Let the wilderness and its cities lift up *their voices*,  
 The settlements where Kedar inhabits.  
 Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud,  
 Let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains.
- <sup>12</sup>Let them give glory to the LORD

**And declare His praise in the coastlands.**

**<sup>13</sup>The LORD will go forth like a warrior,  
He will arouse *His* zeal like a man of war.  
He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry.  
He will prevail against His enemies.**

**42:10-13** These verses parallel the universal emphasis of the “Coastlands” of 41:1. The Gentiles eagerly wait for light (i.e., 2:2-4; 40:4,5,6; 49:6).

For those who seek light, YHWH is a refuge and help (vv. 6-7), but for those who cling to idols He is a warrior (v. 13)!

▣ There are several commands in these verses.

1. “sing” – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 10
2. “lift up *their voices*” – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 11
3. “sing aloud” – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 11
4. “shout for joy” – BDB 846, KB 1011, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 11
5. “give glory” – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 12
6. “declare” – BDB 619, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, v. 12

**42:10** The last two lines of v. 10 refer to the same group as “coastlands” of 41:1 (cf. 42:12b).

1. you who go down to the sea
2. you islands

**42:11 “Kedar”** This (BDB 871) possibly refers to the Arab nations. The Hebrew root can refer to

1. nomadic Arabian tribes – Isa. 21:16; 42:11; 60:7; Jer. 2:10; 49:28; Ezek. 27:21
2. ancestors of Ishmael – Gen. 25:13; I Chr. 1:29

▣ **“Sela”** This means “Rock” (BDB 709). This possibly refers to Petra, the capital of Edom (BDB 701, cf. 16:1).

▣ **“sing aloud. . . shout for joy”** What are they rejoicing about? The glory of YHWH has come to them (v. 12a). The light has come to the nations (v. 6d). That light is the covenant people and their knowledge of YHWH!

**42:13** This describes in military terms the Lord’s attack against the idolatrous nations that oppose His will and His people’s return.

1. He will go forth like a warrior
2. He will arouse His zeal like a man of war
3. He will utter a shout
4. He will raise a war cry
5. He will prevail against His enemies (i.e., idolaters, cf. v. 17)

The term “zeal” (BDB 888) is also used in 9:7; 26:11; 37:32; 59:17 to show YHWH’s purposeful actions that assure victory!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:14-17**

**<sup>14</sup>“I have kept silent for a long time,  
I have kept still and restrained Myself.**

**Now like a woman in labor I will groan,  
 I will both gasp and pant.  
<sup>15</sup>I will lay waste the mountains and hills  
 And wither all their vegetation;  
 I will make the rivers into coastlands  
 And dry up the ponds.  
<sup>16</sup>I will lead the blind by a way they do not know,  
 In paths they do not know I will guide them.  
 I will make darkness into light before them  
 And rugged places into plains.  
 These are the things I will do,  
 And I will not leave them undone.”  
<sup>17</sup>They will be turned back *and* be utterly put to shame,  
 Who trust in idols,  
 Who say to molten images,  
 “You are our gods.”**

**42:14** This possibly refers to the exilic period. YHWH endured the exile of His covenant people with deep emotions.

1. I have kept silent for a long time
2. I have kept still and restrained Myself
3. I waited in anguish like a woman in labor
  - a. a groan (BDB 821, KB 949)
  - b. a gasp (BDB 983, KB 1375)
  - c. a pant (BDB 675, KB 730)

**42:15-16** YHWH describes His aid for the returning covenant people.

1. v. 15 is metaphorical of preparing a smooth and level highway for the return (also v. 16d)
2. v. 16a-c describes His care for the returnees
3. v. 16e-f describes YHWH’s sure commitment to act (two *Qal* PERFECTS)

**42:17** This continues YHWH’s rejection and condemnation of idolatry (i.e., 1:28-31; 44:9-11; 45:16).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:18-22**

<sup>18</sup>**Hear, you deaf!  
 And look, you blind, that you may see.  
<sup>19</sup>Who is blind but My servant,  
 Or so deaf as My messenger whom I send?  
 Who is so blind as he that is at peace *with Me*,  
 Or so blind as the servant of the LORD?  
<sup>20</sup>You have seen many things, but you do not observe *them*;  
 Your ears are open, but none hears.  
<sup>21</sup>The LORD was pleased for His righteousness’ sake  
 To make the law great and glorious.  
<sup>22</sup>But this is a people plundered and despoiled;  
 All of them are trapped in caves,  
 Or are hidden away in prisons;**

**They have become a prey with none to deliver *them*,  
And a spoil, with none to say, “Give *them* back!”**

**42:18-22** This strophe describes the covenant people. The shock is that they too had become idolaters! Yet they were even more responsible for their spiritual condition because they had

1. the Patriarchs
2. the covenants
3. the promises (cf. Rom. 9:4-5)

The ones who were to bring light to the nations in darkness had themselves become darkness! They epitomized the curse of Isa. 6:9-10, but there was hope in Isa. 35:5!

**42:18** Note the two IMPERATIVES

1. hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. look – BDB 613, KB 661, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

▣ **“deaf. . . blind”** These words occur several times in this context and are an allusion to Isa. 6:9-10.

**42:19** Notice the parallel between the titles (1) “My Servant,” line 1; (2) “My messenger,” line 2; and (3) “the servant of the Lord” in line 4. Also notice the threefold repetition of “blind” (BDB 734). The irony is that the “blind” one is described as

- NASB “he that is at peace with Me”
- NKJV “*he who is perfect*”
- NRSV “my dedicated one”
- JPSOA “the chosen one”
- REB “the one who has trust”

The Hebrew word מַשְׁלָם (BDB 1023) is uncertain. There have been several theories. It seems to

1. be parallel to the other titles for Israel (see above)
2. a title that showed how far Israel was from her calling and true self

**42:20** There is an obvious parallelism between the two parts of line 1 (related to sight) and line 2 (related to hearing).

The first pair is one which the MT compilers identified as a variant.

1. the MT had “to see,” *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE (*qere*)
2. the Jewish scholars suggested “you have seen,” *Qal* PERFECT (*ketiv*, also in Dead Sea Scrolls)

**42:21** The problem with Israel was not God’s law but Israel’s inability to do it! The Fall affected all humans (cf. v. 22; i.e., Ezek. 36:22-38). Israel’s sin had consequences! The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 was meant to answer this human inability (cf. vv. 23-25)



**NASB, NJB “in caves”**

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**JPSOA “in holes”**

The MT has “young men” (BDB 104), but the context implies a similar form “in holes” (BDB 359).

1. בַּחֲוָרִים – young men
2. בַּהֲוָרִים – in holes

Context, context, context is crucial! Hebrew parallelism in poetry is crucial in interpretation!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:23-25**

<sup>23</sup>**Who among you will give ear to this?**

**Who will give heed and listen hereafter?**

<sup>24</sup>**Who gave Jacob up for spoil, and Israel to plunderers?**

**Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned,**

**And in whose ways they were not willing to walk,**

**And whose law they did not obey?**

<sup>25</sup>**So He poured out on him the heat of His anger**

**And the fierceness of battle;**

**And it set him aflame all around,**

**Yet he did not recognize *it*;**

**And it burned him, but he paid no attention.**

**42:24 “walk”** This is used in the Bible to show that biblical faith is a lifestyle commitment, not a theology alone. This is possibly a source of the early title of Christianity in Acts, “the Way” (cf. 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; and John 14:6).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Israel and Judah need this message so badly? (cf. 40:27)
2. Why is God’s power stressed?
3. Does the title “My Servant” refer to the Jews or to the Messiah?
4. Why are the numerous references to the Gentiles’ inclusion so significant in this passage?
5. Why did God choose the Jews?

# ISAIAH 43

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel Redeemed	The Redeemer of Israel	Israel, the Blind and Dead (42:18-43:7)	God's Promise to Rescue His People	God, Israel's Protector and Liberator
43:1-7 (1-7)	43:1-7 (1-7)	43:1-7 (1-7)	43:1-5a (1-5a)  43:5b-7 (5b-7)	43:1-7 (1-7)
Israel is God's Witness		The Servant Israel Is the LORD'S Witness	Israel is the LORD'S Witness	Yahweh Alone Is God
43:8-13 (8-13)	43:8-13 (8-13)	43:8-13 (8-13)	43:8-9 (8-9)  43:10 (10)  43:11-13 (11-13)	43:8-12a (8-12a)   43:12b-13 (12b-13)
Babylon to Be Destroyed		The Redemption and Restoration of Israel (43:14-44:5)	Escape From Babylon	Against Babylon
43:14-21 (14-21)	43:14-15 (14-15)	43:14-21 (14-21)	43:14-15 (14-15)	43:14-15 (14-15)
	43:16-21 (16-21)		43:16-17 (16-17)  43:18-21 (18-21)	Miracles Of The New Exodus  43:16-21 (16-21)
The Shortcomings of Israel	Pleading With Unfaithful Israel		Israel's Sin	Israel's Ingratitude
43:22-24 (22-24)	43:22-24 (22-24)	43:22-24 (22-24)	43:22-25 (22-25)	43:22-28 (22-28)
43:25-28 (25-28)	43:25-28 (25-28)	43:25-28 (25-28)	43:26-28 (26-28)	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Israel's unique position as YHWH's covenant people is clearly revealed in vv. 1-7.
  1. He formed them, vv. 1,7
  2. He redeemed them, v. 1
  3. He called them by His name, vv. 1,7
  4. He protected them, v. 2
  5. He is their covenant God, v. 3
  6. They are precious in His sight, v. 4
  7. He honored them, v. 4
  8. He loved them, v. 4
  9. He is with them, v. 5
- B. YHWH wants to use them to reveal Himself to the nations, vv. 8-10 (esp. v. 10c).
- C. Verses 10d-f - 13 are a theological affirmation of YHWH's uniqueness. See Special Topic: Monotheism at 40:14.
- D. YHWH will bring His people back from exile (vv. 5-6,14,16,19-20)
  1. through Cyrus II
  2. ultimately through the Messiah
- E. YHWH will redeem Israel even though they do not deserve it (cf. vv. 22-24).
- F. YHWH as Israel's redeemer is the focus of this chapter (cf. vv. 1,3,11,14,25-26). YHWH acts because of who He is and for His purposes. Israel is a precious tool in the hand of God for universal redemption.
- G. Names for God used in chapter 43 (see Special Topic: Names for Deity at 40:3)
  1. **"the LORD"** (vv. 1,3,11,14) YHWH – The covenant name for God (cf. Exod. 3:14), "I Am," is from the Hebrew VERB "to be."
  2. **"God"** (v. 3; *"El* in v. 13) *Elohim* – This is a PLURAL word. The rabbis say YHWH is God's name for mercy, while *Elohim* deals with the world in general (i.e., creator, sustainer). These two names for God are the most common in the OT.
  3. **"The Holy One of Israel"** (vv. 3,15) – This title expresses God's purity and transcendence (see Introduction, V, C and note at 40:25).



4. **“Savior”** (vv. 3,11,12) *Yasha* – This is from the same root as Joshua and Jesus. The basic meaning is “to be wide” or “spacious” (cf. 19:20; 45:15,21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8).
5. **“Redeemer”** (v. 14) – This is from the same root as *Go’el*, the kinsman redeemer or avenger (cf. Ruth 4:4,6). This term depicts God as our near kinsman (cf. 41:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16). It is another example of God’s personal relationship with us. Other examples are God as parent or husband.
6. **“The Creator”** (v. 15) – YHWH the creator (cf. 40:28) is also the special covenant God of Israel. This (the VERB *bara*, cf. v. 1) is a common theme (cf. Isaiah 40-66).
7. **“King”** (v. 15) – God is the true King of Israel. The earthly king is merely His representative (cf. I Samuel 8).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:1-7

<sup>1</sup>But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob,  
 And He who formed you, O Israel,  
 “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
 I have called you by name; you are Mine!  
<sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
 And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.  
 When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,  
 Nor will the flame burn you.  
<sup>3</sup>For I am the LORD your God,  
 The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;  
 I have given Egypt as your ransom,  
 Cush and Seba in your place.  
<sup>4</sup>Since you are precious in My sight,  
*Since* you are honored and I love you,  
 I will give *other* men in your place and *other* peoples in exchange for your life.  
<sup>5</sup>Do not fear, for I am with you;  
 I will bring your offspring from the east,  
 And gather you from the west.  
<sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, ‘Give *them* up!’  
 And to the south, ‘Do not hold *them* back.’  
 Bring My sons from afar  
 And My daughters from the ends of the earth,  
<sup>7</sup>Everyone who is called by My name,  
 And whom I have created for My glory,  
 Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”

**43:1 “LORD”** This is from the word YHWH. In Exod. 3:14 it is translated “I Am.” This form is from the Hebrew VERB “to be.” See Special Topic at 40:1.

▣ **“your creator”** This is a *Qal* PARTICIPLE (BDB 135, KB 153). This is a common theme throughout the Servant Songs. Here it refers to the establishment of the nation (cf. Genesis 12,15,22).

The second line of chapter 43 has the parallel VERB “formed” (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. v. 21; 44:2,21,24). YHWH was not only the Creator of the physical realm but also the covenant people (cf. Genesis 12,15,18,22).

▣ **“O Jacob. . .O Israel”** These two VOCATIVES both refer to the collective covenant people, the seed of Abraham.

▣ **“Do not fear”** This is a command (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense). So often this is God’s word for His people, especially after the exile and destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (cf. 40:9; 41:10,13,14; 44:2; 54:4).

▣ **“redeemed”** See Special Topic at 41:14.

▣ **“I have called you by name”** This (both “redeemed” and “called” are *Qal* PERFECTS) refers to God’s choice of Israel (cf. 7; 45:3-4). This was a special calling through Abraham (cf. Genesis 12,15,18,22).

▣ **“you are Mine”** See v. 21 and Exod. 19:5-6. Israel was uniquely YHWH’s people.

**43:2 “the waters. . .the fire. . .the flame”** This is such a wonderful text! These are used as metaphors of problems, fears, and foes!

▣ **“will be with you”** This is God’s greatest promise (i.e., His personal presence, cf. v. 5; Deut. 31:6,18; Ps. 23:4; Matt. 28:20).

▣ **“Nor will the flame burn you”** For one example see Daniel 3.

**43:3 “Savior”** This root’s basic meaning can be translated “to be wide” (BDB 446, KB 448). The names Joshua and Jesus are based on this root.

▣ **“ransom”** This speaks of the high cost of redemption (see Special Topic at 41:14). The object of this verse seems to be Cyrus II’s conquests.

**43:4** There is an apparent parallel between

1. v. 3 – a ransom involving Egypt, Cush, and Seba instead of Israel
2. v. 4 – a ransom involving
  - a. other men
  - b. other peoples

The UBS Text Project (p. 111) gives another option (i.e., Assyria. . .Edom), which is found in the REB. This change is possible without a change of consonants. However, the UBS Text Project rates option #1 as A (very high probability).

Verses 3 and 4 are a literary way of showing YHWH’s great love for Israel and His willingness for Cyrus’ military victories to assure Israel’s return to Palestine.

**43: 5-7** This reflects the return from Babylonian exile allowed by Cyrus II’s decree.

**43:7 “called. . .created. . .formed. . .made”** God had a purpose for Israel (cf. v. 10; Gen. 12:1-3; Exod. 19:5-6). See Special Topic at 40:15.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:8-13**

<sup>8</sup>**Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes,  
And the deaf, even though they have ears.**

<sup>9</sup>**All the nations have gathered together**

So that the peoples may be assembled.  
 Who among them can declare this  
 And proclaim to us the former things?  
 Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified,  
 Or let them hear and say, "It is true.

<sup>10</sup>You are My witnesses," declares the LORD,  
 "And My servant whom I have chosen,  
 So that you may know and believe Me  
 And understand that I am He.  
 Before Me there was no God formed,  
 And there will be none after Me.

<sup>11</sup>I, even I, am the LORD,  
 And there is no savior besides Me.

<sup>12</sup>It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed,  
 And there was no strange *god* among you;  
 So you are My witnesses," declares the LORD,  
 "And I am God.

<sup>13</sup>Even from eternity I am He,  
 And there is none who can deliver out of My hand;  
 I act and who can reverse it?"

**43:8 "the people who are blind"** This was because of their continuing unbelief and covenant disobedience (cf. 6:9-10 and 42:18-22).

**43:9** There is a series of *Qal* IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES (cf. NRSV and NJB, "let. . .").

1. let them bring their witness (BDB 678, KB 733)
2. let them justify themselves (BDB 842, KB 1003)
3. let them hear (BDB 1033, KB 1570)
4. let them say (BDB 55, KB 65)

The nations, like the idols of chapter 40, do not know the future. Only YHWH holds time and history in His hand. He will use Israel to reveal Himself and ultimately He will use the Messiah, His special Servant.

**43:10-13** Notice the many ways YHWH's uniqueness, power, and eternity are expressed.

1. He wants humans, made in His image, to
  - a. know (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
  - b. believe (BDB 52, KB 63, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT)
  - c. understand (BDB 106, KB 122, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
2. He is the only God
  - a. I am He, vv. 10,11,12,13
  - b. before Me there was no God formed, v. 10
  - c. after Me no God formed, v. 10
  - d. no savior beside Me, v. 11
3. His acts (all *Hiphil* PERFECTS)
  - a. He has spoken (BDB 616, KB 665)
  - b. He has saved (BDB 446, KB 448)
  - c. He has proclaimed (BDB 1033, KB 1570)
4. He is from eternity, v. 13a

5. His power, v. 13b,c

These truths are what the nations need to know and affirm, v. 9.

**43:10 “You are My witnesses”** This is metaphorical for a court scene (cf. v. 12; :18; 41:21; 44:8; Rom. 8:31-38), where all the nations are gathered (cf. v. 9).

▣ **“Before Me there was no God”** This refers to monotheism (cf. vv. 10-13, see Special Topic at 40:14). This is reflected in Exod. 20:5.

**43:13 “eternity”** This follows the Septuagint. The MT has “from the day.”

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:14-21**

<sup>14</sup>**Thus says the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,**

**“For your sake I have sent to Babylon,  
And will bring them all down as fugitives,  
Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice.**

<sup>15</sup>**I am the LORD, your Holy One,  
The Creator of Israel, your King.”**

<sup>16</sup>**Thus says the LORD,**

**Who makes a way through the sea  
And a path through the mighty waters,**

<sup>17</sup>**Who brings forth the chariot and the horse,  
The army and the mighty man  
(They will lie down together *and* not rise again;  
They have been quenched *and* extinguished like a wick):**

<sup>18</sup>**“Do not call to mind the former things,  
Or ponder things of the past.**

<sup>19</sup>**Behold, I will do something new,  
Now it will spring forth;  
Will you not be aware of it?  
I will even make a roadway in the wilderness,  
Rivers in the desert.**

<sup>20</sup>**The beasts of the field will glorify Me,  
The jackals and the ostriches,  
Because I have given waters in the wilderness  
And rivers in the desert,  
To give drink to My chosen people.**

<sup>21</sup>**The people whom I formed for Myself  
Will declare My praise.”**

**43:14 “will bring them all down as fugitives”** This refers to the fall of Babylon by Cyrus II. It was not Cyrus’ power that defeated Neo-Babylon but YHWH’s power and purpose (i.e., “for your sake”).

There is a possible revocalization of the Hebrew consonants.

1. “fugitives” (NASB, NKJV, NET Bible)
2. “bars” (JPSOA, NRSV, NJB, TEV)

▣ **“the Chaldeans”** Herodotus (450 B.C.), *Hist.* I, uses this term to refer to an ethnic group (cf. II Kgs. 24:1-4; Dan. 5:30) as well as a priestly class (cf. Dan. 2:2; 3:8; 4:7; 5:7,11) whose usage goes back to Cyrus II. Even before this time period Assyrian records used the term (BDB 505) in an ethnic sense (cf. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 1113). Also read the good discussion of the possibility of a confusion of two similar terms (i.e., *Kal-du* vs. *Kasdu*) in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 14-15 or Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel*, series 1.

Because Gen. 11:28 states that Ur of the Chaldeans was the home of Terah and his family, Chaldeans may have been ethnically Semitic (i.e., same racial group as the Hebrews).

▣ There is another possible revocalization of the Hebrew consonants.

1. into the ships (NASB, NKJV)
2. in lamentation (JPSOA, NRSV, NJB, TEV, REB, NET Bible)
3. the LXX has “bound in ships”

It is possible that v. 14 should be taken as Babylonian people thinking they could escape the Persian army by floating down river (i.e., Euphrates) in their ships.

**43:15 “your King”** This is possible linked to II Samuel 7.

**43:16** This uses (1) the Exodus from Egypt (cf. v. 17; Exodus 14-15) as an example for the return from Babylon or (2) YHWH’s control of the waters of chaos.

**43:19 “I will even make a roadway in the wilderness”** This is a very common biblical theme (cf. 40:1-4).

▣ **“rivers”** The Dead Sea Scrolls have “paths” (REB).

**43:20** Instead of curses (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29) the beasts became tame. Nature blooms and produces in light of YHWH’s presence and blessings.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:22-24**

- <sup>22</sup>“Yet you have not called on Me, O Jacob;  
But you have become weary of Me, O Israel.  
<sup>23</sup>You have not brought to Me the sheep of your burnt offerings,  
Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices.  
I have not burdened you with offerings,  
Nor wearied you with incense.  
<sup>24</sup>You have bought Me not sweet cane with money,  
Nor have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices;  
Rather you have burdened Me with your sins,  
You have wearied Me with your iniquities.

**43:22-24** This is not a condemnation of sacrifice in general but of false motives (cf. Jeremiah 7). The VERBS are all PERFECTS which show a settled attitude of rebellion.

**43:24 “sweet cane”** This refers to holy anointing oil (cf. Exod. 30:23; Jer. 6:20).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:25-28

<sup>25</sup>“I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake,  
And I will not remember your sins.

<sup>26</sup>Put Me in remembrance, let us argue our case together;  
State your *cause*, that you may be proved right.

<sup>27</sup>Your first forefather sinned,  
And your spokesmen have transgressed against Me.

<sup>28</sup>So I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary,  
And I will consign Jacob to the ban and Israel to revilement.

**43:25** “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake” God’s forgiveness is an act of pure grace, not merit (cf. 37:35; 48:9,11; Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ **“I will not remember your sins”** When God forgives, God forgets (cf. 1:18; 38:17; 44:22; Ps. 103:12; Micah 7:19). What a needed truth in light of Satan’s continuing condemnations! Oh the mercy and grace of God!

### SPECIAL TOPIC: WORDS FOR FORGIVENESS

Here are most of the Hebrew words or idioms that express divine forgiveness of human sin and rebellion.

1. “forgive,” “pardon,” סלח – BDB 699, KB 757, i.e., Exod. 34:9; Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; 19:22; Num. 14:20; 15:25-28; 30:5,8,12; I Kgs. 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50; Ps. 25:11; 103:3; Isa. 55:7; Dan. 9:19; Amos 7:2 (this term is always used of God, never of humans)
2. “wipe away,” “blot out,” נשׂא (very common VERB with many meanings) – BDB 669, KB 724, i.e., Exod. 23:21; 32:32; 34:7; Num. 14:18; Josh. 24:19; Ps. 25:18; 32:1,5; 85:2; 99:8; Micah 7:18
3. “cover,” “atone,” כפר – BDB 497, KB 493, i.e., very common in Leviticus; Ps. 65:3; 78:38; 79:9; Isa. 6:7; 22:14; Jer. 18:23; Ezek. 16:63; Dan. 9:24
4. “blot out,” “wipe out,” מחה – BDB 562, KB 567, i.e., Neh. 4:5; Ps. 51:1,9; Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 18:23
5. “heal,” רפא – BDB 950, KB 1272, i.e., II Chr. 7:14; Ps. 41:4; 103:3; Isa. 6:10; 57:18; Jer. 3:22; 17:14; 30:17; Hosea 5:13; 14:4
6. “passing over,” עבר – BDB 716, KB 778, i.e., Pro. 19:11; Amos 7:8; 8:2; Micah 7:18
7. “wash,” כבש – BDB 460, KB 459, i.e., Ps. 51:2,7; Jer. 2:22; 4:14
8. “cleanse,” טהר – BDB 372, KB 369, i.e., Lev. 16:30; Ps. 51:7; Pro. 20:9; Ezek. 24:13; 36:25
9. “cast behind the back,” שלך – BDB 1020, KB 1527, i.e., Isa. 38:17; Micah 7:19
10. “purge,” חטא – BDB 306, KB 305, i.e., Ps. 51:7 (this connotation of divine cleansing of this common VERB, is only found here)
11. “hide Your face from,” סתר – BDB 711, KB 771, i.e., Ps. 51:9
12. “remember” (neg.), אכר – BDB 269, KB 269, i.e., Isa. 43:25
13. “tread on” (lit. “subdue”), כבש – BDB 461, KB 460, i.e., Micah 7:19

**43:26 “let us argue our case together”** This reflects a legal metaphor of a court room (cf. 1:18; 41:21; Rom. 8:31-38). This verse has a series of commands by the judge.

1. put Me in remembrance – BDB 269, KB 269, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. let us argue our case together – BDB 1047, KB 1627, *Niphal* COHORTATIVE
3. state your case – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

**43:27 “Your first forefathers sinned”** Literally it is “father.” It could refer to Adam or Jacob or any Jewish ancestor. It shows that God’s love is undeserved. The OT does not dwell on the origin of sin, but acknowledges its presence and pervasiveness. Some rabbis, like Paul, emphasize Genesis 3, but others emphasize Genesis 6.

▣ **“spokesmen”** This is a reference to either

1. the prophets
2. the priests
3. the politicians

**43:28 “I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary”** The VERB “pollute” (BDB 320 III, KB 319, *Piel* IMPERFECT) equals “pierce through” (BDB 318, cf. II Kgs. 25:18-27). The NEB and REB slightly change the Hebrew consonants to “your princes profaned my sanctuary,” which follows the LXX.

It is uncertain whether the two VERBS of v. 28 refer to the past or the future. The Hebrew text links verses 27 and 28. Verse 28 obviously refers to the past. Most of chapter 43 deals with YHWH’s current deliverance of Israel from exile. Hebrew TENSES do not give time, just action; time must be ascertained from the context.

▣ **“the ban”** This is from the word *herem* (BDB 356). Something was “holy,” so unusable by fallen humanity, therefore, it must be destroyed. An example would be Jericho (cf. Joshua 6).

# ISAIAH 44:1-23

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Blessings of Israel	God's Blessing of Israel	Jeshurun	The LORD Is the Only God	The Blessing In Store For Israel
44:1-5 (2-5)	44:1-5 (2-5)	44:1-5 (1-5)	44:1-5 (1-5)	44:1-5 (1-5)
	There Is No Other God	God's Uniqueness		There Is Only One God
44:6-8 (6-8)	44:6-8 (6-8)	44:6-8 (6-8)	44:6-8 (6-8)	44:6-8 (6-8)
The Folly of Idolatry	Idolatry Is Foolishness	Satire Against Idolatry	Idolatry Is Ridiculed	The Fatuity of Idols
44:9-17	44:9-11 (9-11)	44:9-11	44:9-11	44:9-11
	44:12 (12)	44:12-17	44:12	44:12
	44:13-14 (13-14)		44:13-17	44:13-17
	44:15-17 (15-17)			
44:18-20	44:18-20 (18-20)	44:18-20	44:18-19	44:18-19
			44:20	44:20
God Forgives and Redeems	Israel Is Not Forgotten	Israel Is Forgiven and Redeemed	The LORD, the Creator and Savior	Loyalty to Yahweh
44:21-23 (21-23)	44:21-22 (21-22)	44:21-22 (21-22)	44:21-22 (21-22)	44:21-23 (21-13)
	44:23 (23)	44:23 (23)	44:23 (23)	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph



3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:1-5

<sup>1</sup>“But now listen, O Jacob, My servant,  
And Israel, whom I have chosen:

<sup>2</sup>Thus says the LORD who made you  
And formed you from the womb, who will help you,  
‘Do not fear, O Jacob My servant;  
And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

<sup>3</sup>For I will pour out water on the thirsty *land*  
And streams on the dry ground;  
I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring  
And My blessing on your descendants;

<sup>4</sup>And they will spring up among the grass  
Like poplars by streams of water.’

<sup>5</sup>This one will say, ‘I am the LORD’s’;  
And that one will call on the name of Jacob;  
And another will write *on* his hand, ‘Belonging to the LORD,’  
And will name Israel’s name with honor.”

**44:1 “listen”** This is an IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570) which characterizes many oracles in Isaiah (cf. 1:2,10; 6:8,9,10; 7:13; 28:14; 32:9; 33:13; 34:1; 36:13; 39:5; 42:18; 46:3,12; 47:8; 48:1,12,14, 16; 51:1,7,21; 55:2,3; 59:1; 66:5).

This word means “to hear so as to perform.” It became the name (the *Shema*) of the famous Jewish prayer in Deut. 6:4-5.

▣ **“O Jacob, My servant”** Notice the parallelism between lines 1 and 2. YHWH is addressing corporate Israel.

▣ **“whom I have chosen”** YHWH

1. chose Israel, vv. 1,2
2. made Israel, v. 2
3. formed Israel, v. 2
4. helped Israel, v. 2

**44:2** Notice the parallelism between lines 1 and 2.

1. “made you” – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, line 1
2. “formed you” – BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, line 2

There are several Hebrew words used to describe YHWH’s creative acts.

▣ **“Do not fear”** This phrase (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is used often in chapters 40-66 (cf. 40:9; 41:10,13,14; 43:1,5; 44:2; 51:7; 54:4,14; 57:11). They were not to fear because

1. they were God’s people

2. He was with them
3. their punishment was over
4. He would provide all they needed

▣ **“Jeshurun”** This (BDB 449) was a rare title for Israel meaning “the upright one” (cf. Deut. 32:15; 33:5,26). It is parallel to “O Jacob My servant.”

▣ **“I will pour”** This VERB (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is often used in connection with anointings or sacrifices. In this verse it is repeated twice.

1. once for the miraculous water of abundance
2. once for the Spirit (cf. [1] 32:15, different word [BDB 788]; [2] Joel 2:28, different word [BDB 1049])

YHWH is the source of blessings and for desert people water was the symbol of life and abundance (cf. v. 4).

▣ **“on your offspring”** Blessings, like curses, moved through families (cf. Deut. 5:9-10; 7:9). These future generations will know who they are in YHWH and rejoice in it (v. 5).

**44:5** The textual question is to whom this verse refers.

1. proud descendants of Abraham
2. foreigners who claim and extol Israel’s God (cf. 56:3-6)

The VERB “call” (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is translated

1. PASSIVE in the Aramaic Targums, “shall be called”
2. REFLEXIVE (*Niphal*) in the LXX and the Peshitta, “shall call himself”
3. ACTIVE in the Hebrew, “shall call on” (i.e., act of worship)

It seems to me from the context of the parallelism of lines 2 and 3 that it is talking about foreigners. If so, then this is one of those texts that assures non-Jews of access to the one true God! Not only is the servant a light to the nations, but a savior of the nations! Genesis 3:15 is fulfilled, as well as 12:3!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:6-8**

**<sup>6</sup>Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:**

**“I am the first and I am the last,  
And there is no God besides Me.**

**<sup>7</sup>Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it;**

**Yes, let him recount it to Me in order,**

**From the time that I established the ancient nation.**

**And let them declare to them the things that are coming**

**And the events that are going to take place.**

**<sup>8</sup>Do not tremble and do not be afraid;**

**Have I not long since announced *it* to you and declared *it*?**

**And you are My witnesses.**

**Is there any God besides Me,**

**Or is there any *other* Rock?**

**I know of none.”**

**44:6** Notice the titles for God in this context (similar to 43:3,15).

1. the LORD (YHWH)
2. the King of Israel

3. Redeemer (BDB 145 I, cf. 41:14)
4. the LORD of hosts
5. I am the first and I am the last (cf. 41:4; 43:10; 48:12; Rev. 1:8,17; 22:13)
6. God (*Elohim*)
7. Rock, v. 8 (cf. 17:10; 26:4; 30:29; Ps. 18:2)

See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 40:3.

These titles emphasize the uniqueness, eternality, faithfulness, and power of Israel's God.

▣ **“there is no God besides Me”** This is an affirmation of uniqueness and monotheism. See Special Topic at 40:14. This is a recurrent theme in Isaiah.

**44:7 “Let him proclaim and declare it”** This is an allusion to the court scene again. YHWH is challenging the idols to prove their existence and power but they cannot (cf. Isa. 41:21-24; 43:8-9). They cannot predict the future.

Notice the number of commands addressed to the false gods (idols of the nations).

1. proclaim – BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. declare – BDB 616, KB 615, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. recount – BDB 789, KB 884, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. declare – same as #2

**44:8** In light of the impotence of the false gods of the nations, Israel is not to

1. tremble – BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. fear – BDB 923 (רָהַר), KB 437 (יִרָה), *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (different root from v. 2)

▣ **“you are My witnesses”** YHWH had a specific revelatory purpose for His servants/servant.

▣ **“I know of none”** YHWH answers His own question. The VERB is *Qal* PERFECT; there is no other god or gods, only Him (see Special Topic at 40:14).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:9-11**

<sup>9</sup>Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame. <sup>10</sup>Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit? <sup>11</sup>Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame.

**44:9-20** This is a prose section dealing with the folly of idolatry (cf. Jer. 10:2-16).

**44:9**

**NASB** “futile”  
**NKJV** “useless”  
**NRSV** “nothing”  
**TEV** “worthless”  
**NJB** “nothingness”

This is the Hebrew word (BDB 1062) translated “formless” in Gen. 1:2; “desolation” in Isa. 34:11; and “emptiness” in 41:29. Here it denotes unreality.

**44:11** There is a series of IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES describing the idol maker and worshiper.

1. let them assemble – BDB 867, KB 1062, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. let them stand up – BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. let them tremble – BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. let them be put to shame – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:12-17**

<sup>12</sup>The man shapes iron into a cutting tool and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary. <sup>13</sup>Another shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit in a house. <sup>14</sup>Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and raises *it* for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow. <sup>15</sup>Then it becomes *something* for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it. <sup>16</sup>Half of it he burns in the fire; over *this* half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, “Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire.” <sup>17</sup>But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god.”

**44:14-20** This shows the folly of idolatry (cf. Jer. 10:2-16).

1. plants a tree
2. cut it for
  - a. warmth
  - b. cooking food
  - c. making a god
3. falls down in worship before a helpless god, the remainder of a cut log. He asks the log to help him, save him!
4. the maker forgets all this preparation because he has deceived himself (v. 20)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:18-20**

<sup>18</sup>They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend. <sup>19</sup>No one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, “I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat *it*. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!” <sup>20</sup>He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?”

**44:18** Is the unbelief and superstition a result of

1. the Fall
2. YHWH's hand?

The OT relates all causality to God (i.e., Pharaoh, also note 6:9-10; 29:10), but still humans are responsible for their acts. This is the mystery of God's sovereignty and humanity's free will (i.e., necessary human acts for God's forgiveness, cf. 55:7). Maybe Ps. 81:12 sums it up best (cf. Rom. 1:24,26,28).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE**

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Ephesians 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths:

1. Predestination vs. human free will
2. Security of the believer vs. the need for perseverance
3. Original sin vs. volitional sin
4. Sinlessness (perfectionism) vs. sinning less
5. Initial instantaneous justification and sanctification vs. progressive sanctification
6. Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility
7. God's transcendence vs. God's immanence
8. God as ultimately unknowable vs. God as knowable in Scripture
9. The Kingdom of God as present vs. future consummation
10. Repentance as a gift of God vs. repentance as a necessary human covenantal response
11. Jesus as divine vs. Jesus as human
12. Jesus is equal to the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

**44:19 "an abomination"** See Special Topic: Abomination at 41:24.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:21-23**

<sup>21</sup>**"Remember these things, O Jacob,  
And Israel, for you are My servant;  
I have formed you, you are My servant,  
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.**

<sup>22</sup>**I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud  
And your sins like a heavy mist.  
Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."**

<sup>23</sup>**Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done *it*!  
Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth;  
Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains,**

**O forest, and every tree in it;  
For the LORD has redeemed Jacob  
And in Israel He shows forth His glory.**

**44:21-23** In light of the false witness of idolatry, the true witness of YHWH's people is crucial! They are commanded to

1. remember, v. 21 – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. return, v. 22 – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

YHWH's creation is also to witness

1. shout for joy, O heavens, v. 23 – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. shout joyfully O depths of the earth, v. 23 – BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. break forth with a shout of joy you mountains and forests, v. 23 – BDB 822 KB 953, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

It is ironic that the idol makers burn and form the trees, but the trees rejoice over YHWH's redemption and Israel's witness to His glory.

**44:21**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV “you will not be forgotten by Me”**

**REB, LXX,**

**Peshitta,**

**JPSOA “never forget me”**

The difference is in vocalization only. The UBS Text Project gives option #1 (NASB) a “C” rating (considerable doubt).

**44:22** This is another tremendous promise of complete forgiveness. The VERB “wipe out” (BDB 562, KB 567, *Qal* PERFECT) is also used in 43:25; Ps. 51:3,11. When God forgives, God forgets (cf. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19).

The bases for this complete blotting out of our transgressions are

1. YHWH's redemption
2. a believer's repentance

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

This concept is crucial but difficult to define. Most of us have a definition which comes from our denominational affiliation. However, usually a “set” theological definition is imposed on several Hebrew (and Greek) words which do not specifically imply this “set” definition. It must be remembered that NT authors (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers using Koine Greek terms, so the place to start is the Hebrew terms themselves, of which there are primarily two.

1. *nhm* ( BDB 636, KB 688)
2. *swb* ( BDB 996, KB 1427)

The first, *nhm*, which originally seems to have meant to draw a deep breath, is used in several senses.

- a. “rest” or “comfort” (e.g., Gen. 5:29; 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 50:2; often used in names, cf. II Kgs. 15:14; I Chr. 4:19; Neh. 1:1; 7:7; Nahum 1:1)

- b. “grieved” (e.g., Gen. 6:6,7)
- c. “changed mind” (e.g., Exod. 13:17; 32:12,14; Num. 23:19)
- d. “compassion” (e.g., Deut. 32:36)

Notice that all of these involve deep emotion! Here is the key: deep feelings that lead to action. This change of action is often directed at other persons, but also toward God. It is this change of attitude and action toward God that infuses this term with such theological significance. But here care must be exercised. God is said to “repent” (cf. Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11,35; Ps. 106:45), but this does not result from sorrow over sin or error, but a literary way of showing God’s compassion and care (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:27-28; Ezek. 24:14). Due punishment for sin and rebellion is forgiven if the sinner truly turns away from his/her/their sin and turns to God.

This term has a wide semantical field. Context is crucial in determining its intended meaning.

The second term, *swb*, means “to turn” (turn from, turn back, turn to). If it is true that the two covenant requirements are “repentance” and “faith” (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:4,15; 2:17; Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3), then *nhm* refers to the intense feelings of recognizing one’s sin and turning from it, while *swb* would refer to the turning from sin to the turning to God (one example of these two spiritual actions is Amos 4:6-11, “you have not returned to Me” [five times] and Amos 5:4,6,14, “seek Me. . . seek the Lord. . . seek good and not evil”).

The first great example of the power of repentance is David’s sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Samuel 12; Psalm 32,51). There were continuing consequences for David, his family, and Israel, but David was restored to fellowship with God! Even wicked Manasseh can repent and be forgiven (cf. II Chr. 33:12-13).

Both of these terms are used in parallel in Ps. 90:13. There must be a recognition of sin and a purposeful, personal turning from it, as well as a desire to seek God and His righteousness (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). Repentance has a cognitive aspect, a personal aspect, and a moral aspect. All three are required, both to start a new relationship with God and to maintain the new relationship. The deep emotion of regret turns into an abiding devotion to God and for God!

#### 44:23

NASB, NKJV	“lower parts of the earth”
NRSV, JPSOA	“depths of the earth”
TEV	“deep places of the earth”
NJB	“underworld”
LXX, Peshitta	“foundations of the earth”

This apparently refers to *Sheol* (BDB 982).

#### SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

- I. Old Testament
  - A. All humans go to *Sheol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 982), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17).
  - B. *Sheol* characterized
    - 1. associated with God’s judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
    - 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5

3. associated with *abaddon* (destruction), in which God is also present, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
4. associated with “the Pit” (grave), Ps.16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
5. wicked descend alive into *Sheol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; Hab. 2:5
7. people there called *Repha'im* (i.e., “spirits of the dead”), Isa. 14:9-11)

## II. New Testament

A. The Hebrew *Sheol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)

B. *Hades* characterized

1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23

C. Possibly divided (rabbis)

1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Peter 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Genesis 6; I Enoch)

D. *Gehenna*

1. Reflects the OT phrase, “the valley of the sons of Hinnom,” (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574), was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.
2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH’s judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
3. The Jews of Jesus’ day were so appalled by their ancestors’ participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus’ metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
4. Jesus’ usage of *Gehenna*
  - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
  - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
  - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
  - d. paralleled to *Sheol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
  - e. characterizes the wicked as “son of hell,” Matt. 23:15
  - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
  - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *Sheol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude v. 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-11; 20:1,3).



- h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
- E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that
  - 1. originally all humans went to *Sheol/Hades*
  - 2. their experience there (good/bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell)).
  - 3. the only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *Sheol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.

### III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

- A. The NT does not teach the “immortality of the soul,” which is one of several ancient views of the afterlife.
  - 1. human souls exist before their physical life
  - 2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
  - 3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state
- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
  - 1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
  - 2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
  - 3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matthew 17
  - 4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, I Thess. 4:13-18
  - 5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
  - 6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

### IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible.
  - 1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
  - 2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
  - 3. the place of God’s throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)
- B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife, probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).
- C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again, I Corinthians 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:4

and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door*

# ISAIAH 44:24-45:25

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	Judah Will Be Restored	The Commission of Cyrus (44:24-45:13)		God, Creator of the World and LORD of History
44:24-28 (24-28)	44:24-28 (24-28)	44:24-28 (24-28)	44:24-28 (24-28)	44:24-28 (24-28)
God Uses Cyrus	Cyrus, God's Instrument	The Commission of Cyrus (44:24-45:13)	The LORD Appoints Cyrus	Cyrus, the Instrument of God
45:1-7 (1-7)	45:1-7 (1-7)	45:1-4 (1-4)	45:1-4 (1-4)	45:1-7 (1-7)
God's Supreme Power		45:5-7 (5-7)	45:5-8 (5-8)	Prayer
45:8 (8)	45:8 (8)	45:8 (8)		45:8 (8)
			The LORD of Creation and History	The Supreme Power of Yahweh
45:9-10 (9-10)	45:9-10 (9-10)	45:9-13	45:9-13 (9-13)	45:9-13 (9-13)
45:11-13 (11-13)	45:11-13 (11-3)			
	The LORD, the Only Savior	The Conversion of the Nations		The Conversion of the Nations
45:14-17 (14-17)	45:14 (14)	45:14-17 (14-17)	45:14-17 (14-17)	45:14-19 (14-19)
	45:15-17 (15-17)			
45:18-19 (19)	45:18-19 (18-19)	45:18-19 (18-19)	45:18-19 (18-19)	
			The LORD of the World and Idols of Babylon	God, LORD of the Whole Universe
45:20-25 (20-25)	45:20-21 (20-21)	45:20-21 (20-21)	45:20-21 (20-21)	45:20-25 (20-25)
	45:22-25 (22-25)	45:22-23 (22-23)	45:22-23 (22-23)	
		45:24-25 (24-25)	45:24-25 (24-25)	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ISAIAH 44:24-45:25**

- A. This is a very specific prophecy. Cyrus II, also known as Cyrus the Great, is mentioned by name in 44:28 and 45:1. For those who deny the possibility of predictive prophecy (it is the main evidence in 41:22-23; 44:7,26), this is the major impetus for the theory of multiple authorship of Isaiah. I believe that Isaiah is written by only one author and that God not only reveals the future of the Assyrian Empire, but also that of the Babylonians and the Persians through this 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. prophet.
- B. This particular reference to Cyrus has to do with his decree of 538 B.C. that allowed all of the exiled people to return to their native lands and rebuild their national temples with the help of the Persian treasury. For the specific reference to the Jewish return see Ezra 1:2-4; 6:3-5. Cyrus' primary motivation for this was for each of the nations to pray to their own god on his behalf and his successors (cf. Ezra 6:10; 7:23).
- C. I think that Isaiah 45:6 is extremely significant. It shows again not only the purpose of God choosing Israel, but also of God choosing Cyrus. God chose Abraham to choose the world and He chose Cyrus for the same purpose.
- D. Notice the number of times the different words for create are used.
  1. BDB 427, KB 428 – form, create, 44:24; 45:7,9 (twice), 18 (twice)
  2. BDB 793, KB 889 – do, make, 44:24; 45:7,9,11,18
  3. BDB 135, KB 153 – create, 45:7 (twice), 8,12,18 (twice)The theological emphases of this “new age” section are
  1. YHWH alone created everything
  2. YHWH formed Israel
  3. YHWH is alone and unique (monotheism)
  4. YHWH proves His existence by
    - a. predictive prophecy
    - b. Israel's existence

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:24-28

- <sup>24</sup>Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb,  
“I, the LORD, am the maker of all things,  
Stretching out the heavens by Myself  
And spreading out the earth all alone,  
<sup>25</sup>Causing the omens of boasters to fail,  
Making fools out of diviners,  
Causing wise men to draw back  
And turning their knowledge into foolishness,  
<sup>26</sup>Confirming the word of His servant  
And performing the purpose of His messengers.  
*It is I* who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited!’  
And of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built.’  
And I will raise up her ruins *again*.  
<sup>27</sup>*It is I* who says to the depth of the sea, ‘Be dried up!’  
And I will make your rivers dry.  
<sup>28</sup>*It is I* who says of Cyrus, ‘*He is My shepherd!*  
And he will perform all My desire.’  
And he declares of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’  
And of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid.’”

**44:24-28** This is one sentence in Hebrew. It is a series of relative clauses which are translated by the NIV as “who. . .” It is significant that this is a structured unit because the climax is found in the mention of Cyrus by name in v. 28. It is basically a unit dealing with “the God who can” versus the idols who cannot. YHWH announces beforehand what will occur to prove His existence and power (cf. 41:22-23; 44:7,26).

Notice the list of “who. . .” in NIV (i.e., *Qal* PARTICIPLES).

1. who formed you in the womb, v. 24
2. who has made all things, v. 24
3. who alone stretched out the heavens, v. 24
4. who spread out the earth by Myself, v. 24
5. who foils the signs of false prophets, v. 25
6. who overthrows the learning of the wise, v. 25
7. who carries out the words of his servants, v. 25
8. who says of Jerusalem, “it shall be inhabited,” v. 25
9. who says to the watery deep, “Be dry,” v. 27
10. who says of Cyrus, “He is my shepherd,” v. 28

**44:24 Redeemer** This is the term *Go’el*, which has the same definition as “ransom” with the added idea of a near kinsman as the agent. It is often a title for God; it is used in this personal sense to reveal God’s character. See Special Topic at 41:14 and notes at 43:14.

▣ **“the one who formed you from the womb”** This primarily refers to the formation of the nation of Israel (cf. v. 2). It is used uniquely of the Exodus experience. This concept of birthing also lends itself to the concept of the people of God as the children of God.

▣ **“I, the LORD, am. . .”** This is literally the phrase, “I am YHWH,” which is a key phrase in the OT. It is a play on the covenant name for God, from the VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). Its basic meaning is “I am the ever-existing, only-existing God.” See Special Topic at 40:3.

▣ **“maker of all things”** This is the emphasis of God as both Creator and Redeemer (cf. 45:12,18).

▣ **“Stretching out the heavens by Myself”** Here again is God as Creator. This phraseology is used in Isa. 40:22; 42:5; 45:12,18; 51:13.

▣ **“spreading out the earth all alone”** The English “all alone” (*qere*, NEB) is literally a rhetorical question, “Who was with Me?” (*ketiv*, DSS, LXX, NRSV). This is an emphasis, like the phrase above, “by Myself,” on God’s unique position. He is the one and only Creator God (cf. Job 38:4ff). See Special Topic: Monotheism at 40:14.

▣ **“omens. . .diviners. . .wise men”** This verse is an exposure of the occult practices of the surrounding nations, particularly Babylon. It is a foil for God to discuss His true prophets in v. 26. Biblically, the way to determine a true prophet is found in Deut. 13:1-3; 18:22. The false prophets and the true prophets are going to be contrasted in order to reveal that God is the only God.

It is possible that the Hebrew word “boasters” can mean

1. liars, vain talkers (BDB 95 III)
2. soothsayers, from an Akkadian root (AB, vol. 20, p. 72), which would make it parallel to “diviners” (line 2). Note how similar the Hebrew words are.

#1 בודים to #2 בררים

The Barim priests of Babylon were known for their predictions (Leupold, p. 133).

**44:26 “Confirming the word of His servant”** God is in control of history. His forth-telling of future events is one way to prove to all mankind that God is the only Creator, Redeemer God (cf. 41:22-23; 45:7,26). Throughout this section of Isaiah prophecy is used as a means of God demonstrating His ability over against the inability of the occult practices to determine future events.

The words “servant” (BDB 712) and “messenger” (BDB 521) are parallel. The first is SINGULAR and the second PLURAL. Is this meant to refer to

1. the Servant
2. the prophets

or are both to be understood as the prophet? Thereby, “servant” would be a way to characterize all prophets.

This verse may be an allusion to Isa. 2:2-4 or Micah 4:1-4.

▣ **“It is I who says of Jerusalem, ‘she shall be inhabited’”** This is a very specific prophecy of not only the restoration of Jerusalem but also of the cities of Judah (cf. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-3).

**44:27** There has been much discussion on the meaning of this verse. These are the theories:

1. YHWH controls the waters of chaos (cf. Genesis 1; Psalm 74:12-17; Isa. 51:10).
2. It is a reference to God’s splitting of the Red Sea and the Jordan River and, therefore, is a reference to the Exodus.
3. It shows that God can overcome any barrier and is used in the sense of God drying up or overcoming the Euphrates River (i.e., note Isa. 11:15-16) so that Cyrus can defeat Babylon.
4. This is used in some sense that God is the controller of moisture which proves that he is the fertility God and not Ba’al.

**44:28 “It is I who says of Cyrus”** Cyrus is mentioned by name for the first time in this context. He is also mentioned by name in 45:1. Josephus, in his book, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.5, says that Jewish tradition believes that prophecies were shown to Cyrus and that he allowed the Jews to return to Judah. We also learn that Cyrus was impressed by these prophecies in II Chr. 36:22-23.

▣ **“He is My shepherd”** This term primarily speaks of a leader or administrator. There are two very strong kingly terms used here, “shepherd” (BDB 944 I) in 44:28 and “anointed one” (BDB 603) in 45:1. Both of these terms show that God will use Cyrus to accomplish His purposes. This does not imply that Cyrus became a believer (cf. v. 5c), but that God uses human instrumentality in order to accomplish His purposes (i.e., Exod. 3:7-10).

▣ **“Your foundation will be laid”** The fulfillment of this prophecy, related to both the city of Jerusalem and the temple, is found in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed,  
Whom I have taken by the right hand,  
To subdue nations before him  
And to loose the loins of kings;  
To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:  
<sup>2</sup>“I will go before you and make the rough places smooth;  
I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars.  
<sup>3</sup>I will give you the treasures of darkness  
And hidden wealth of secret places,  
So that you may know that it is I,  
The LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.  
<sup>4</sup>For the sake of Jacob My servant,  
And Israel My chosen *one*,  
I have also called you by your name;  
I have given you a title of honor  
Though you have not known Me.  
<sup>5</sup>I am the LORD, and there is no other;  
Besides Me there is no God.  
I will gird you, though you have not known Me;  
<sup>6</sup>That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun  
That there is no one besides Me.  
I am the LORD, and there is no other,  
<sup>7</sup>The One forming light and creating darkness,  
Causing well-being and creating calamity;  
I am the LORD who does all these.”

**45:1 “anointed”** This is a title in the OT used for several kinds of people.

1. for King Saul, I Sam. 12:3; 24:6
2. for the people of God, Hab. 3:13
3. for the Patriarchs, Ps. 105:15
4. for the priests, Lev. 4:3,5,16
5. for “the Coming One,” Dan. 9:25; Ps. 2:2

It is used as a Messianic title developed during the inter-biblical period. The term “Messiah” (see Special Topic at 40:14) comes from the Hebrew term “Anointed One.” Cyrus being called by this term shows that election in the OT was primarily for service, not salvation.

▣ **“by the right hand”** See Special Topic at 40:2.

▣ **“to loose the loins of kings”** This refers to loosening the sash, which either implies a man’s garments were free-flowing which made it difficult to move, or the sash may have held weapons and they, therefore, dropped to the ground (cf. v. 5).

**45:2**

**NASB** “rough places smooth”

**NKJV** “crooked places straight”

**NRSV, TEV** “level the mountains”

**NJB** “open gateways”

The NRSV is literal (cf. 49:11). It is also found in the DSS and LXX. Mountain may be a metaphor of problems or fears (cf. 40:4; 41:15; 42:15).

▣ **“shatter the doors of bronze, and cut through their iron bars”** These are all metaphors to show that God will cause Cyrus to succeed in his conquest over the walled cities of Mesopotamia and Palestine. It is interesting that the historian, Herodotus, 1:179, mentions that the city of Babylon had over 100 brass gates.

**45:3 “treasures of darkness”** This is the hidden wealth of the empires of Mesopotamia and the Near East.

**45:4 “For the sake of Jacob My servant,**

**And Israel My chosen one”** Here we have the first of two reasons why God used Cyrus: (1) the restoration of His chosen people and (2) He wanted the people of Israel to be a light to the world, v. 6. Israel was not a light so God used Cyrus (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ **“Though you have not known Me”** God used Cyrus even though he did not know Him. There is a play on the word “know” in vv. 4,5,6. In Hebrew the term “know” speaks of intimate personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1), not only cognitive knowledge. There is no merit on Cyrus’ part that God should choose him, but God used him for divine purposes (see Special Topic at 40:15).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)**

The Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the *Qal*.

1. to understand good and evil – Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
2. to know by understanding – Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
3. to know by experience – Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Josh. 23:14
4. to consider – Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
5. to know personally
  - a. a person – Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 33:9
  - b. a god – Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17



- c. YHWH – Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
- d. sexual – Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
- 6. a learned skill or knowledge – Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
- 7. be wise – Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
- 8. God’s knowledge
  - a. of Moses – Deut. 34:10
  - b. of Israel – Deut. 31:21,27,29

**45:5 “I am the LORD, and there is no other”** This is an affirmation of monotheism (cf. 44:24; 45:6-7,14,18,21,22, see Special Topic at 40:14).

▣ **“Besides Me there is no God”** This is another way of referring to monotheism (cf. 44:6,8; 43:11).

▣ **“I will gird you”** This means “arm you.” The weapons were worn on the girdle (cf. v. 1). This is the opposite of v. 1d.

**45:6 “That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun**

**That there is no one besides Me”** Here again is the astonishing prophecy that God chose Cyrus for the same purpose that He chose Israel, which was to reveal Himself to all the world so that all the world might come to know Him.

**45:7** This verse has caused much consternation among commentators because it seems to make God the creator of evil. Basically, what is seen here is the denial of a dualism in the universe. This may reflect the Persian influence of Zoroastrianism, but we are uncertain of Cyrus’ relationship to this developed dualism. This verse is basically saying that there is only one causality in the universe (cf. Eccl. 7:14; Amos 3:6b). God is in control of all things. He uses evil for His purposes! This is another way of affirming monotheism.

Verse 7 is a series of *Qal* PARTICIPLES relating to God’s creating activities put in contrasting pairs.

- 1. forming – BDB 427, KB 428
- 2. creating – BDB 135, KB 153
- 3. causing – BDB 793, KB 889
- 4. creating – BDB 135, KB 153
- 5. doing – BDB 793, KB 889

Be careful of taking one verse out of a poetic context and using it as the basis of a doctrinal statement. Genre and context are crucial in proper interpretation!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:8**

**<sup>8</sup>“Drip down, O heavens, from above,  
And let the clouds pour down righteousness;  
Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit,  
And righteousness spring up with it.  
I, the LORD, have created it.”**

**45:8** The prophet is using the crisis of his own day to foreshadow the future kingdom of God. In context, this verse is influenced by v. 6, which means that this is the idealistic future when all humans will know and worship God, which was the purpose of the original creation (cf. Gen. 3:8).

▣ Verse 8 is a series of commands (i.e., prayers) directed toward God’s created order.

1. drip down – BDB 950, KB 1271, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. pour – BDB 633, KB 683, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. open – BDB 834, KB 986, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. bear fruit – BDB 826, KB 963, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. spring up – BDB 855, KB 1033, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

YHWH ends the paragraph/verse with His summary statement of His creating power (BDB 135, KB 153, *Qal* PERFECT)! This emphasis on God as creator introduces the rest of the chapter (esp. v. 18). As He created the earth, so too, Israel. Creation has a relational purpose.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:9-10**

<sup>9</sup>“Woe to *the one* who quarrels with his Maker—

An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth!

Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’

Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands’?

<sup>10</sup>Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’

Or to a woman, ‘To what are you giving birth?’”

**45:9 “Woe to *the one* who quarrels with his Maker—”** We have seen several allusions to the court scene literary model in Isaiah 40-45. Now “woe” identifies another prophetic literary model, “the funeral dirge.” It was a “grave” warning to those (Jews or Gentiles) who question YHWH. In context, this strophe would refer to the shock felt by Jews at the inclusion of Gentiles!

This shows the presence of some Jews who reacted negatively to God’s way of handling redemption (cf. v. 11). They were upset that God would use an unbelieving ruler such as Cyrus (cf. v. 13). This is very similar to the prophet Habakkuk’s incredulous thoughts about God using Babylon.

▣ **“Will the clay say to the potter”** This concept of humans as clay and God as potter is common in the Bible, probably because

1. humans are made from the dust or clay and will return to dust (cf. Isa. 39:16; Jer. 18:1ff; Rom. 9:20-21)
2. it highlights YHWH’s freedom to do with His creation whatever He desires and purposes



NASB, NKJV	“He has no hands”
NRSV, JPSOA	“Your work has no handles”
REV, REB	“you have no skill”
NJB	“your work has no hands”
Peshitta	“am I not the work of your hands”
NAB	“what you are making has no hands”

This can mean

1. the idols have no hands
2. the craftsmen have no skill
3. the vessel has no handles

It is best just to recognize the ambiguity and look to the other lines of v. 9 and v. 10 for a general contextual meaning. That which is the created cannot question the creator!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:11-13**

**<sup>11</sup>Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker:**

**“Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons,  
And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands.**

**<sup>12</sup>It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it.  
I stretched out the heavens with My hands  
And I ordained all their host.**

**<sup>13</sup>I have aroused him in righteousness  
And I will make all his ways smooth;  
He will build My city and will let My exiles go free,  
Without any payment or reward,” says the LORD of hosts.**

**45:11** This verse starts out with several titles for God.

1. YHWH
2. the Holy One of Israel
3. Israel’s Maker (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* PARTICIPLE)

It then continues the emphasis on YHWH as the predictor of future events (i.e., Cyrus’ conquest).

The UBS Text Project (p. 125) suggests, “questions me about the things to come, (but) as to my sons and the work of my hands, let me take care of them!”

**45:12 “And I ordained all their host”** Here again YHWH is magnifying His unique place as Creator of heaven and earth. The Babylonians worshiped the stars and planets. This is a strong statement that YHWH commanded (BDB 845, KB 1010, *Piel* PERFECTS) all their hosts (cf. 40:26). This emphasis on YHWH as the creator and controller of the heavenly bodies (i.e., sun, moon, stars, planets, comets) functions like Genesis 1 in showing the folly of astral worship.

In Isa. 24:21-22 the word “host” is used for the angelic powers behind the nations (cf. the LXX of Deut. 32:8 and Daniel 10). Whether it is angelic or planetary, YHWH is in control of all the lesser gods of the universe called *elohim*. There is no other God but YHWH, but there are other spiritual forces.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: ANGELS AND THE DEMONIC**

- A. Ancient peoples were animists. They attributed personality to forces of nature, animals, natural objects, and traits of human personality. Life is explained through the interaction of these spiritual entities with mankind.
- B. This personification became polytheism (many gods). Usually the demonic (*genii*) were lesser gods or demigods (good or evil) that impacted individual human lives.
  1. Mesopotamia, chaos and conflict
  2. Egypt, order and function
  3. Canaan, see W. F. Albright’s *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Fifth Edition, pp. 67-92

C. The OT does not dwell on or develop the subject of lesser gods, angels, or the demonic, probably because of its strict monotheism (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4; 33:26; Psalm 35:10; 71:19; 86:6; Isa. 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7; Mic. 7:18). It does mention the false gods of the pagan nations (*Shedim*, cf. Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37) and it does name some of them.

1. *Se'im* (satyrs or hair demons, cf. Lev. 17:7; II Chr. 11:15)
  2. *Lilith* (female, a seducing demon, cf. Isa. 34:14)
  3. *Mavet* (Hebrew term for death used for Canaanite god of the underworld, *Mot*, cf. Isa. 28:15, 18; Jer. 9:21; and possibly Deut. 28:22)
  4. *Resheph* (plague, cf. Deut. 33:29; Ps. 78:48; Hab. 3:5)
  5. *Dever* (pestilence, cf. Ps. 91:5-6; Hab. 3:5)
  6. *Az'azel* (name uncertain, but possibly a desert demon or place name, cf. Lev. 16:8,10,26)
- (These examples are taken from *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1523.)

However, there is no dualism or angelic independence from YHWH in the OT. Satan is a servant of YHWH (cf. Job 1-3; Zech. 3), not an enemy (cf. A. B. Davidson, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 300-306).

D. Judaism developed during the Babylonian exile (586-538 B.C.). It was theologically influenced by the Persian personified dualism of Zoroastrianism, a good high god called *Mazda* or *Ormazd* and an evil opponent called *Ahriman*. This allowed within post-exilic Judaism the personified dualism between YHWH and His angels and Satan and his angels or demons.

Judaism's theology of personified evil is explained and documented well in Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendix XIII (pp. 749-863) and XVI (pp. 770-776). Judaism personified evil in three ways.

1. Satan or Sammael
2. the evil intent (*yetzer hara*) within mankind
3. the Death Angel

Edersheim characterizes these as (1) the Accuser; (2) the Tempter; and (3) the Punisher (vol. 2, p. 756). There is a marked theological difference between post-exilic Judaism and the NT presentation and explanation of evil.

E. The NT, especially the Gospels, asserts the existence and opposition of evil spiritual beings to humanity and to YHWH (in Judaism Satan was an enemy to mankind, but not to God). They oppose God's will, rule, and kingdom.

Jesus confronted and expelled these demonic beings, also called (1) unclean spirits (cf. Luke 4:36; 6:18) or (2) evil spirits (cf. Luke 7:21; 8:2). Jesus clearly made a distinction between illness (physical and mental) and the demonic. He demonstrated His power and spiritual insight by recognizing and exorcizing these evil spirits. They often recognized Him and attempted to address Him, but Jesus rejected their testimony, demanded their silence, and expelled them. Exorcisms are a sign of the defeat of Satan's kingdom.

There is a surprising lack of information in the NT Apostolic letters on this subject. Exorcism is never listed as a spiritual gift nor is a methodology or procedure for its use given for future generations of ministers or believers.

- F. Evil is real; evil is personal; evil is present. Neither its origin nor purpose is revealed. The Bible asserts its reality and aggressively opposes its influence. There is no ultimate dualism in reality. God is in total control; evil is defeated and judged and will be removed from creation.
- G. God's people must resist evil (cf. James 4:7). They cannot be controlled by it (cf. I John 5:18), but they can be tempted and their witness and influence damaged (cf. Eph. 6:10-18). Evil is a revealed part of the Christian's world-view. Modern Christians have no right to redefine evil (the demythologizing of Rudolf Bultmann); depersonalize evil (the social structures of Paul Tillich), nor attempt to explain it completely in psychological terms (Sigmund Freud). Its influence is pervasive, but defeated. Believers need to walk in the victory of Christ!

**45:13 “I have aroused him in righteousness”** The NIV translates the “him” as Cyrus. YHWH stirred up Cyrus to do His will. This refers to (1) the rapid and complete conquests by Cyrus and (2) the decree of Cyrus which allowed all the exiled people groups to go home and rebuild their national temples. This decree was given in 538 B.C., one year after the fall of Babylon.

▣ **“Without any payment or reward”** YHWH will give Cyrus II victory and he in turn will let Israel return to Judah without a bribe or payment (TEV).

The Jewish Study Bible (p. 876) says that v. 14 refers to YHWH's reward to Cyrus.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:14-17**

- <sup>14</sup>**Thus says the LORD,**  
**“The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush**  
**And the Sabeans, men of stature,**  
**Will come over to you and will be yours;**  
**They will walk behind you, they will come over in chains**  
**And will bow down to you;**  
**They will make supplication to you:**  
**‘Surely, God is with you, and there is none else,**  
**No other God.’”**
- <sup>15</sup>**Truly, You are a God who hides Himself,**  
**O God of Israel, Savior!**
- <sup>16</sup>**They will be put to shame and even humiliated, all of them;**  
**The manufacturers of idols will go away together in humiliation.**
- <sup>17</sup>**Israel has been saved by the LORD**  
**With an everlasting salvation;**  
**You will not be put to shame or humiliated**  
**To all eternity.**

**45:14** It is uncertain if vv. 14-17 comprise a literary unit. It is obvious that vv. 15-17 are referring to Israel. It is possible that v. 14 may refer to Persia (cf. 43:3) and not to Judah. However, these same nations are given as a ransom for God's people in 43:3. All the world was meant to come to God in 45:20-22. Therefore, Judah could be the subject of v. 14. This is very similar to the prophecies that all the nations will stream to a restored Zion (cf. 2:2-4; 60:1ff; Ps. 72:8-11).

The summary line of v. 14, “No other God,” carries over to v. 16 (i.e., “they”). Both the idols and their worshipers shall be

1. put to shame – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* PERFECT
2. humiliated – BDB 487, KB 480, *Niphal* PERFECT

But Israel will not (cf. v. 17)!

**45:15** Notice the names for God

1. God (*El*, BDB 42)
2. God (*Elh*, BDB 43) of Israel
3. Savior (BDB 446)

The Savior of Israel did hide Himself from His people for a period of time because of their sin and rebellion (cf. 1:15; 8:17; 54:8; 57:17; Ps. 44:24; 88:14, also note Job 13:24). But that period of judgment has passed (cf. 40:2) and now the return and restoration has begun through Cyrus.

The AB, vol. 20, p. 82, suggests this hiddenness is because Israel was a small and insignificant nation at this period of time.

**45:16** See note at v. 14. Verse 16 is theologically parallel to 44:11.

**45:17** This is a wonderful promise but readers need to remember it is conditional on Israel’s covenant obedience. Just to read this and forget that Israel was again conquered and destroyed by both Greece and Rome shows the limits of proof-texting.

The problem was not YHWH’s love and promises, but Israel’s inability to keep His commandments.

The Hebrew terms “everlasting” (BDB 761) and “eternity” (BDB 761) are from a Hebrew root that has a wide range of meaning (semantic field). See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (‘*OLAM*)**

The etymology of the Hebrew term ‘*olam*, עולם (BDB 761) is uncertain (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 345). It is used in several senses (usually determined by context). The following are only selected examples.

1. ancient things
  - a. peoples, Gen. 6:4; I Sam. 27:8; Jer. 5:15; 28:8
  - b. places, Isa. 58:12; 61:4
  - c. God, Ps. 93:2; Pro. 8:23; Isa. 63:16
  - d. things, Gen. 49:26; Job 22:15; Ps. 24:7,9; Isa. 46:9
  - e. time, Deut. 32:7; Isa. 51:9; 63:9,11
2. future time
  - a. one’s life, Exod. 21:6; Deut. 15:17; I Sam. 1:22; 27:12
  - b. hyperbole for king, I Kgs. 1:31; Ps. 61:7; Neh. 2:3
  - c. continuous existence
    - (1) earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; Eccl. 1:4
    - (2) heavens, Ps. 148:6
  - d. existence of God
    - (1) Gen. 21:33
    - (2) Exod. 15:18

- (3) Deut. 32:40
- (4) Ps. 93:2
- (5) Isa. 40:28
- (6) Jer. 10:10
- (7) Dan. 12:7
- e. the covenant
  - (1) Gen. 9:12,16; 17:7,13,19
  - (2) Exod. 31:16
  - (3) Lev. 24:8
  - (4) Num. 18:19
  - (5) II Sam. 23:5
  - (6) Ps. 105:10
  - (7) Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8
  - (8) Jer. 32:40; 50:5
- f. special covenant with David
  - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; 22:51; 23:5
  - (2) I Kgs. 2:33,45; 9:5
  - (3) II Chr. 13:5
  - (4) Ps. 18:50; 89:4,28,36,37
  - (5) Isa. 9:7; 16:5; 37:35; 55:3
- g. God's Messiah
  - (1) Ps. 45:2; 72:17; 89:35-36; 110:4
  - (2) Isa. 9:6
- h. God's laws
  - (1) Exod. 29:28; 30:21
  - (2) Lev. 6:18,22; 7:34; 10:15; 24:9
  - (3) Num. 18:8,11,19
  - (4) Ps. 119:89,160
  - (5) Isa. 59:21
- i. God's promises
  - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25; 22:51
  - (2) I Kgs. 9:5
  - (3) Ps. 18:50
  - (4) Isa. 40:8
- j. Abraham's descendants and the Promised Land
  - (1) Gen. 13:15; 17:19; 48:4
  - (2) Exod. 32:13
  - (3) I Chr. 16:17
- k. covenantal feasts
  - (1) Exod. 12:14,17,24
  - (2) Lev. 23:14,21,41

- (3) Num. 10:8
- l. eternity everlasting
  - (1) I Kgs. 8:13
  - (2) Ps. 61:7-8; 77:8; 90:2; 103:17; 145:13
  - (3) Isa. 26:4; 45:17
  - (4) Dan. 9:24
- m. what the Psalms say believers will do forever
  - (1) give thanks, Ps. 30:12; 79:13
  - (2) abide in His presence, Ps. 41:12; 61:4,7
  - (3) trust in His mercy, Ps. 52:8
  - (4) praise the LORD, Ps. 52:9
  - (5) sing praises, Ps. 61:8; 89:1
  - (6) declare His justice, Ps. 75:9
  - (7) glorify His name, Ps. 86:12; 145:2
  - (8) bless His name, Ps. 145:1
- 3. both backward and forward in time (“from everlasting to everlasting”)
  - a. Ps. 41:13 (praise to God)
  - b. Ps. 90:2 (God Himself)
  - c. Ps. 103:17 (the lovingkindness of the LORD)

Remember, context determines the extent of the term’s meaning. The everlasting covenants and promises are conditional (i.e., Jeremiah 7). Be careful of reading your modern view of time or your NT systematic theology into every OT usage of this very fluid word. The NT universalized OT promises.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:18-19**

**<sup>18</sup>For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens  
 (He is the God who formed the earth and made it,  
 He established it *and* did not create it a waste place,  
*But* formed it to be inhabited),  
 I am the LORD, and there is none else.**

**<sup>19</sup>I have not spoken in secret,  
 In some dark land;  
 I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,  
 ‘Seek Me in a waste place’;  
 I, the LORD, speak righteousness,  
 Declaring things that are upright.”**

**45:18 “He established it *and* did not create it a waste place”** This is an allusion to Gen. 1:2. It could be translated “without form” (BDB 1062). God always had a purpose for creation. That purpose is that it would be inhabited. There was a development in God’s creation. This does not prove some kind of destruction between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 (i.e., the Gap Theory).



▣ **“But formed it to be inhabited)”** This is used by the rabbis to stress that everyone should marry (cf. Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7).

**45:19** YHWH has asserted over and over in this section of Isaiah that He is the God who hears and acts; Who knows the future and sets its course! This theological assertion is a primary evidence of His existence! The other evidence is the existence of Israel and her return to the Promised Land.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:20-25**

- <sup>20</sup>**“Gather yourselves and come;  
Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations;  
They have no knowledge,  
Who carry about their wooden idol  
And pray to a god who cannot save.**
- <sup>21</sup>**Declare and set forth *your case*;  
Indeed, let them consult together.  
Who has announced this from of old?  
Who has long since declared it?  
Is it not I, the LORD?  
And there is no other God besides Me,  
A righteous God and a Savior;  
There is none except Me.**
- <sup>22</sup>**Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;  
For I am God, and there is no other.**
- <sup>23</sup>**I have sworn by Myself,  
The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness  
And will not turn back,  
That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*.**
- <sup>24</sup>**They will say of Me, ‘Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.’  
Men will come to Him,  
And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame.**
- <sup>25</sup>**In the LORD all the offspring of Israel  
Will be justified and will glory.”**

**45:20 “Gather yourselves and come;  
Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations;  
They have no knowledge”**

Some say this refers to scattered, exiled Israelites returning home (i.e., “you fugitives of the nations,” also note v. 25), while others believe it is another general invitation to the Gentile nations, as in vv. 6,22,23 (cf. Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10). Both are possible in this context.

There is a series of commands in vv. 20-22 related to how humans are to approach YHWH and respond to His offer of availability.

1. gather yourselves – BDB 867, KB 1062, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, v. 20
2. come – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 20
3. draw near – BDB 620, KB 670, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, v. 20
4. turn to Me – BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 22
5. be saved – BDB 446, KB 448, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, v. 22

The NT uses v. 23 in two quotes that refer to all humans (i.e., Rom. 14:1 and esp. Phil. 2:10)! What a wonderful invitation and fulfillment of Gen. 3:15 and 12:3 (see Special Topic at 40:15).

▣ **“Who carry about their wooden idol”** This calls on the nations to reject their idols who cannot act, and come to the God of Israel who can act and who will save them.

**45:21** This is the imagery of a court scene. It predicts (1) Cyrus and his success and (2) the return of Israel as an evangelistic tool to bring the world to God. Here God is called a “Savior” and in this context implies not of Jews only but of the entire world (cf. v. 22). The obvious implication of monotheism (see Special Topic at 40:14) is that the One God loves all humans created in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

**45:22 “Turn to Me”** This is the Hebrew word that is used for worship (BDB 815, KB 937). As the people turn to God they leave their idolatry and sin (cf. 55:7).

Humans have a choice. They can turn to YHWH and be saved or turn to idols (cf. Lev. 19:4,31; 20:6; Deut. 31:18,20) and have no hope!

▣ **“and be saved, all the ends of the earth”** This is a reference to the universal salvation offered to all humans who will repent and trust in YHWH because there is no other God (cf. v. 21). This universal offer is so characteristic of Isaiah. This can be translated “save themselves” (*Niphal* IMPERATIVE), which would be a play on Gen. 12:3.

**45:23 “I have sworn by Myself”** There is no higher oath possible!

▣ **“The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness  
And will not turn back”**

This is the ancient belief in the power of the spoken word (cf. 24:3; 25:8; 40:8; 55:10-11). God said it; He wants the world to be saved (i.e., John 3:16)!

▣ **“That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*”** This is used in this context of YHWH. However, in Phil. 2:10 it is used of all conscious creation confessing Jesus Christ as Lord. The context again shows that God wants the whole world to come to Him and later revelation will show it is through His Messiah, Jesus Christ, that this universal offer is accomplished (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21).

The theological issue is very clear. If the NT is revelation, then the OT promises to national Israel have been widened.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: CRUCIAL INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE TO REVELATION**

### **“Why Do Christians Have So Many Dogmatic Interpretations of Revelation”**

Through the years of my study of eschatology I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of evangelicalism! Believers cannot affect God’s eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the gospel mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an end-time culmination of the promises of God. The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several biblical paradoxes.

1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
2. the tension between the Bible’s monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)

3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises (“if. . .then”) and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind’s redemption
4. the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models
5. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future.
6. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first.

Let us discuss these tensions one at a time.

**FIRST TENSION** (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but neither Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezek. 37-39; Dan. 7-12; Zech.)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; II Cor. 5; I Thess. 4-5; II Thess. 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope (“the mystery of Christ,” cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God’s acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God’s promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham’s call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
2. In the OT the enemies of God’s people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are:
  - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)

- b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
- c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) and the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19)
- d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model (i.e., D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning-Hooks*) has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral (cf. I Cor. 15:58; I Thess. 4:18).

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; pr Paul)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation alludes to OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

#### **SECOND TENSION** (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7,14,18,21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen.1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Gen. 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God (i.e., Rom. 9:6), never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Rom. 4:3,9,22; Gal. 3:6). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. 1:6; II Pet.2:5,9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

#### **THIRD TENSION** (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21 and the coming of Messiah). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The “if . . . then” pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one “horn of the dilemma,” God’s faithfulness or human effort, God’s sovereignty or mankind’s free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God’s OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isa. 53), not Israel! God’s ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God’s covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Gal. 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Rom. 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

#### **FOURTH TENSION** (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models).

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture’s literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters’ arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible’s eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre (Fee and Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its worth*, pp. 249-264). An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood (i.e., John L. Bray, *Matthew 24 Fulfilled*). In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation’s initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God’s control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God’s love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thess.2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillments

of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark.13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4-5; and II Thess. 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . .First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes" (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

"Today's readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine 'what will happen when,' thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message" (p. 35).

**45:24 "And all who are angry at Him shall be put to shame"** This does show that one day all peoples, whether they believe in YHWH or not, will acknowledge Him as Lord (cf. Philippians 2). Some will have previously acknowledged Him and be saved, but some will acknowledge Him just before judgment and separation (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the characteristics of God mentioned in Isa. 45:24-28. (there are nine relative clauses)
2. Why did God choose Cyrus?
3. What is the significance of the Hebrew word “know” (cf. 45:4-6)?
4. Why is Isa. 45:6 so significant?
5. List the number of times and ways the doctrine of monotheism is mentioned in this passage.
6. Does Isa. 45:8 refer to the return from exile or the Messianic kingdom? Why?
7. What is the significance of Isa. 45:22?
8. How is Isa. 45:23 used in the NT and what significance does it have for this passage?

# ISAIAH 46

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Babylon's Idols and the True God	Dead Idols and the Living God	The LORD Supports Israel	The LORD of the World and the Idols of Babylon (45:20-46:13)	The Fall of Babylon
46:1-2 (1-2)	46:1-2 (1-2)	46:1-2 (1-2)	46:1-2 (1-2)	46:1-13 (1-13)
46:3-4 (3-4)	46:3-4 (3-4)	46:3-4 (3-4)	46:3-4 (3-4)	
46:5-7 (5-7)	46:5-7 (5-7)	46:5-7 (5-7)	46:5-7 (5-7)	
46:8-11 (8-11)	46:8-11 (8-11)	46:8-11 (8-11)	46:8-11 (8-11)	
46:12-13 (12-13)	46:12-13 (12-13)	46:12-13 (12-13)	46:12-13 (12-13)	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Leupold, in his commentary on Isaiah, p. 147, reminded me that
  1. in Isaiah 14 the kingdom of Babylon is judged
  2. in Isaiah 46 the idols of Babylon are judged
  3. in Isaiah 47 the nation, personified as a queen, is judged
- B. Babylon, in the Bible, is a metaphor for all human society organized and functioning apart from God. It is mankind's attempt to meet his needs with his own resources. Babylon is personified as the great whore in Revelation 18.



## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Bel has bowed down, Nebo stoops over;  
Their images are *consigned* to the beasts and the cattle.  
The things that you carry are burdensome,  
A load for the weary *beast*.  
<sup>2</sup>They stooped over, they have bowed down together;  
They could not rescue the burden,  
But have themselves gone into captivity.

**46:1 “Bel”** *Bel* (BDB128, KB 132, Akkadian for “lord”) is a similar title to the Canaanite title *Ba’al*. This is a reference to the chief god of the Akkadian pantheon (*Enlil*, who was called “lord”). As Babylon came to power the chief deity’s name was changed to *Marduk* (BDB 597, cf. Jer. 50:2).

▣ **“Nebo”** This was the son of *Marduk* (named only here in the OT) and was the god of learning and writing (BDB 612). Bel and Nebo can be seen in many of the Babylonian names of the period (Nebuchadnezzar [Dan. 1:1]; Nebushazban [Jer. 39:13]; Nebuzaradan [Jer. 39:9]; Nabopolassar [first king of Neo-Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar’s father]; Nabonidus [Beshazzar’s father, last king of Neo-Babylon]; Belteshazzar [Dan. 1:7]; Belshazzar [Dan. 5:1]). These were the two chief gods of the Babylonian pantheon.

▣ **“bowed down. . .stoops over”** There is a play on the concept “bow down” (BDB 505, KB 499). It relates to 45:23, the deities of Babylon are bowing before YHWH the Creator.

▣ **“you carry. . .load. . .the burden”** There is a play on the word “carry” in vv. 1-2 and 3-4. First of all the idols of Babylon must be carried on beasts of burden to try to escape the Persians or in ritual marches through the street of the large cities. God carries His children, both metaphorically in the womb and later, throughout their lives (cf. v. 1). It is the inability of the Babylon gods to hear, to act versus the care, provision, and grace acts of the God of Israel, with which they are contrasted in vv. 1-4.

**46:2 “But have themselves gone into captivity”** Here these Babylonian idols are personified as going into captivity with their people.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:3-4

<sup>3</sup>“Listen to Me, O house of Jacob,  
And all the remnant of the house of Israel,  
You who have been borne by Me from birth  
And have been carried from the womb;  
<sup>4</sup>Even to *your* old age I will be the same,  
And even to *your* graying years I will bear *you*!  
I have done *it*, and I will carry *you*;  
And I will bear *you* and I will deliver *you*.”

**46:3 “Listen”** This, like v. 12, is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570). See note at 44:1.

▣ “the remnant” See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES**

The OT concept of “a faithful remnant” is a recurrent theme of the Prophets (mostly in the eighth century prophets and Jeremiah). It is used in three senses:

1. those who survived the Exile (e.g., Isa. 10:20-23; 17:4-6; 37:31-32; Jer. 42:15,19; 44:12,14,28; Amos 1:8)
2. those who remain faithful to YHWH (e.g., Isa. 4:1-5; 11:11,16; 28:5; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:7-9; 7:18-20)
3. those who are a part of the eschatological renewal and re-creation (e.g., Amos 9:11-15)

In this context God chooses only some (those with a faithful zeal) of the remnant (survivors of the Exile) to return to Judah. As we have seen before in this chapter, themes from Israel’s past recur (v. 6). God is reducing the numbers so that He can show His power, provision, and care (e.g., Gideon, Judges 6-7).

▣ “have been carried from the womb” This primarily is a reference to God as parent and Israel as child. However, it also refers to the formation of the nation of Israel beginning with the Exodus (cf. Deut. 1:31; Isa. 63:9).

**46:4 “Even to your old age”** God not only created Israel but will sustain her (i.e., “carry” or “bear” them, cf. Exod. 19:4; Deut. 1:31; 32:11).

▣ “I shall be the same” This (lit. *I Am He*, cf. NKJV) is the concept that God does not change (cf. NJB, cf. Mal. 3:6). Even though Israel has been unfaithful to the covenant, God remains faithful. He is the God of covenant loyalty. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

▣ “And I will bear *you* and I will deliver *you*” This is a reference to the nation of Israel, but it is individualized also to every believer (SINGULAR VERBS). Notice the VERBS in v. 4.

1. God had created Israel (*Qal* PERFECT, BDB 793, KB 889)
2. God will continue to provide and protect
  - a. bear you – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 687, KB 741 (twice)
  - b. carry you – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 669, KB 724 (twice)
  - c. deliver you – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 572, KB 589

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:5-7**

<sup>5</sup>“To whom would you liken Me  
And make Me equal and compare Me,  
That we would be alike?  
<sup>6</sup>Those who lavish gold from the purse  
And weigh silver on the scale  
Hire a goldsmith, and he makes it *into* a god;  
They bow down, indeed they worship it.  
<sup>7</sup>They lift it upon the shoulder *and* carry it;  
They set it in its place and it stands *there*.  
It does not move from its place.

**Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer;  
It cannot deliver him from his distress.”**

**46:5 “To whom would you liken Me”** This is the emphasis that no one can be compared with YHWH (cf. 43:11; 44:6,8; 45:6). This is a comparison between YHWH and the idols of the nations (cf. Isa. 40:18-20; 44:9-20).

Notice the parallelism.

1. to whom would you liken Me – *Piel* IMPERFECT (BDB 197, KB 225)
2. and make Me equal – *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (BDB 1000, KB 1436)
3. and compare Me – *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (BDB 605, KB 647)
4. that we should be alike – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 197, KB 225)

YHWH is unique! He is the ever-living, only-living, one true God (see Special Topic: Monotheism at 40:14). Also note the theological concept of Trinity at the Special Topic at 40:13.

**46:6-7** These two verses are the contrast between the one true God of v. 5 and the idols of the nations.

1. people give money to make images and then bow down and worship them (v. 6)
2. they then move them here and there but they cannot move themselves; the idols cannot deliver (v. 7)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:8-11**

<sup>8</sup>**“Remember this, and be assured;  
Recall it to mind, you transgressors.  
<sup>9</sup>Remember the former things long past,  
For I am God, and there is no other;  
*I am* God, and there is no one like Me,  
<sup>10</sup>Declaring the end from the beginning,  
And from ancient times things which have not been done,  
Saying, ‘My purpose will be established,  
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;  
<sup>11</sup>Calling a bird of prey from the east,  
The man of My purpose from a far country.  
Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass.  
I have planned *it*, *surely* I will do it.”**

**46:8 “Remember”** This verse and the first line of v. 9 contain a series of IMPERATIVES.

1. remember, v. 8 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 269, KB 269)
2. be assured, v. 8 – *Hithpoel* IMPERATIVE (BDB 84, KB 100)
3. recall, v. 8 – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 996, KB 1427)
4. remember, v. 9 – same as #1

Number 2 is a rare form. The Aramaic Targums translate it as “take courage,” possibly from a related Arabic root (cf. Leupold, p. 145).

**☐ “you transgressors”** This shows that some in Israel still had doubts about the way God was performing His task of redemption (cf. 45:9-11, the book of Habakkuk). This same group is referred to in v. 12 as “the stubborn minded” of the Jewish people.

**46:9 “the former things long past”** This could refer to

1. YHWH’s ancient covenant with Abraham (cf. 43:18; 65:17; Jer. 16:14; 23:7)
2. YHWH’s acts of birthing (i.e., the Exodus) them
3. Israel’s ancient promise to be loyal and abide by the covenant (cf. Deut. 32:7)
4. YHWH’s proof of His existence by predicting the future (cf. vv. 10,11; 42:9)

▣ **“For I am God”** See note at v. 5.

**46:10-11** Again, God is using the example of predictive prophecy to show that He is in control of history. The emphasis on His purposes, mentioned so often in vv. 10-11, shows that history is not random but has a divine purpose (i.e., teleological; cf. Isa. 14:24,26; 25:1).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:12-13**

<sup>12</sup>**“Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded,  
Who are far from righteousness.  
<sup>13</sup>I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off;  
And My salvation will not delay.  
And I will grant salvation in Zion,  
And My glory for Israel.”**

**46:12-13** This is a very important passage and shows that God will have mercy even on unbelieving Israel. This shows that the Jewish people did not deserve God’s love and mercy. Many of them were still stubborn and stiff-necked (cf. 48:4), but God brought salvation to them because of Who He is and not because of who they are (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). This is the New Covenant model (cf. Jer. 31:31-34).

This is literally

1. My counsel (BDB 420) will stand – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. All My purpose (BDB 481 CONSTRUCT 343), I will accomplish – BDB 793 I, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERFECT

This assurance of YHWH fulfilling His Divine Plan is also seen in 14:24; 25:1; 40:8; 55:11 (see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 371-390).

The phrase in 10a is theologically parallel to 41:4; 44:6; 48:12. YHWH is the “present one” from the “very” beginning to the “very” end (i.e., the first and last)!



**NASB, NKJV,**

**LXX, Peshitta** “righteousness”

**NRSV** “deliverance”

**TEV, JPSOA,**

**REB** “victory”

**NJB** “saving justice. . . justice”

The Hebrew word used twice is “righteousness” (BDB 842). BDB says it is used of the salvation of God (#6a), Isa. 45:8; 46:13; 51:6.

The Hebrew term “salvation” (BDB 448) is parallel in v. 13b.

▣ **“Who are far from”** This description of God’s covenant people is contrasted with the nearness (“it is not far off,” v. 13b) of YHWH’s deliverance

1. through Cyrus II (temporal)
2. through the Messiah (eschatological)

# ISAIAH 47

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Lament For Babylon	The Humiliation of Babylon	Lamentation Over Babylon	Judgment On Babylon	Lament For Babylon
47:1-7 (1-7)	47:1-3 (1-3)	47:1-4 (1-4)	47:1-3 (1-3)	47:1-3 (1-3)
	47:4 (4)		47:4 (4)	47:4-7 (4-7)
	47:5-7 (5-7)	47:5-7 (5-7)	47:5-7 (5-7)	
47:8-11 (8-11)	47:8-9 (8-9)	47:8-9 (8-9)	47:8-9 (8-9)	47:8-15 (8-15)
	47:10-11 (10-11)	47:10-13 (10-13)	47:10-13 (10-13)	
47:12-15 (12-15)	47:12-15 (12-15)			
		47:14-15 (14-15)	47:14-15 (14-15)	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. If chapter 46 emphasized the fall of the Babylonian idols, then chapter 47 describes the fall of the empire itself (i.e., the city of Babylon) along with its occult prophets and priests.

- B. Verses 1-7 have a series of IMPERATIVES directed at Babylon, depicted as a prostitute/queen.
1. come down, v. 1 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 432, KB 434)
  2. sit in the dust, v. 1 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 442, KB 444)
  3. sit on the ground, v. 1 – same as #2 (notice the number of times this term is used in vv. 1 [twice], 5, 8 [twice])
  4. take, v. 2 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 542, KB 534)
  5. grind, v. 2 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 377, KB 374)
  6. remove your veil, v. 2 – *Piel* IMPERATIVE (BDB 162, KB 191)
  7. strip off the skirt, v. 2 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 362, KB 359)
  8. uncover the leg, v. 2 – *Piel* IMPERATIVE (BDB 162, KB 191)
  9. cross the river, v. 2 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 716, KB 778)
  10. let your nakedness be uncovered, v. 3 – *Niphal* JUSSIVE (BDB 162, KB 191)
  11. sit silently, v. 5 – same as #3,4
  12. go into darkness, v. 5 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 97, KB 112)
- C. The prophetic literary form of this chapter is a “funeral dirge.” It is recognized by its unique beat/meter in Hebrew (3, 2 beat, like the poems of Lamentations). It is a funeral lament but in a sarcastic sense (Taunt Song).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:1-7

- <sup>1</sup>“Come down and sit in the dust,  
O virgin daughter of Babylon;  
Sit on the ground without a throne,  
O daughter of the Chaldeans!  
For you shall no longer be called tender and delicate.
- <sup>2</sup>Take the millstones and grind meal.  
Remove your veil, strip off the skirt,  
Uncover the leg, cross the rivers.
- <sup>3</sup>Your nakedness will be uncovered,  
Your shame also will be exposed;  
I will take vengeance and will not spare a man.”
- <sup>4</sup>Our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts is His name,  
The Holy One of Israel.
- <sup>5</sup>“Sit silently, and go into darkness,  
O daughter of the Chaldeans,  
For you will no longer be called  
The queen of kingdoms.
- <sup>6</sup>I was angry with My people,  
I profaned My heritage  
And gave them into your hand.  
You did not show mercy to them,  
On the aged you made your yoke very heavy.
- <sup>7</sup>Yet you said, ‘I will be a queen forever.’  
These things you did not consider  
Nor remember the outcome of them.

**47:1 “Come down”** This is one of three literary models used by the Hebrew prophets to communicate their divine messages.

1. funeral dirge
2. court scene
3. promise oracle

▣ **“O virgin daughter of Babylon”** This was a Semitic idiom of security and preciousness in family metaphors. She (the Neo-Babylonian Empire) who was so secure and protected, has now become vulnerable.

▣ **“sit in the dust. . .sit on the ground without a throne”** This is literally “sit” (cf. vv. 2[twice],5,8 [twice]). It was one of the physical signs of mourning.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES**

The Israelites expressed sorrow for the death of a loved one and for personal repentance, as well as corporate crimes, in several ways:

1. tear outer robe, Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; II Sam. 1:11; 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Job 1:20
2. put on sackcloth, Gen. 37:34; II Sam. 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Jer. 48:37
3. take off shoes, II Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:3
4. put hands on head, II Sam. 13:19; Jer. 2:37
5. put dust on head, Josh. 7:6; I Sam. 4:12; Neh. 9:1
6. sit on the ground, Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 26:16 (lie on the ground, II Sam. 12:16); Isa. 47:1
7. beat the breast, I Sam. 25:1; II Sam. 11:26; Nahum 2:7
8. cut the body, Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 48:37
9. fast, II Sam. 12:16,21-23; I Kgs. 21:27; I Chr. 10:12; Neh. 1:4
10. chant a lament, II Sam. 1:17; 3:31; II Chr. 35:25
11. baldness (hair pulled out or shaved), Jer. 48:37
12. cut beards short, Jer. 48:37
13. cover head or face, II Sam. 15:30; 19:4

▣ **“Chaldeans”** This is parallel to “Babylon,” see note at 43:14.

▣ **“shall no longer be called tender and delicate”** These two terms (BDB 940 and 772) are used in Deut. 28:56 for luxurious, extravagant living. This is contrasted with vv. 2-3, where she is now

1. a slave
2. a prostitute

**47:2-3** This is a series of phrases used to describe one who used to be the queen of the nations (vv. 5,7) and is now a slave.

1. she grinds meal, v. 1
2. she removes her veil, v. 2
3. she had to prepare her clothes for hard labor, v. 2
4. she had to cross the rivers herself and not be carried (possibly into exile), v. 2

5. her nakedness was uncovered, v. 3
  - a. as a punishment for sin (cf. 20:4)
  - b. simply the lot of slaves who were poorly clad and sexually vulnerable

**47:3**

**NASB** “and will not spare a man”  
**NKJV** “I will not arbitrate with a man”  
**NRSV** “I will spare no one”  
**TEV** “no one will stop me”  
**NJB** “no one stands in My way”  
**JPSOA** “let no man intercede”  
**REB** “show clemency to none”

This is somewhat ambiguous but the term (BDB 803) had an etymological relationship to prayerful intercession (cf. 53:12; 59:16; Jer. 36:25). It seems to mean that no one could intercede for Babylon or that no human was powerful enough in prayer to stop YHWH’s predetermined plan for her judgment.

**47:4** This is an exclamation from the author which interjects itself into the flow of poetry. Three of the beautiful titles for God are seen here as the prophet praises God for Who He is. The titles are

1. Redeemer – an emphasis on God as Savior; He is the One who buys people back from slavery
2. Lord of hosts – a Persian title which focuses on one of two areas
  - a. the angelic council, Isa. 24:21-22
  - b. the astral deities of Babylon, Isa. 40:26
3. the Holy One of Israel – the title for God who will bring this to pass on behalf of His people

**47:5 “Sit silently, and go into darkness”** This major world power has now become a peasant. This verse tells her to seek obscurity and be silent (two IMPERATIVES).

▣ **“The queen of kingdoms”** This is an idiom of Neo-Babylon’s view of itself and its power (cf. v. 7). The queen has become a sex slave (cf. vv. 2-3,8a). What she did to exiles will now happen to her (i.e., divinely caused role reversal).

It is just possible that this idiom relates to Nabonidus leading Neo-Babylon away from *Marduk* to the worship of the moon goddess called “the Queen of heaven.” She was called *Sin* (Akkadian or *Nanna* (Sumerian)).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: MOON WORSHIP**

Moon worship was the most widespread mythology of the Ancient Near East starting with Sumer. There was both a male and female aspect to the myth. Originally the moon god came from the rape of the grain goddess, *Ninlil* by *Enlil*, the sky god. *Enlil* was cast out of the pantheon and condemned to the underworld for his act, but when *Ninlil* found out she was with child she joined him. The child, *Sin*, was allowed to climb into the sky each night.

The worship of the moon is designed by its different phases.

1. new moon – *Asimabbbar*
2. crescent moon – *Sin*
3. full moon – *Nanaa* (Sumerian “illumination” from *En-su*, “lord of wisdom”)

These names basically mean “wise lord” (i.e., *Suen*) or “illumination” (*Nanaa*), worshiped at Ur of the Chaldees. The city itself was often called the city of Nannar. The fertility pair were worshiped at



Ziggurats (large pyramids with flat tops) located in the city. The sun god (*Shamash*) was the firstborn of the couple and later *Ereshkigal* (the Queen of the Underworld) and I Nanna (*the Queen of Heaven/sky*).

The cult was spread all across the ANE, but the major centers of worship were

1. Ur
2. Haran
3. Tema
4. Canaan
5. Mecca

Basically this mythology combined the fertility emphasis with astral worship.

The OT rejects astral worship (cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; II Kgs. 21:3,5; 23:5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5) and fertility worship (i.e., *Ba'al* and *Asherah*, Ugarit poems). The Hebrews, originally nomads, were very careful to resist moon worship because in general moon worship was characteristic of nomadic peoples who traveled at night, while the sun was much more generally worshiped by settled or agricultural peoples. Eventually nomads settle and then astral worship in general became the problem.

**47:6 “I was angry with My people”** This explains why the Jews were taken into exile. In the ancient world the deity of the nation protected them. The fact that both Israel and Judah were taken captive was seen by the world as the gods of the Fertile Crescent being more powerful than the God of Israel, but this was not the case. God was using the powers of the Fertile Crescent to judge His people for their sin (cf. 42:24).

▣ **“You did not show mercy on them”** Although God gave His people to Assyria and Babylon in order to punish them, they went too far and now they will be judged for their lack of mercy.

**47:7 “These things you did not consider**

**Nor remember the outcome of them”**

The two VERBS are *Qal* PERFECTS, which denote a settled attitude.

1. did not consider, lit. “did not lay these things to heart”
2. did not remember their end

Notice how v. 8 continues the thought.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:8-11**

<sup>8</sup>“Now, then, hear this, you sensual one,  
Who dwells securely,  
Who says in your heart,  
‘I am, and there is no one besides me.  
I will not sit as a widow,  
Nor know loss of children.’

<sup>9</sup>But these two things will come on you suddenly in one day:  
Loss of children and widowhood.  
They will come on you in full measure  
In spite of your many sorceries,  
In spite of the great power of your spells.

<sup>10</sup>You felt secure in your wickedness and said,  
‘No one sees me,’

**Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you;  
For you have said in your heart,  
'I am, and there is no one besides me.'**

**<sup>11</sup>But evil will come on you  
Which you will not know how to charm away;  
And disaster will fall on you  
For which you cannot atone;  
And destruction about which you do not know  
Will come on you suddenly."**

**47:8-9 "Who dwells securely. . .but these two things shall come upon you suddenly"** It seems from Daniel 5 and from Herodotus that the people of Babylon laughed at the approaching Persian army. However, the Persian army rechanneled the waters of the Euphrates River, went under the walls of this magnificent city, and in one day the city fell (cf. Daniel 5). The people of Babylon saw the Persians as liberators because Belshazzar and his father, Nabonidus, had begun to worship a strange moon goddess called *Sin* (*Nanna*, see Special Topic at 47:5) and Cyrus allowed them to return to their traditional deities—*Bel*, *Marduk*, and *Nebo*.

**47:8 "I am, and there is no one beside me"** This is an obvious challenge to YHWH (cf. v. 10). Which One delivered His people? Which One is the true, unique God?

**47:9 "Loss of children"** Note Isa. 13:16,18. What she did to others will happen to her!

▣ **"many sorceries. . .the great power of your spells"** The emphasis on Babylon's occultic practices, made so specific here in v. 9, is continued in vv. 11-13. These practices are condemned in Deut. 18:9ff. For all her magical arts Babylon could not protect herself, which shows the corruptness and ineffectiveness of occult practices (i.e., the weakness of her gods).

**47:10 "secure in your wickedness"** The Dead Sea Scrolls change "wickedness" by changing a "d" to an "r," which makes it mean "knowledge." Either of these words fits the context.

▣ **"No one sees me"** This implies that they knew what they were doing was wicked and were trying to hide themselves (cf. Isa. 29:15).

**47:11 "charm"** This means "to bribe." Their magical charms could not bribe YHWH (cf. v. 3c).

▣ **"atone"** This is the Hebrew word "to cover" and is used of the OT concept of atonement as being a blood covering on the mercy seat (cf. Leviticus 16).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:12-15**

**<sup>12</sup>"Stand *fast* now in your spells  
And in your many sorceries  
With which you have labored from your youth;  
Perhaps you will be able to profit,  
Perhaps you may cause trembling.**

**<sup>13</sup>You are wearied with your many counsels;  
Let now the astrologers,**

Those who prophesy by the stars,  
 Those who predict by the new moons,  
 Stand up and save you from what will come upon you.  
<sup>14</sup>Behold, they have become like stubble,  
 Fire burns them;  
 They cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame;  
 There will be no coal to warm by  
 Nor a fire to sit before!  
<sup>15</sup>So have those become to you with whom you have labored,  
 Who have trafficked with you from your youth;  
 Each has wandered in his own way;  
 There is none to save you.”

**47:12 “Perhaps you may cause trembling”** Leupold adds the word “me” to show the possibility that God is telling them to see if their spells threaten Him or cause Him to tremble. This seems to be the meaning of the passage. It may, however, refer to the Persian army (NJB).

**47:13** Not only are Babylon’s deities helpless and humiliated (cf. vv. 1-3,5), but also her prophets and counselors/sorcerers (cf. v. 14).



NASB, NKJV,	
LXX	“counsels”
NRSV, NJB	“consultations”
TEV	“advise”

This is the same Hebrew word (BDB 420) that is translated “purpose” in 46:10,11. This may be a contrast between YHWH’s plans/purposes that will come to pass and the faulty, weak, ineffective plans/purposes of the Babylonian religious elite!

No one “counseled” YHWH (cf. 40:13). He always fulfills His plans (cf. 44:26; 46:10,11).



NASB, NKJV,	
TEV, NJB,	
LXX	“astrologers”
NRSV	“those who study the heavens”
JPSOA	“scanners of heavens”
Peshitta	“Chaldeans
Emphasized Bible	“the dividers of the heavens”

The MT has the *Qal* PERFECT of BDB 211, KB 237 (*ketiv*), which seems to mean “to divide” from an Arabic root. The Masoretic scholars suggested that the *Qal* PARTICIPLE of the same root be read (*qere*). If this is accurate then it is parallel with “those who gaze at the stars” (i.e., astrologers).

**47:14 “There will be no coal to warm by,  
 Nor a fire to sit before”**

Fire is used here as a judgment on the occultic practices of Babylon. Fire did have domestic purposes for cooking food and keeping warm, but this fire will be a fire of judgment.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE**

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

### **A. Positive**

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Pro. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God's leadership (cf. Exod. 13:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
7. God's empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)
8. protection (cf. Zech. 2:5)

### **B. Negative**

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

### **C. God's anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors**

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 16:8)

### **D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse depending on the context.**

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the play between Isa. 45:23 and 46:1-2?
2. What is the word play between Isa. 46:1-2 and 46:3-4?
3. List the number of ways that monotheism is emphasized in Isaiah 46 and 47.
4. What does 46:8 have in common with Isa. 46:12?
5. How does one reconcile God's control over history and human freedom?
6. Why is Isa. 46:12-13 important to our concept of justification by faith?
7. List the number of ways that Babylon has fallen from luxury to slavery.
8. List the types of occult practices found in Isa. 47:9-13.

# ISAIAH 48

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel's Obstinacy	Israel Refined for God's Glory	Hear and See	God is LORD of the Future	Yahweh Has Foretold Everything
48:1-11 (1-11)	48:1-2 (1-2)	48:1-2 (1-2)	48:1-2 (1-2)	48:1-11 (1-11)
	48:3-5 (3-5)	48:3-5 (3-5)	48:3-5 (3-5)	
	48:6-8 (6-8)	48:6-8 (6-8)	48:6-8 (6-8)	
	48:9-11 (9-11)	48:9-11 (9-11)	48:9-11 (9-11)	
Deliverance Promised	God's Ancient Plan to Redeem Israel		Cyrus, the LORD's chosen Leader	Yahweh Has Chosen Cyrus
48:12-16 (12-16)	48:12-13 (12-13)	48:12-13 (12-13)	48:12-13 (12-13)	48:12-15 (12-15)
	48:14-16 (14-16)	48:14-16 (14-16)	48:14-15 (14-15)	Israel's Destiny
			48:16 (16a)	48:16-19 (16-19)
			The LORD's Plan for His People	
48:17-19 (17-19)	48:17-19 (17-19)	48:17-19 (17-19)	48:17 (17)	
			48:18-19 (18-19)	The End of the Exile
48:20-22 (20-22)	48:20-21 (20-21)	48:20-22 (20-22)	48:20-22 (20-22)	48:20-22 (20-22)
	48:22 (22)			

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. AS YHWH addressed Babylon in chapters 46 and 47, He now addresses His people, His returnees, His faithful remnant.
- B. Notice the different ways Israel is referred to.
  1. O house of Jacob, v. 1
  2. who are named Israel, v. 1
  3. who came from the loins of Judah, v. 1
  4. who swear by the name of the LORD, v. 1
  5. who invoke the God of Israel, v. 1
  6. you are obstinate, v. 4
  7. you have been called a rebel from birth, v. 8
  8. O Jacob, vv. 12,20
- C. Notice the different titles and descriptions of YHWH
  1. the name of the LORD, v. 1
  2. the God of Israel, vv. 1,2
  3. I am He, v. 12
  4. I am the first, I am the last, v. 12
  5. the LORD (YHWH), vv. 14,17,20,22
  6. the Lord GOD (*Adon* YHWH), 16
  7. Redeemer, v. 17
  8. the Holy One, v. 17
  9. the LORD your God, v. 17
- D. There are several significant and theologically important verses in this section of Isaiah that will be developed in the NT.
  1. 45:23
  2. 46:8-11
  3. 48:8-11
  4. 48:16
- E. Leupold entitles this chapter “A Sharp Rebuke and a Gracious Challenge” (p. 158). This fluctuation between judgment and mercy characterizes prophetic literature and it happens side by side with little or no transition.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:1-11

- <sup>1</sup>“Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are named Israel  
And who came forth from the loins of Judah,  
Who swear by the name of the LORD  
And invoke the God of Israel,  
*But* not in truth nor in righteousness.  
<sup>2</sup>For they call themselves after the holy city  
And lean on the God of Israel;  
The LORD of hosts is His name.  
<sup>3</sup>I declared the former things long ago  
And they went forth from My mouth, and I proclaimed them.  
Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.  
<sup>4</sup>Because I know that you are obstinate,  
And your neck is an iron sinew  
And your forehead bronze,  
<sup>5</sup>Therefore I declared *them* to you long ago,  
Before they took place I proclaimed *them* to you,  
So that you would not say, ‘My idol has done them,  
And my graven image and my molten image have commanded them.’  
<sup>6</sup>You have heard; look at all this.  
And you, will you not declare it?  
I proclaim to you new things from this time,  
Even hidden things which you have not known.  
<sup>7</sup>They are created now and not long ago;  
And before today you have not heard them,  
So that you will not say, ‘Behold, I knew them.’  
<sup>8</sup>You have not heard, you have not known.  
Even from long ago your ear has not been open,  
Because I knew that you would deal very treacherously;  
And you have been called a rebel from birth.  
<sup>9</sup>For the sake of My name I delay My wrath,  
And *for* My praise I restrain *it* for you,  
In order not to cut you off.  
<sup>10</sup>Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;  
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.  
<sup>11</sup>For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act;  
For how can *My name* be profaned?  
And My glory I will not give to another.”

**48:1 “Hear”** This is a common IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570) for Isaiah, as well as Deuteronomy, Kings, Job, Psalm, and Amos, to begin a new section (cf. 1:2,10; 7:13; 28:22; 36:13; 37:17; 47:18; 46:3,12; 47:8; 48:1,2,14,16; 49:1; 51:1,7; 55:2; 66:5). YHWH wants His message “heard” and “lived out.” Revelation demands obedience! Truth is not only mental but lifestyle!



**NASB, NRSV** “from the loins of Judah”  
**NKJV** “from the wellsprings of Judah”  
**TEV** “you who are descended from Judah”  
**NJB** “issued from the waters of Judah”

There are three Hebrew words that attempt to explain this text.

1. “waters,” וַמֵּי (the UBS Text Project gives it a “B” rating)
2. “loins,” וּמִמְעֵי (NASB, NRSV, AB)
3. “seed,” וּמִזְרֵעַ

All of these Hebrew terms are metaphorical of the descendants by natural means of a group, tribe, family.

Notice that all the descendants are designated by

1. Jacob
2. Israel
3. Judah

This implies the returnees (mostly from the southern three tribes called Judah) from exile. Israel now refers to all of Abraham’s seed, as it did before the United Monarchy before the split in 922 B.C.

▣ **“Who swear. . . invoke”** Both of these VERBS refer to worship acts.

1. swear by the name (cf. 19:18; 65:16)
2. invoke (lit. “cause to remember,” *Hiphil*, cf. 12:4; 26:13; 62:6)



**NASB, NKJV,**  
**LXX** “*But not in truth nor in righteousness*”  
**NRSV** “*But not in truth or right*”  
**TEV** “*But you don’t mean a word you say*”  
**NJB** “*Though not in good faith or uprightness*”  
**JPSOA** “*Though not in truth and sincerity*”  
**REB** “*But not with honesty and sincerity*”

Wow, what a condemning evaluation of Israel’s worship! The term “truth” is אֱמֶת (BDB 54) and means “faithfulness.” See Special Topic at 42:3.

For the second word, יָדָקָה (BDB 842) see Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS**

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous” (BDB 841). The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s



loyalty was tested (cf. Genesis 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God's first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind's repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.
4. restoring the fellowship of the Garden of Eden

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. Based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called "justification by faith." The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term "righteousness" in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaïosunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of Deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy there was no clear delineation between the secular (society's norms) and the sacred (God's will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as "justice" (relating to society) and "righteousness" (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father's love, mercy, and grace; the Son's life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit's wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine's position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term "the righteousness of God" is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], while for the Catholics it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20 is a record of God's restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf.

Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God's image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
  - a. Romans 3:26
  - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
  - c. II Timothy 4:8
  - d. Revelation 16:5
2. Jesus is righteous
  - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
  - b. Matthew 27:19
  - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
  - a. Leviticus 19:2
  - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
  - a. Romans 3:21-31
  - b. Romans 4
  - c. Romans 5:6-11
  - d. Galatians 3:6-14
  - e. Given by God
    - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
    - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
    - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
  - f. Received by faith
    - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
    - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
  - g. Through acts of the Son
    - 1) Romans 5:21
    - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
    - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
  - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
  - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
  - c. Ephesians 1:4; 2:10
  - d. I Timothy 6:11
  - e. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
  - f. John 3:7
  - g. I Peter 2:24
6. God will judge the world by righteousness
  - a. Acts 17:31

b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

1. a decree of God
2. a gift of God
3. an act of Christ
4. a life to be lived

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the *Parousia*!

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects.

1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
3. the gospel is a changed life (Catholic emphasis)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

**48:2** The first two lines remind me of Jeremiah’s “Temple Sermon” in Jeremiah 7, where the Israelites trust in the temple but not in YHWH.

1. call themselves after the holy city (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. v. 1)
2. lean on (BDB 701, KB 759, *Niphal* PERFECT)

Their worship looked orthodox and pious but it was false and directed to the wrong source.

**48:3** YHWH again speaks (notice the number of “I’s”) of His control of time and history. He uses predictive prophecy to show His people His existence and power.

**48:4** YHWH describes His people as

1. obstinate (cf. Ezek. 2:4; 3:7)
2. neck is an iron sinew
3. forehead is bronze

▣ **“know”** This word (BDB 393, KB 390) is used several times in this chapter (cf. 48:4,6,7,8 [twice]), where it means “knowledge about,” but it should mean “intimate fellowship with.”

**48:6** There is some question about how the VERBS of the first two lines should be translated. I like the NJB's version, "You have heard and seen all this, why won't you admit it?"

The "it" refers to YHWH's predictions (cf. v. 5). YHWH proves His existence by His knowledge of and control of future events affecting all nations not just Israel/Judah.

**48:8 "deal very treacherously"** This intensified grammatical form is a *Qal* IMPERFECT and a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root (BDB 93, KB 108).

▣ **"a rebel from birth"** See Deut. 9:7. Even in the exit from Egypt, Israel was idolatrous (i.e., Ezek. 20:8,13; Amos 5:25-26).

**48:9** This is a good summary of YHWH's problem with Abraham's seed. He wanted to use them so that the world would know Him and come to Him (cf. Gen. 12:3, see Special Topic at 40:15). But they were not faithful. He had declared, "the soul that sins it will die" (i.e., Gen. 2:16,17; Ezek. 18:4,20). Now God's word and God's purpose come into conflict. He will choose to act for the greater good (i.e., salvation of all humans, cf. I Sam. 12:22; Ps. 106:8; Jer. 14:7; Ezek. 20:8-9,14,17). The text that describes this so well is Ezek. 36:22-38! YHWH acts for Israel for His greater purpose! Is this not what Isa. 48:11 is affirming? This is the wonderful message of Isaiah. See Special Topic at 40:15.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:12-16**

<sup>12</sup>**"Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called;**

**I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.**

<sup>13</sup>**Surely My hand founded the earth,**

**And My right hand spread out the heavens;**

**When I call to them, they stand together.**

<sup>14</sup>**Assemble, all of you, and listen!**

**Who among them has declared these things?**

**The LORD loves him; he will carry out His good pleasure on Babylon,**

**And His arm *will be against* the Chaldeans.**

<sup>15</sup>**I, even I, have spoken; indeed I have called him,**

**I have brought him, and He will make his ways successful.**

<sup>16</sup>**Come near to Me, listen to this:**

**From the first I have not spoken in secret,**

**From the time it took place, I was there.**

**And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit."**

**48:12 "I am He, I am the first, I am also the last"** This is a recurrent idiom in Isaiah (cf. 41:4; 44:6) and becomes a common designation for Christ in Rev. 1:8,17; 22:13! It denotes the God of creation (v. 13) and eternity. Eternity past, eternity future. The only God is YHWH (see Special Topic: Monotheism at 40:14).

**48:14** The two IMPERATIVES of line 1 are repeated in v. 16, line 1.

Also note the parallelism between "the LORD loves him" and "His arm." Cyrus is God's instrument against Babylon on behalf of Israel.

**48:15** The first phrase ("I, even I, have spoken," BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT) is a way of accepting the power of YHWH's spoken word (cf. 55:11). His purposes cannot be thwarted!

**48:16**

**NASB** “now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit”

**NKJV** “and now the Lord GOD and His Spirit have sent Me”

**NRSV** “and now the Lord GOD has sent me and his spirit”

**TEV** “Now the Sovereign LORD has given me his power and sent Me”

**NJB** “and now Lord Yahweh has sent me with his spirit”

**JPSOA** “and now the Lord GOD has sent me, endowed with His Spirit”

**LXX** “and now the LORD has sent me and his spirit”

Wow! How many persons and who are they who are being mentioned? Who is the speaker? Obviously one is YHWH. His Spirit is probably the same as Gen. 1:2; Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1. But who is the “me”?

1. the “I” of line 3
2. the prophet Isaiah
3. the Messiah (or the Servant)
4. Cyrus II (as if speaking)

Christians can easily see the Trinity in this text (see Special Topic at 40:13). The same three persons are mentioned again in 61:1.

See Special Topic: The Personhood of the Spirit at 42:1.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:17-19**

<sup>17</sup>Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,

“I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit,  
Who leads you in the way you should go.

<sup>18</sup>If only you had paid attention to My commandments!

Then your well-being would have been like a river,  
And your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

<sup>19</sup>Your descendants would have been like the sand,

And your offspring like its grains;  
Their name would never be cut off or destroyed from My presence.”

**48:17 “the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel”** This is a recurrent title in this section of Isaiah (cf. 41:14; 43:14; 49:7,26; 54:5,8). It is expressed in a slightly different but parallel way in 49:26, “I the LORD, am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” See Special Topic: The Names for Deity at 40:3.

▣ **“who teaches you to profit”** This is “profit” (BDB 418 I, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) in the sense of advantage (cf. Job 21:15; 35:3; Jer. 12:13; Isa. 47:12). Often it is used of what idols cannot do for the worshiper (cf. 44:9,10; 57:12; I Sam. 12:21; Jer. 2:8; 7:8,11; 23:32; Hab. 2:18).

▣ **“Who leads you in the way you should go”** This is the Semitic idiom of the righteous life as a “good path” (cf. Ps. 32:8; 119:105). Here it probably refers to YHWH’s presence and provision on the way home from exile (cf. v. 20; 49:9-10).

**48:18-19** This is a “what if . . .” text that reflects the covenant blessing and cursing of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-29. Israel sinned and reaped the terrible consequences. She was created for righteousness and revelation, but disobedience and idolatry led to darkness and confusion.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:20-22**

<sup>20</sup>**Go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans!**

**Declare with the sound of joyful shouting, proclaim this,**

**Send it out to the end of the earth;**

**Say, “The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob.”**

<sup>21</sup>**They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts.**

**He made the water flow out of the rock for them;**

**He split the rock and the water gushed forth.**

<sup>22</sup>**“There is no peace for the wicked,” says the LORD.**

**48:20** This is a series of commands to the returning Jewish exiles.

1. Go forth from Babylon – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 422, KB 425)
2. Flee from the Chaldeans – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 137, KB 156)
3. Declare with the sound of joyful shouting – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 616, KB 665)
4. Proclaim this – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570)
5. Send it out to the end of the earth – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 422, KB 425)
6. Say. . . – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 55, KB 65)

YHWH announces to His people to leave exile and go home. To the world He announces His purpose (cf. 62:11; Jer. 31:10; 50:2) and that He has accomplished it! He wants the world to know so they will come to know Him (cf. 2:2-4; 42:6; 45:22-23; 51:4-5; 60:1,3; Acts 13:46-49)!

**48:21** The return from Assyrian and Babylonian exile was seen as a new exodus and wilderness wandering. YHWH will provide their every need. He will be with them as He was with the Israelites during the exodus.

**48:22** This is a summary statement related to unbelievers, idolaters (cf. 57:21; 59:8). Any path without YHWH is a path of destruction and ruin. This decision-making process is known in the OT as “the two ways” (cf. Deut. 30:15; Pro. 4:10-19; Jer. 21:8; Matt. 7:13-14).

# ISAIAH 49

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salvation Reaches to the End of the Earth	The Servant, The Light to the Gentiles	The Second Servant Song	Israel, A Light to the Nations	Second Song of the Servant
49:1-4 (1-4)	49:1-2 (1-2)	49:1-4 (1-4)	49:1-3 (1-3)	49:1-7 (1-7)
	49:3-4 (3-4)		49:4-5 (4-5)	
49:5-7 (5-7)	49:5-6 (5-6)	49:5-6 (5-6)		
		Return and Restoration	49:6 (6)	
	49:7 (7)	49:7 (7)	49:7a (7a)	
			49:7b (7b)	
			The Restoration of Jerusalem	The Joyful Homecoming
49:8-13 (8-13)	49:8-9a (8-9a)	49:8-12 (8-12)	49:8-10 (8-10)	49:8-12 (8-12)
	49:9b-12 (9b-12)			
			49:11-16 (11-16)	
	49:13 (13)	49:13 (13)		49:13-17 (13-17)
Promises to Zion	God Will Remember Zion			
49:14-21 (14-21)	49:14-18 (14-18)	49:14-18 (14-18)		
			49:17-18 (17-18)	
				49:18-22 (18-22)
	49:19-21 (19-21)	49:19-21 (19-21)	49:19-21 (19-21)	
49:22-23 (22-23)	49:22-23 (22-23)	49:22-23 (22-23)	49:22-23 (22-23)	
				49:23-26 (23-26)
49:24-26 (24-26)	49:24 (24)	49:24-26 (24-26)	49:24 (24)	
	49:25-26 (25-26)		49:25-26 (25-26)	

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)**

#### ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS**

- A. The literary unit of Isaiah 40-66 focuses on God's restoration of His people through the work of "His Servant" (cf. chapters 49-57).
- B. This passage is known as the second Servant Song. See full list of the Songs/Poems at the Introduction to chapter 42, A.
- C. This chapter has several important truths.
  1. God has prepared a special Savior/Servant
  2. This special Servant will bring all people to God
  3. God has not forgotten His Servant nation, Israel
- D. Note the parallel themes and imagery between chapters 40 and 49.

### **WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:1-4**

- <sup>1</sup> **"Listen to Me, O islands,  
And pay attention, you peoples from afar.  
The LORD called Me from the womb;  
From the body of My mother He named Me.**
- <sup>2</sup>**He has made My mouth like a sharp sword,  
In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me;  
And He has also made Me a select arrow,  
He has hidden Me in His quiver.**
- <sup>3</sup>**He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel,**



**In Whom I will show My glory.”**

**“But I said, “I have toiled in vain,**

**I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity;**

**Yet surely the justice *due* to Me is with the LORD ,**

**And My reward with My God.”**

**49:1 “Listen”** See full note on the introductory IMPERATIVE at 48:1.

There are two IMPERATIVES that introduce this new literary unit.

1. listen – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570)

2. pay attention – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 904, KB 1151)

God’s revelation of Himself and His purposes was meant to be heard, understood, and acted on!

▣ **“O islands. . .peoples from afar”** These parallel phrases show the universal implications of the “servant’s” task (cf. 42:7). The love of God

1. remembers its covenant with Abraham’s descendants (cf. vv. 5-6b)

2. remembers the promise to all humans, Gen. 3:15; 12:3 (cf. v. 6c)

There is a dual aspect to YHWH’s message

1. to the returning Jewish exiles under Cyrus

2. to the returning nations under the Servant/Messiah

There is always in Isaiah an eye on the present (Assyria); the near Future (Babylon, Persia), and the distant future (gospel age). YHWH’s desires for Israel’s

1. righteousness

2. revelation to the nations

was never fulfilled. The evangelistic mandate (see Special Topic at 40:15) was transferred to the NT people of God (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8).

▣ **“The LORD called Me from the womb”** The NASB has the PRONOUNS capitalized to show that they refer to the Messiah, the individualized Servant. God’s special call is expressed in the Servant’s prenatal call (as was Jeremiah, cf. Jer. 1:5). There is an obvious tension in these “Servant” passages between the individual and corporate aspects of the Servant. It is clear from 41:8-9; 42:19; 43:10; 49:3 that the title is corporate Israel. However, the individual focus of the SINGULAR PRONOUNS of chapter 49 and the work of the individual in 52:13-53:12 show that these passages have a dual focus. This dual focus can also be seen in chapter 42. Verses 1-4 relate to the Messiah, while vv. 19-21 are obviously corporate Israel. Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests to bring the world to God, Gen. 12:1-3; Exod. 19:4-6. She failed because she did not and could not keep the covenant. God fulfilled His universal redemptive task through one faithful Israelite—Jesus! This same tension between the individual and corporate can be seen in that 49:6 is quoted in Luke 2:32 to refer to Jesus’ ministry and in Acts 13:46-49 referring to the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.

▣ **“From the body of My mother”** The word “body” is literally “inward parts” (BDB 588). This speaks of the creation and development of a baby (cf. Ps. 139:13). This same word is used in 48:19 for “offspring” (also note Gen. 15:4).

▣ **“He named Me”** The Servant is called and named before birth by YHWH. He is His special representative.

This parallels what YHWH did for national Israel in 43:1. There is a real and continuing fluidity between the corporate and individual imagery related to the Servant!

**49:2 “He has made My mouth like a sharp sword”** This is a metaphor describing a powerful speaker, and here and in Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12 it speaks of revelation. It is used to describe the glorified Christ as Judge in Isa. 11:4; Rev. 1:16; 2:12-16; 19:15,21.

▣ **“In the shadow of His hand”** This verse has two metaphors of protection and concealment (cf. 51:16) until the right time. The Servant’s task is specialized and specific. This thought is captured by the recurrent NT phrase “in the fullness of time” (cf. Mark 1:15; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10; I Tim. 2:6; Titus 1:3).

**40:3-4** The focus of these verses is that the Servant is corporate Israel, but the corporate Servant has failed its assigned task! Israel was to be God’s chosen instrument of world redemption, v. 6c,d, but now she herself must be redeemed (cf. vv. 5-6a,b; 53:8d).

**49:4** There is a contextual question if these verses relate to the failure of Israel or the suffering of the Messiah. All the VERBS are PERFECT. The ambiguity may be purposeful!

The closing two lines of v. 4 express an ultimate trust in God’s justice and reward (cf. v. 5c).

▣ **“My reward with My God”** I think this links up with 53:10-11. The reward will be redemption on a global scale!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:5-7**

<sup>5</sup>And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,  
To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him  
(For I am honored in the sight of the LORD,  
And My God is My strength),  
<sup>6</sup>He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant  
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;  
I will also make You a light of the nations  
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”  
<sup>7</sup>Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel *and* its Holy One,  
To the despised One,  
To the One abhorred by the nation,  
To the Servant of rulers,  
“Kings will see and arise,  
Princes will also bow down,  
Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.”

**49:5 “To bring Jacob back to Him”** This verse and v. 6b show that the Servant must restore Israel, therefore, the Servant cannot be Israel.

▣ **“(For I am honored in the sight of the LORD,  
And My God is My strength)”**

This is a comment from the Servant. It may be a way of encouraging the Servant amidst the disappointments and opposition He will encounter during His ministry (cf. 53:1-12).

**49:6 “to restore the preserved ones of Israel”** This phrase refers to the faithful remnant (see Special Topic at 46:3) of the Chosen People, the chosen instrument of revelation. The hope of a restored,

believing Israel is seen in Zech. 12:10 and Romans 9-11 (see the free commentaries on these books at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org) ).

▣ **“I will also make You a light of the nations**

**So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth”**

Notice the Servant/Messiah had two purposes. If v. 5 reflects the Israel-focused ministry of the Gospels, then v. 6 represents the worldwide expansion of the early church. This universal spread of the gospel is an oft-repeated theme in Isaiah (cf. 2:2-4; 42:6; 45:22-23; 51:4; 60:1,3; Acts 13:46-49).

**49:7 “the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and its Holy One”** This series of titles (see note at 48:17) shows us the tension between

1. the transcendent and immanent God
2. God as Savior and God as Judge
3. God as friend and God as boss

We must hold together justification and sanctification. They form one purpose! YHWH wants a people who display His character.

▣ **“To the despised One,**

**To the One abhorred by the nation,**

**To the Servant of rulers”**

This implies the lowliness of the Servant, even the rejection of the Servant (cf. 50:4-11; 52:14-53:6; Psalm 22). But ultimately all earthly authority will acknowledge Him (cf. Phil. 2:6-11, which alludes to Isa. 45:22-23).

Is it not ironical that the one despised and abhorred by the nations (cf. Psalm 2) is the very one that will bring salvation to the nations!

▣ **“Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You”** Here is the key to our hope, YHWH’s faithfulness. Our hope is in the character of the One who calls, promises, and redeems!

**SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL’S GOD**

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Compassionate (BDB 933)   | – | Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 2. Gracious (BDB 337)  | – | Exod. 34:6; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2             |
| 3. Slow to anger (BDB74 CONSTRUCT BDB 60)                                | – | Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2                                     |
| 4. Abounding in steadfast love (BDB 912 I CONSTRUCT BDB 338)             | – | Exod. 34:6-7; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2                                   |
| 5. Faithful (BDB 54)   | – | Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15  |
| 6. Abundant forgiveness (BDB 699)  | – | Neh. 9:17  |
| 7. Did not forsake them (BDB 736 I)                                      | – | Neh. 9:17,31   |
| 8. Repents of evil (BDB 636, KB 688, <i>Niphal</i> PARTICIPLE + BDB 948) | – | Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2  |
| 9. The great God (BDB 42, 152)   | – | Neh. 1:5; 9:32   |

- |                                       |   |                      |
|---------------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 10. Great and terrible (BDB 152, 431) | – | Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32 |
| 11. Keeps covenant (BDB 1036, 136)    | – | Neh. 1:5; 9:32       |
| 12. Steadfast love (BDB 338)          | – | Neh. 1:5; 9:32       |

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:8-13**

<sup>8</sup>Thus says the LORD,  
 “In a favorable time I have answered You,  
 And in a day of salvation I have helped You;  
 And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people,  
 To restore the land, to make *them* inherit the desolate heritages;  
<sup>9</sup>Saying to those who are bound, ‘Go forth,’  
 To those who are in darkness, ‘Show yourselves.’  
 Along the roads they will feed,  
 And their pasture *will be* on all bare heights.  
<sup>10</sup>They will not hunger or thirst,  
 Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down;  
 For He who has compassion on them will lead them  
 And will guide them to springs of water.  
<sup>11</sup>I will make all My mountains a road,  
 And My highways will be raised up.  
<sup>12</sup>Behold, these will come from afar;  
 And lo, these *will come* from the north and from the west,  
 And these from the land of Sinim.”  
<sup>13</sup>Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth!  
 Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains!  
 For the LORD has comforted His people  
 And will have compassion on His afflicted.

**49:8** Notice that “in a favorable time” and “in a day of salvation” are parallel. This text is quoted in II Cor. 6:2. It is used in Ps. 69:13-15 for a day of deliverance. It can denote physical or spiritual deliverance/salvation. The Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10) symbolized this radical forgiveness of debts. In this context they are talking about the return to Palestine, which began with Cyrus’ decree in 538 B.C. and was accomplished in several waves.

1. Sheshbazzar – Ezra 1
2. Zerubbabel and Joshua – Ezra 2
3. Nehemiah – Nehemiah 1
4. Ezra – Nehemiah 8

Notice the VERBS in v. 8 that describe YHWH’s actions.

1. I have answered You – *Qal* PERFECT (BDB 772, KB 851)
2. I have helped You – *Qal* PERFECT (BDB 740, KB 810)
3. I will keep You – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 665, KB 718)
4. I will give You – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 678, KB 733)
  - a. to restore the land – *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 877, KB 1086)
  - b. to make them inherit – *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 635, KB 686)

▣ “. . .give You for a covenant of the people” This phrase was used earlier in 42:6 in which the themes of 49:6,8 coincide. YHWH’s covenant with Abraham and his seed had a wider orientation than just Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3; see Special Topic at 40:15). This was also for the whole world (i.e., the nations). This is the logical and theological implication of monotheism—only one God (see Special Topic at 40:14), all humans created in God’s image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), and a promise to redeem all humans in Gen. 3:15, long before there was a nation of Israel.

**49:8d-12** These verses are metaphors of sheep feeding in abundant pastures. They reflect the covenant blessing of Deuteronomy 27-28. God’s people have been restored to the Promised Land! Paul uses this text for the New Age in II Cor. 6:2. Verse 10 is also used in Rev. 7:16, which shows Gentiles are included.

**49:9** The Israelites are described as being in prison (i.e., prisoners, BDB 63, cf. 42:7; 61:1).

1. to those who are bound
2. to those who are in darkness

They are told to

1. go forth – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 422, KB 425)
2. show yourselves – *Niphal* IMPERATIVE (lit. “uncover yourself,” BDB162, KB 191)

**49:10 “He who has compassion on them will lead them”** These are descriptive titles for YHWH.

1. the one who has compassion – *Piel* PARTICIPLE (BDB 933, KB 1216)
2. the one who leads them – *Piel* IMPERFECT (BDB 624, KB 675)
3. the one who will guide them – *Piel* IMPERFECT (BDB 624, KB 675)

▣ The agricultural metaphors of provision from v. 9 continue.

1. no hunger
2. no thirst
3. no heat stroke

The return home will be easy, protected and with abundant provisions. This same imagery is used in Rev. 7:16 of the Messianic period. YHWH’s Messiah is their shepherd (cf. Ps. 121:5-6).

**49:11** Access to Jerusalem is metaphorically assured by the removal of all obstacles and the provision of a repaired, even raised, roadway (cf. 11:16; 19:23; 62:10).

There will be a free-flowing movement between nations for the purpose of worshiping YHWH.

The nations have come!

It is interesting how many times Isaiah uses the imagery of a highway.

1. a highway for the exiled Jews to return, 11:16; 57:14
2. a highway for Gentile worshipers to come, 19:23
3. a highway of holiness, 26:7; 35:8; 43:19; 49:11; 51:10
4. a Messianic highway, 40:3; 42:16

**49:12 “. . .And these from the land of Sinim”** The exact location is uncertain. The thrust of the text is that God will bring all His people home, even from the farthest land.

1. NASB, NKJV, Peshitta – “Sinim”
2. NRSV, REB – “Syene”
3. TEV, NIV, NJB – “Aswan”
4. DSS – “Syenians”

All of these are various spellings of the ancient and modern city in southern Egypt which had a large Jewish population (cf. Ezek. 30:6).

**49:13 “O heaven. . .O earth. . .O mountains”** These have served as witnesses to God’s judgment against His people (i.e., 44:23). Now they serve as joyful witnesses of God’s faithfulness (cf. 48:1ff)!

Notice the series of IMPERATIVES.

1. shout – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 943, KB 1247)
2. rejoice – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 162, KB 189)
3. break forth – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 822, KB 953)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:14-21**

- <sup>14</sup> But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me,  
And the Lord has forgotten me.”**
- <sup>15</sup> “Can a woman forget her nursing child  
And have no compassion on the son of her womb?  
Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.**
- <sup>16</sup> Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of *My hands*;  
Your walls are continually before Me.**
- <sup>17</sup> Your builders hurry;  
Your destroyers and devastators  
Will depart from you.**
- <sup>18</sup> Lift up your eyes and look around;  
All of them gather together, they come to you.  
As I live,” declares the LORD ,  
“You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride.**
- <sup>19</sup> For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land—  
Surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants,  
And those who swallowed you will be far away.**
- <sup>20</sup> The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears,  
‘The place is too cramped for me;  
Make room for me that I may live *here*.’**
- <sup>21</sup> Then you will say in your heart,  
‘Who has begotten these for me,  
Since I have been bereaved of my children  
And am barren, an exile and a wanderer?  
And who has reared these?  
Behold, I was left alone;  
From where did these come?’”**

**49:14-21** These verses are words of encouragement by God to a discouraged and barren Jerusalem (i.e., Zion). Notice the number of times the word “forget” (BDB 1013, KB 1489) is used.

1. “the Lord has forgotten me” – *Qal* PERFECT
2. “can a woman forget her nursing child” – *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. “even these may forget” – *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. “I will not forget you” – *Qal* IMPERFECT

God uses anthropomorphic language to describe His love and faithful protection to the returnees by means of a feminine metaphor (hear sermon online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org) under “Difficult and Controversial Texts,” number 111, “The Femininity of God.”

**49:15** This is a powerful metaphor of God’s covenant love (cf. 66:9-13). YHWH is described in terms of a nursing mother. See Special Topic at 41:2.

**49:16-17** This is another powerful metaphor of God's constant remembrance of His covenant with Abraham's descendants. Even when Jerusalem is in ruins, God's people envision the new day of restoration!

**49:17**

**NASB** "your builders hurry"

**NKJV** "your sons make haste"

**NJB** "your rebuilders are hurrying"

**JPSOA** "swiftly your children are coming"

The UBS Text Project (p. 134-135) shows the two options.

1. your son, בִּנְיָ – MT, DSS
2. your builders, בְּנֵיךְ – which the UBS calls "Babylonian vocalization"

The UBS Text Project gives option #2 a C rating (considerable doubt).

The second line is also in question.

1. REV – "Your builders outstrip your destroyers"
2. NEB – "Those who are to rebuild you make better speed than those who pulled you down"

This difference involves only a revocalization of the Hebrew consonants (UBS Text Project, p. 135).

**49:18** Jerusalem was destroyed! She is pictured as a mother without children (cf. vv. 20-21). Her husband, YHWH, has now restored her and provided numerous children as the crown of her old age!

YHWH challenges the returnees to

1. lift up your eyes – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 669, KB 724)
2. look around – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 906, KB 1157)

**49:21-22** Those who return to Jerusalem, which symbolizes the worship of YHWH (i.e., the temple), will be so many that the city cannot physically contain them all!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:22-23**

<sup>22</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD,

"Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations  
And set up My standard to the peoples;  
And they will bring your sons in *their* bosom,  
And your daughters will be carried on *their* shoulders.

<sup>23</sup>Kings will be your guardians,

And their princesses your nurses.

They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth

And lick the dust of your feet;

And *you* will know that I am the LORD;

Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame."

**49:22-23** In v. 7 the leaders of the Gentile nations rejected and rebelled against God's Messiah (cf. Psalm 2). Now they come repentantly to Jerusalem bringing God's covenant people, the Jews, with them. This verse is not meant to magnify the Old Covenant, but the covenant-making God! The Gentiles' reverence for YHWH will be seen in their respect for His people (cf. 45:14).

**49:22 “set up My standard to the peoples”** This is parallel to “lift up My hand to the nations.” The Servant will be a signal/flag for the nations (i.e., Gentiles) to rally (cf. 11:10,12). The ultimate goal of the covenant peoples’ restoration is the restoration of all humanity! See Special Topic at 45:23.

**49:23 “And you will know that I am the LORD”** Israel was meant to be a witness to the nations. Now the nations will be a witness to Israel. As Gentiles trust in YHWH and are converted in large numbers, this is a sign to Israel that God is with them but that they must also have faith (cf. Romans 9-11).

▣ **“Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame”** The concept of “wait” is found often in Isaiah: 25:9; 26:8; 40:31 (Ps. 37:9). This is analogous to those who “trust in” the Servant!

The phrase “put to shame” is another theme of the OT (cf. 45:17; Ps. 25:3; Joel 2:27). Those who wait/trust will not be shamed/disappointed!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:24-26**

<sup>24</sup>“Can the prey be taken from the mighty man,  
Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?”

<sup>25</sup>Surely, thus says the LORD,  
“Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away,  
And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued;  
For I will contend with the one who contends with you,  
And I will save your sons.

<sup>26</sup>I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh,  
And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine;  
And all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior  
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

**49:24-26** These verses are metaphorical of a second exodus experience. God is delivering His people again from powerful world empires. It is significant that God’s purpose in this deliverance, like His first deliverance, is not only that His covenant people might go free but that all nations will know Him (cf. v. 26c; 45:6; Mal. 1:11).

**49:24b**

**NASB, NRSV,**

**NJB** “a tyrant”

**NKJV** “the righteous”

**REB** “the ruthless”

**JPSOA** “victor”

The translation followed by NKJV is found in the MT, but the others from the DSS, Syriac, and Vulgate.

1. righteous – צדיק
2. tyrant – ערץ

**49:25 “For I will contend”** This is “court scene” imagery. Possibly its use in Jer. 50:34 sheds light on this verse.

YHWH/Servant has changed from Prosecutor to Advocate!

**49:26d** Notice again the powerful titles for the Deity of Israel (cf. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16).



# ISAIAH 50

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Helps His Servant	The Servant, Israel's Hope	Covenant, Faithfulness, and Judgment		Israel's Punishment
50:1-3 (1-3)	50:1-3 (1-3)	50:1-3 (1-3)	50:1 (1)	50:1-3 (1-3)
			50:2-3 (2-3)	
			The Obedience of the LORD'S Servant	Third Song of the Servant
50:4-11 (4-11)	50:4-6 (4-6)	50:4-6 (4-6)	50:4-6 (4-6)	50:4-11 (4-11)
	50:7-9 (7-9)	50:7-9 (7-9)	50:7-9 (7-9)	
	50:10-11 (10-11)	50:10-11 (10-11)	50:10-11 (10-11)	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is the third Servant Song (50:4-9).
- B. In 49:25d the court imagery is used with the Servant as the defense advocate. Here the court imagery is used of YHWH as divorcing His covenant people for their faithlessness.

- C. In contrast to the faithlessness of the covenant people, the faithfulness of the Servant, the ideal Israelite, is stressed. He will accomplish what Israel could not!
- D. Notice that most English translations see three paragraphs in vv. 4-11, which would denote three main truths.
  - 1. vv. 4-6
  - 2. vv. 7-9
  - 3. vv. 10-11

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD,  
 “Where is the certificate of divorce  
 By which I have sent your mother away?  
 Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you?  
 Behold, you were sold for your iniquities,  
 And for your transgressions your mother was sent away.  
<sup>2</sup>Why was there no man when I came?  
 When I called, *why* was there none to answer?  
 Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom?  
 Or have I no power to deliver?  
 Behold, I dry up the sea with My rebuke,  
 I make the rivers a wilderness;  
 Their fish stink for lack of water  
 And die of thirst.  
<sup>3</sup>I clothe the heavens with blackness  
 And make sackcloth their covering.”

**50:1** There are two ancient legal situations used to highlight Israel’s legal standing.

- 1. divorce of a faithless wife (cf. 54:6-7; Jer. 3:1,8; Hos. 2:4)
- 2. the selling of someone into slavery for a debt (cf. Deut. 32:30; II Kgs. 4:1; Neh. 5:5)

For Israel’s “iniquities” and “transgressions” she was judged and exiled. It was not the weakness of YHWH, but the rebellion of His people (cf. 59:2).

**50:2** This verse starts with a series of four rhetorical questions, as v. 1 had two. The first two deal with YHWH, surprised at the lack of intercession and faith response.

He asks if Israel had lost confidence in His ability to save!

▣ **“Is My hand so short”** This is a *Qal* PERFECT and a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root (BDB 894, KB 1126), which intensifies a concept, here a question.

▣ **“ransom”** See Special Topic at 41:4. It is parallel to “deliver.”

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:4-11

<sup>4</sup>The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples,  
 That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.

He awakens *Me* morning by morning,  
 He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.  
<sup>5</sup>The Lord GOD has opened My ear;  
 And I was not disobedient  
 Nor did I turn back.  
<sup>6</sup>I gave My back to those who strike *Me*,  
 And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard;  
 I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.  
<sup>7</sup>For the Lord GOD helps Me,  
 Therefore, I am not disgraced;  
 Therefore, I have set My face like flint,  
 And I know that I will not be ashamed.  
<sup>8</sup>He who vindicates Me is near;  
 Who will contend with Me?  
 Let us stand up to each other;  
 Who has a case against Me?  
 Let him draw near to Me.  
<sup>9</sup>Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me;  
 Who is he who condemns Me?  
 Behold, they will all wear out like a garment;  
 The moth will eat them.  
<sup>10</sup>Who is among you that fears the LORD,  
 That obeys the voice of His servant,  
 That walks in darkness and has no light?  
 Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.  
<sup>11</sup>Behold, all you who kindle a fire,  
 Who encircle yourselves with firebrands,  
 Walk in the light of your fire  
 And among the brands you have set ablaze.  
 This you will have from My hand:  
 You will lie down in torment.

**50:4-6** These verses describe aspects of the Servant's ministry (in His own words).

1. gifted to listen
2. gifted to encourage, v. 4a
3. He listens to
  - a. hurting, weary ones (cf. Jer. 31:25), v. 4b
  - b. YHWH, vv. 4c,d,5a
4. He was not disobedient, v. 5b
5. He did not turn back, v. 5c
6. He yielded Himself to abuse by leaders (cf. Matt. 26:67; 27:30; Mark 15:9)
  - a. whipped His back
  - b. plucked out His beard
  - c. spit in His face

The Servant's verbal skills will lead to a rejection of His message and person by those who refuse to listen (cf. v. 11).

**50:4a “disciple”** This is a rare word (BDB 541), found only here (twice) and 8:16 in this sense. Usually it is translated “taught” (54:13).

**50:4b**

**NASB, NRSV** “sustain the weary one”

**NKJV** “speak a word in season to him who is weary”

**TEV** “strengthen the weary”

**NJB** “to give a word of comfort to the weary”

**JPSOA** “speak timely words to the weary”

**REB** “to console the weary”

Obviously the MT is ambiguous because the word “sustain” (BDB 736, KB 804) appears only here.

**50:4c,d** There is a repeated *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (BDB 734, KB 802), “awakens.” In the *Hiphil* it is used to rouse or stir up activity.

1. 13:17 – the Medes (Jer. 51:11)
2. 41:2,25 – Cyrus II
3. 45:13 – Cyrus II
4. here – the Servant
5. Dan. 11:2 – inter-biblical ruler

YHWH is in control of world history and world redemption!

**50:6** The specific treatment of the obedient Servant is a foreshadowing of the treatment of Jesus. This introduces the fourth Servant Song in 52:13-53:13, esp. vv. 3,4-5,7-9. The Servant will pay a high price for His loyalty, trust, and obedience in YHWH (cf. Psalm 2, 22). There is a purpose in suffering for Him (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21; the book of Hebrews).

**50:7-9** The first verse of this strophe is repeated in v. 9a, “the Lord (*Adon*) GOD (YHWH) helps me.”

Because of this the Servant will not

1. be disgraced
2. set His face like flint (cf. Luke 9:51)
3. be ashamed

Why, because YHWH acts on His behalf, introduced by another series of questions (vv. 8-9). The grammatical structure (i.e., “Who. . .?”) runs through v. 10.

**50:8**

**NASB, NRSV** “vindicate”

**NKJV, LXX** “justifies”

**TEV** “prove me innocent”

**NJB** “saving justice”

**JPSOA** “My vindicator”

**REB** “will clear my name”

As vv. 6-7 describe an unjust trial, so v. 8 describes a just verdict. The VERB (BDB 842, KB 1003) is a *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE which means “declare righteous” (cf. Exod. 23:7; Deut. 25:1; I Kgs. 8:32; Pro. 17:15). It is used in a negative context in Isa. 5:23. It describes

1. God in this context
2. the Servant in 53:11

▣ **“Let him draw near to Me”** This is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. The VERB (BDB 620, KB 670) is used of approaching a judge at trial. Notice here the Servant is the Judge.

**50:10-11** AB takes these two verses as a response to the Servant (p. 116), apparently by YHWH (Leupold, p. 196). There is a contrast between two kinds of “light.”

1. the darkness of those who have faith in God and His Messiah but do not fully understand (v. 10)
  - a. let him trust in the name of the Lord – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 105, KB 120) used in a JUSSIVE sense
  - b. let him rely on his God – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 1043, KB 1612) used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. those who make their own light (i.e., fire, see Special Topic at 47:14) and walk in it (*Qal* IMPERATIVE) which will eventually consume them (i.e., lie down in torment, v. 11)

# ISAIAH 51

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel Exhorted	The LORD Comforts Zion	Salvation For Abraham's Children	Words of Comfort to Jerusalem	The Blessings in Store For the Chosen People
51:1-3 (1-3)	51:1-2 (1-2)	51:1-3 (1-3)	51:1-2 (1-2)	51:1-3 (1-3)
	51:3 (3)		51:3 (3)	
51:4-8 (4-8)	51:4-6 (4-6)	51:4-8 (4-8)	51:4-6 (4-6)	51:4-8 (4-8)
	51:7-8 (7-8)		51:7-8 (7-8)	
				The Awakenings of Yahweh
51:9-11 (9-11)	51:9 (9)	51:9-11 (9-11)	51:9-11 (9-11)	51:9-11 (9-11)
	51:10-11 (10-11)			Yahweh, the Counselor
51:12-16 (12-16)	51:12-16 (12-16)	51:12-16 (12-16)	51:12-16 (12-16)	51:12-16 (12-16)
	God's Fury Removed	God's Kingship (51:17-52:12)	The End Of Jerusalem's Suffering	The Awakening of Jerusalem
51:17-20 (17-20)	51:17-20 (17-20)	51:17-20 (17-20)	51:17-20 (17-20)	51:17-23 (17-23)
51:21-23 (21-23)	51:21-23 (21-23)	51:21-23 (21-23)	51:21-23 (21-23)	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There is a series of IMPERATIVES which call on God's covenant people to awake spiritually and respond appropriately.
1. listen, pay attention, 51:1,4,7,21
  2. awake, 51:19[thrice], 17[twice]
  3. look, lift up your eyes, 51:1-2,6
- This emphasis is continued in chapter 52.
- B. The subject matter of this context is moved along by a series of rhetorical questions: 51:9-10,12-14; 52:5

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:1-3

<sup>1</sup>**“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness,  
Who seek the LORD:  
Look to the rock from which you were hewn  
And to the quarry from which you were dug.  
<sup>2</sup>Look to Abraham your father  
And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain;  
When *he was but one* I called him,  
Then I blessed him and multiplied him.”  
<sup>3</sup>Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion;  
He will comfort all her waste places.  
And her wilderness He will make like Eden,  
And her desert like the garden of the LORD;  
Joy and gladness will be found in her,  
Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.**

**51:1 “Listen”** This is the Hebrew word *Shema* (BDB 1033, KB 1570). It means “hear so as to do.” The IMPERATIVE is recurrent in Isaiah! This same word starts the famous monotheistic prayer of Deuteronomy 6:4-6.

▣ **“you who. . .”** This is speaking to the faithful covenant people (cf. 50:10). There are three descriptive phrases.

1. who pursue righteousness, v. 1
2. who seek the Lord, v. 1
3. who have the law in their hearts, v. 7

It is possible that “deliverance” (BDB 841, “righteousness”) is parallel to YHWH in line 2, therefore, it may be a title, “The Righteous One.” The “you who. . .” would speak of the faithful who

1. pursue God, line 1
2. seek God, line 2

▣ **“the rock. . .the quarry”** This refers to Abraham and Sarah (cf. v. 2) The geographical location of Abraham's call (i.e., Ur of the Chaldees) was the same as the location of the Babylonian captives (Channel Chebar). YHWH had promised to bless Abraham and his seed (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-11; 18:18; 22:16-18).

**51:2 “who gave birth to you in pain”** This refers to normal childbirth (cf. Gen. 3:16).

▣ **“I blessed him and multiplied him”** YHWH promised two things:

1. to bless Abraham – BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT
2. to multiply him – BDB 915, KB 1176, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

God promised Abraham a land and a seed. He was told his descendants would be like

1. dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16; 28:14; Num. 23:10)
2. stars of the heavens (Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4)
3. sand of the seashore (Gen. 22:17; 32:12)

From Isaiah and Micah we learn that Abraham’s family would be even larger than anyone dreamed. It will include believing “Gentiles and Jews” (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 3:21-31; 4:1-25; Gal. 3:1-29; 6:16).

**51:3 “the LORD will comfort Zion”** The VERB “comfort” (BDB 636, KB 688, *Piel* perfect) appears twice in line 1 and line 2. This is a recurrent theme of this section of Isaiah (cf. 40:1 [twice]; 49:13; 51:3 [twice], 12, 19; 52:9; 54:11; 61:2; 66:13 [thrice]). Its basic meaning in *Piel* is “to comfort,” to “console.” This means to bring the captivity to an end and restore them to the fertile Promised Land (cf. 40:1). This is a re-institution by God of the covenant of Deuteronomy 27-28.

▣ **“waste places. . .wilderness. . .desert like the garden of the LORD”** Physical beauty and fruitfulness are a sign of God’s blessing (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29). The mentioning of Eden implies not only abundance but fellowship with a present God! Eden was a sanctuary of God (cf. John H. Walton, *ANE Thought and the OT*, p. 124).

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: EDEN**

Eden is a geographical location (i.e., in Ugaritic, “a plain”) in Genesis 2-3 which contained a special garden planted and prepared by God for His highest creation (i.e., in image and likeness, cf. Gen. 1:26-27), mankind (cf. Gen. 2:8). The special garden is alluded to in Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 28:13; 31:9, 16, 18 (twice); 36:35; and Joel 2:3.

Apparently the word means “abundance” from an Aramaic root. In Hebrew (BDB 727 III, 792 II) the root means “delight” or “pleasure” (lit). After Genesis the term is a metaphor for a well watered, fruitful place.

▣ **“Joy and gladness. . .thanksgiving and sound of a melody”** This reflects a happy social life, which is also a sign of God’s blessing.

**51:4-8** Notice the number of times in English that the PERSONAL PRONOUNS appear.

1. YHWH
  - a. He, vv. 4c, d, 8a
  - b. YHWH, 4a, 5a, 7a
2. the Servant/Messiah
  - a. Me, vv. 4a, c; 6a; 7a; 8a, b, d, e
  - b. I, vv. 4b; 5b, c; 6a, c; 7b, c, d
  - c. My, vv. 4d; 5a; 6a, b, c; 7c

Wow! What a personal presence and commitment of YHWH to the Servant!



**51:4** Notice the parallelism of lines 1 and 2. The IMPERATIVES:

1. pay attention – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. give ear – BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Lines 3 and 4 are also parallel. Notice again YHWH's teachings (Torah, BDB 435) are meant to bless:

1. Israel
2. the world (cf. 42:6; 49:6; 60:1,3); notice the PLURAL "peoples" in 51:5b and "coastlands" in 51:5c; they wait expectantly for YHWH's Servant

▣ **"law. . .justice"** These two NOUNS are also parallel. They speak of YHWH's truth and will for mankind that is now available to all (i.e., Scripture, revelation).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:4-8**

<sup>4</sup>**"Pay attention to Me, O My people,  
And give ear to Me, O My nation;  
For a law will go forth from Me,  
And I will set My justice for a light of the peoples.**

<sup>5</sup>**My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth,  
And My arms will judge the peoples;  
The coastlands will wait for Me,  
And for My arm they will wait expectantly.**

<sup>6</sup>**Lift up your eyes to the sky,  
Then look to the earth beneath;  
For the sky will vanish like smoke,  
And the earth will wear out like a garment  
And its inhabitants will die in like manner;  
But My salvation will be forever,  
And My righteousness will not wane.**

<sup>7</sup>**Listen to Me, you who know righteousness,  
A people in whose heart is My law;  
Do not fear the reproach of man,  
Nor be dismayed at their revilings.**

<sup>8</sup>**For the moth will eat them like a garment,  
And the grub will eat them like wool.  
But My righteousness will be forever,  
And My salvation to all generations."**

**51:5 "My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth"** The VERB (BDB 422, KB 425) is a *Qal* PERFECT. This line of poetry is paralleled in 46:13. YHWH is ready to act in and through His Servant.

Verse 5 addresses the spiritual hunger of the Gentile nations. Israel must be warned of complacency. Many Judeans returned to Palestine trusting God but many more did not!

Those who hunger for God will find Him available. Those who do not will find Him a Judge!

▣ **"My arms"** This is anthropomorphic language like v. 9; 52:10. God does not have a body. This is a metaphor of God's activity in history. See Special Topic at 41:2.

**51:6 "the sky will vanish like smoke"** Heaven and earth were the ancient witnesses but even they will pass away (cf. 65:17; 66:22; II Pet. 3:10).



NASB (footnote),  
 NKJV, NRSV “gnats”  
 TEV, REB “flies”  
 NJB “vermin”  
 JPSOA “as well”

This is a very difficult phrase. This term in the PLURAL is often translated “gnats” (BDB 485 I).

▣ **“My salvation shall be forever”** The last two lines are parallel. The eternality of God is compared to the finitude of humanity and his world (cf. v. 12; 40:6-8; Job 14:1-2; Ps. 90:5-6; 103:15-18; Matt. 24:35; Heb. 1:10-12; I Pet. 1:24-25).

**51:7 “Listen”** This is another call to attention (cf. v. 1).

▣ **“you who. . .”** Notice how God’s people are characterized.

1. you who know righteousness, v. 7a
2. a people in whose heart is My law, v. 7b (cf. Jer. 31:31-34)

In light of the knowledge they

1. do not fear – v. 7c, BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in as JUSSIVE sense
2. do not be dismayed – v. 7d, BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

▣ **“A people in whose heart is My law”** In the writings of Moses this idiom of intimate and constantly available truth is used (cf. Exod. 28:29; Deut. 6:6). It also occurs in Wisdom Literature (cf. Pro. 3:3; 7:3; Ps. 37:31; 40:8), as well as Prophetic Literature (cf. Isa. 51:7; Jer. 17:1).

**51:8 “moth. . . grub”** Several animals are mentioned in this context (cf. v. 6 [NASB footnote], “gnats”). In 14:11 and 66:24 “worms” are used as a symbol for death and destruction. Nature takes away instead of giving!

▣ **“My righteousness. . . My salvation”** These were parallel in v. 5 also. There they went forth but here they remain forever. See Special Topic at 45:17. What a contrast between the fate of unbelievers and believers!

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:9-11

<sup>9</sup>Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD;  
 Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago.  
 Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces,  
 Who pierced the dragon?  
<sup>10</sup>Was it not You who dried up the sea,  
 The waters of the great deep;  
 Who made the depths of the sea a pathway  
 For the redeemed to cross over?  
<sup>11</sup>So the ransomed of the LORD will return  
 And come with joyful shouting to Zion,  
 And everlasting joy *will be* on their heads.  
 They will obtain gladness and joy,  
 And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

**51:9 “Awake, awake”** This triple IMPERATIVE (BDB 734, KB 802, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) calls for action: (1) action on God’s part, v. 9 and (2) action on Israel’s part, v. 17 (cf. 52:1,11).

▣ **“awake as in the days of old”** This is an allusion to YHWH’s activity in the Exodus (cf. Exod. 6:6; Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 26:8).

▣ **“Rahab. . .dragon”** This word (KB 1193) has three usages.

1. mythical sea monster – Isa. 51:9; Job 9:13; 26:12; Ps. 74:13; 89:10; 148:7
2. metaphor for Egypt based on the twisting Nile River – Isa. 30:7; Ps. 87:4; Ezek. 29:3
3. “the proud” (NASB, BDB 923) or enemies of YHWH – Ps. 40:5

Number 1 is also designated by the term “dragon” (BDB 49) in Job 7:12.

**51:10 “the depths”** This was also a mythological term used in the Sumerian and Babylonian creation accounts. In the Bible it is not a god (cf. Gen. 1:2) but depth of water – *tiamat* (BDB 1062, 63:13).

▣ **“a pathway for the redeemed to cross”** This is an obvious allusion to the splitting of the Red Sea during the Exodus from Egypt (cf. Exodus 14,15).

**51:11** As God delivered His people from Egyptian bondage, so will He deliver His people from Assyrian and Babylonian exile! The descendants of Abraham will return to the Promised Land.

▣ **“everlasting joy”** The term “everlasting” is *‘olam* (BDB 761). See the Special Topic at 45:17. Isaiah uses it often to describe the new age.

1. everlasting covenant, 24:5; 55:3; 61:8
2. YHWH an everlasting Rock, 26:4
3. everlasting joy, 35:10; 51:11; 61:2
4. the Everlasting God, 40:28
5. an everlasting salvation, 45:17
6. everlasting lovingkindness (*Hesed*), 54:8
7. everlasting reign, 55:13
8. an everlasting name, 56:5; 63:12,16
9. an everlasting light, 60:19,20

A negative-oriented use related to the eternal punishment of the wicked is found in 33:14, “an everlasting burning.” Isaiah often uses “fire” to describe God’s wrath (cf. 9:18,19; 10:16; 47:14), but only here “everlasting” (cf. Dan. 12:2).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:12-13**

<sup>12</sup>**“I, even I, am He who comforts you.**

**Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies**

**And of the son of man who is made like grass,**

<sup>13</sup>**That you have forgotten the LORD your Maker,**

**Who stretched out the heavens**

**And laid the foundations of the earth,**

**That you fear continually all day long because of the fury of the oppressor,**

**As he makes ready to destroy?**

**But where is the fury of the oppressor?”**

**51:12 “man. . .the son of man”** This is an Hebraic way of referring to a human being (cf. Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1). It became a later title for Jesus because it affirmed His humanity and because of Dan. 7:13, His Deity.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: SON OF MAN (taken from notes in my commentary on Daniel 7:13)**

The Aramaic phrase (“ben *enosh*,” CONSTRUCT BDB 1085 and 1081) “son of man” is different from the similar Hebrew phrase (“ben *adam*”) found in Psalms and Ezekiel. Both phrases are used in parallel in Job 25:6; Ps. 8:4; 90:3; 144:3; Isa. 13:12. This obviously refers to the Messiah and it links His humanity (cf. 8:17; Job 25:6; Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1), which is the meaning of the Aramaic and Hebrew phrases, “son of man,” with His Deity because the clouds are the transportation of deity (cf. Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Rev. 1:7; 14:14).

Jesus uses the phrase to refer to Himself in the NT. It was not used of the Messiah in rabbinical Judaism. It had no exclusivistic, nationalistic, militaristic connotations. It uniquely describes the Messiah as fully human and fully God (cf. I John 4:1-3). Daniel’s usage is the first which focuses on its divine aspect!

Jesus used the phrase for Himself in three senses.

1. His suffering and death (e.g. Mark 8:31; 10:45; 14:21; Luke 9:22,44)
2. His coming as Judge (e.g. Matt. 16:27; 25:31; John 5:27)
3. His coming in glory to set up His kingdom (e.g. Matt. 16:28; 19:28; Mark 13:26-27; 14:62)

From *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1657 (also see George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 136-139), the later Jewish traditions about this text are listed.

1. This context is Messianic (cf. I Enoch 46:1; 48:10; 4 Ezra [2 Esdras] chapter 13; b. Sanh. 98a)
2. All predictions in this context are already fulfilled (cf. b. Sanh. 97b)
3. This context does not refer to the end-time (cf. Gen. Rab. 98:2)
4. This context represents Israel (cf. Ibn Ezra and Rashi)

▣ **“who dies. . .like grass”** The parallelism emphasizes the frailty and limited life of humans (cf. 40:6,7; Job 14:1-2; Ps. 90:5-6; 103:15; I Pet. 1:24). This context, like I Pet. 1:24-25, contrasts the power and eternity of God with that of His creation (i.e., YHWH as creator in v. 13).

**51:13** This may be a veiled allusion to the idolatry of God’s people in worshiping *Ba’al* as creator, giver of life and fertility instead of YHWH. Their idolatry is what caused their exile and the actions of the oppressor which God allowed.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:14-16**

<sup>14</sup>“The exile will soon be set free, and will not die in the dungeon, nor will his bread be lacking. <sup>15</sup>For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar (the LORD of hosts is His name). <sup>16</sup>I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’”

**51:14** These are descriptions of people in prison who will be set free, although the term “pit” (BDB 1001, KB 1472) can refer to

1. the grave or *Sheol* – Job 33:22,24,28; Ps. 16:10; 49:9
2. here the parallelism suggests “prison”

**51:15** Like vv. 9-11 this verse is an allusion to YHWH freeing His people from Egypt. Also, like vv. 9,10, there is a veiled reference to Genesis 1, where YHWH divides and controls the waters. See full note at v. 10.

▣ **“(the LORD of hosts is His name)”** The term “hosts” can be used in two ways:

1. YHWH as creator and controller of the stars and planets
2. YHWH as military commander of the angels

In a sense both possibilities are a reaction to Babylonian astral worship that turned the heavenly bodies into gods. See Special Topic: The Names For Deity at 40:3.

**51:16** There are three *Qal* INFINITIVES in this verse.

1. to plant (BDB 642, KB 694)
2. to found or establish (BDB 413, KB 417)
3. to say (BDB 55, KB 65)

In context this verse should relate to the redeemed of returning Israel. However, the INFINITIVES are too powerful for human beings to accomplish. Therefore, it must refer to “the Servant,” God’s special Israelite, who will accomplish what Israel could not. There is a movement in chapters 40-53 of the title “the Servant” from national Israel, 41:8-9; 42:1,19; 43:10, to an “individual,” 49:1-7 and 52:13-53:12.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:17-20**

- <sup>17</sup>**Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem,  
You who have drunk from the LORD’S hand the cup of His anger;  
The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.**
- <sup>18</sup>**There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne,  
Nor is there one to take her by the hand among all the sons she has reared.**
- <sup>19</sup>**These two things have befallen you;  
Who will mourn for you?  
The devastation and destruction, famine and sword;  
How shall I comfort you?**
- <sup>20</sup>**Your sons have fainted,  
They lie *helpless* at the head of every street,  
Like an antelope in a net,  
Full of the wrath of the LORD,  
The rebuke of your God.**

**51:17-20** YHWH is encouraging His people to shake off His finished judgment and prepare to return to Jerusalem!

**51:17 “Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem”** These are three IMPERATIVES in a row for emphasis.

1. rouse – *Hithpolel* or *Hithpael* (BDB 734, KB 802)
2. repeated
3. arise – *Qal* (BDB 877, KB 1086)

▣ **“the cup. . .the chalice”** These two are parallel and refer to the idiom of judgment as a cup of strong drink to make one stagger and fall (cf. 29:9; 63:6; Job 21:20; Ps. 60:3; 75:8; Jer. 25:15-16; 51:17; Lam. 4:21; Ezek. 23:32-34). Also note its usage in the NT.

1. of Jesus as sin bearer – Matt. 20:22; 26:38-42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 18:11
2. worshipers of the beast – Rev. 14:10; 16:19; 19:15

**51:19** Notice what has happened to the covenant people and now is happening to Babylon.

1. devastation (BDB 994)
2. destruction (BDB 991)
3. famine (BDB 944)
4. sword (BDB 352)

There is no one to comfort Babylon; there is One to comfort Abraham's seed (cf. vv. 3,12; 40:1).

**51:20** When Assyria and Babylon invaded a town they killed the old, young, and powerful at a prominently visible location (i.e., "the head of every street"). Now this evil act is being done to them.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:21-23**

- <sup>21</sup>**Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted,  
Who are drunk, but not with wine:**
- <sup>22</sup>**Thus says your Lord, the LORD, even your God  
Who contends for His people,  
"Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling,  
The chalice of My anger;  
You will never drink it again.**
- <sup>23</sup>**I will put it into the hand of your tormentors,  
Who have said to you, 'Lie down that we may walk over you.'  
You have even made your back like the ground  
And like the street for those who walk over it."**

**51:21-23** God promises to take the judgment of His cup, which has devastated Israel and Judah and now give it to their tormentors. Assyria and Babylon will reap exactly what they sowed (cf. 17:10; 32:19; Gal. 6:7-10)! God is in charge of time and history!

**51:23 "walk over you"** This treading on the defeated dead is depicted on Egyptian wall art (cf. IVP Bible Background Commentary, p. 633).

1. "lie down" – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1005, KB 1457)
2. "walk over you" *Qal* COHORTATIVE (BDB 716, KB 778)

# ISAIAH 52:1-12

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Chosen For Prostrate Zion	God Redeems Jerusalem	God's Kingship (51:17-52:12)	God Will Rescue Jerusalem	The Liberation of Jerusalem
52:1-2 (1-2)	52:1-2 (1-2)	52:1-2 (1-2)	52:1-2 (1-2)	52:1-2 (1-2)
52:3-6	52:3 (3)  52:4-6 (4-6)	52:3-6	52:3-6	52:3-6 (3-6)
52:7-10 (7-10)	52:7-10 (7-10)	52:7-10 (7-10)	52:7-8 (7-8)  52:9-12 (9-12)	52:7-12 (7-12)
52:11-12 (11-12)	52:11-12 (11-12)	52:11-12 (11-12)		
The Exalted Servant	The Sin-bearing Servant Song (52:13-53:12)	The Fourth Servant Song (52:13-53:12)	The Suffering Servant (52:13-53:12)	Fourth Song of the Servant (52:13-53:12)
52:13-15 (13-15)	52:13-15 (13-15)	52:13-15 (13-15)	52:13-15 (13-15)	52:13-15 (13-15)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The context of chapter 51 runs through 52:12.
- B. Notice the different people to whom the IMPERATIVES are addressed (52:1-52:12).

1. O My people. . . O My nations (51:4-8)
  - a. pay attention – *Hiphil* (BDB 904, KB 1151)
  - b. give ear – *Hiphil* (BDB 24, KB 27)
  - c. lift your eyes – *Qal* (BDB 669, KB 724)
  - d. look – *Hiphil* (BDB 613, KB 661)
  - e. listen – *Qal* (BDB 1033, KB 1570)
2. O arm of the LORD (51:9-11)
  - a. awake – *Qal* (BDB 734, KB 802)
  - b. awake – same as “a”
  - c. put on – *Qal* (BDB 527, KB 519)
  - d. awake – same as “a”
3. O Jerusalem (51:17-23)
  - a. rouse – *Hithpoel* or *Hithpael* (BDB 734, KB 802)
  - b. rouse – same as “a”
  - c. arise – *Qal* (BDB 872, KB 1086)
4. O Zion, O Jerusalem (52:1)
  - a. awake – *Qal* (BDB 734, KB 802)
  - b. awake – same as “a”
  - c. clothe – *Qal* (BDB 527, KB 519)
  - d. clothe – same as “c”
5. O captive (52:5)
  - a. shake – *Hithpael* (BDB 654, KB 707)
  - b. rise – *Qal* (BDB 877, KB 1086)
  - c. loose – *Hithpael* (BDB 605, KB 647 [MT has MASCULINE but *qere* is FEMININE])
6. unspecified (52:9-10, fits #1,3,4, or 5)
  - a. break forth – *Qal* (BDB 822, KB 953)
  - b. shout joyfully – *Piel* (BDB 943, KB 1247)
7. unspecified (52:11-12, fits #1,3,4, or 5)
  - a. depart – *Qal* (BDB 693, KB 747)
  - b. depart – same as “a”
  - c. go out – *Qal* (BDB 422, KB 425)
  - d. touch nothing – *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (BDB 619, KB 668)
  - e. go out – same as “c”
  - f. purify yourselves – *Niphal* (BDB 140, KB 162)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Awake, awake,  
 Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion;  
 Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments,  
 O Jerusalem, the holy city;  
 For the uncircumcised and the unclean  
 Will no longer come into you.

<sup>2</sup>Shake yourself from the dust, rise up,  
 O captive Jerusalem;  
 Loose yourself from the chains around your neck,  
 O captive daughter of Zion.



**52:1-2 “Awake. . .clothe. . .shake. . .loose”** This is a series of IMPERATIVES (see Contextual Insights, B), like 51:9,17. Many compare this with the opposite condition of the city of Babylon in 47:1ff.

**52:1e “For the uncircumcised and the unclean**

**Will no longer come into you”** This cannot refer to the exclusion of the Gentiles from redemption, but that no heathen nation would again invade the Promised Land. This may be the source of John’s imagery in Rev. 21:27.

**52:2**

**NASB, NRSV,**

**NJB, NET “captive”**

**NKJV “sit down”**

**LXX, Vulgate,**

**TEV, JPSOA “sit [on your throne]”**

The MT has “sit” (BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, שׁוּבִי, but later in the verse שׁוּבִיָּה (BDB 985), is translated “captive”). The UBS Text Project gives “sit” a B rating (some doubt). Israel is to rise up and sit on her throne.

▣ **“loose”** This is a place where the MT has a MASCULINE PLURAL form of the *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE, but the Masoretic scholars suggested (*qere*) a FEMININE SINGULAR form.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:3-6**

<sup>3</sup>For thus says the LORD, “You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money.” <sup>4</sup>For thus says the Lord GOD, “My people went down at the first into Egypt to reside there; then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. <sup>5</sup>Now therefore, what do I have here,” declares the LORD, “seeing that My people have been taken away without cause?” *Again* the LORD declares, “Those who rule over them howl, and My name is continually blasphemed all day long. <sup>6</sup>Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, ‘Here I am.’”

**52:3 “redeemed without money”** This verse must be seen in light of 45:13. Cyrus will let the Jews return freely. Cyrus reversed the relocation policy of both the Assyrians and Babylonians. He allowed all conquered peoples to return home and rebuild their national temples. This was his way of restoring order to his empire and also he was superstitious and wanted all the returning people groups to pray to their gods for him and his successors.

**52:4-5** Verse 5 is referring to Babylonian exile though Babylon is not mentioned by name. These verses are looking at past oppression (i.e., Egypt and Assyria). Theologically Israel and Judah were exiled because of their sin against YHWH (cf. 43:22-24; 50:1).

**52:4 “Egypt. . .Assyria”** These were two of the Jews’ previous enemies before that of Babylon (cf. 10:5ff).

**52:5** There are several ways to view the Hebrew text.

1. the rulers (“those who rule,” BDB 605, KB 647, *Qal* PARTICIPLE)
  - a. leaders of Jerusalem who “wail” (BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) over the fall of Jerusalem
  - b. leaders of Babylon “mock” as Jerusalem falls

▣ **“My name is continually blasphemed”** This VERB (BDB 610, KB 658) is a rare *Hithpoel* form. God’s name was linked to Israel’s condition. God will act, not because of Israel’s goodness but because of His name (cf. 48:11; Ezek. 20:9,14,22,44; 36:19-20,22-23; Dan. 9:17-19; Rom. 2:24).

**52:6** By YHWH’s deliverance His people will know that He has reestablished the covenant. His name will have meaning again!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: “THE NAME” OF YHWH**

The use of “the name” as a substitute for YHWH Himself is parallel to the Exod. 23:20-33 use of “angel,” who is said to have “My name is in Him.” This same substitution can be seen in the use of “His glory” (e.g., John 1:14; 17:22). All are attempts to soften the personal anthropomorphic presence of YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:13-16; 6:3). YHWH is surely spoken of in human terms, but it was also known that He was spiritually present throughout creation (cf. I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 139:7-16; Jer. 23:24; Acts 7:49 quotes Isa. 66:1).

There are several examples of “the name” representing YHWH’s divine essence and personal presence.

1. Deut. 12:5; II Sam. 7:13; I Kgs. 9:3; 11:36
2. Deut. 28:58
3. Ps. 5:11; 7:17; 9:10; 33:21; 68:4; 91:14; 103:1; 105:3; 145:21
4. Isa. 48:9; 56:6
5. Ezek. 20:44; 36:21; 39:7
6. Amos 2:7
7. John 17:6,11,26

The concept of “calling on” (i.e., worshiping) the name of YHWH is seen early in Genesis.

1. 4:26, the line of Seth
2. 12:8, Abraham
3. 13:4, Abraham
4. 16:13, Hagar
5. 21:33, Abraham
6. 26:25, Isaac

and in Exodus:

1. 5:22-23, speak in Thy name
2. 9:16, show My name through all the earth (cf. Rom. 9:17)
3. 20:7, do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (cf. Lev. 19:12; Deut. 5:11; 6:13; 10:20)
4. 20:24, where I cause my name to be remembered (cf. Deut. 12:5; 26:2)
5. 23:20-21, an angel (“since My name is in him”)
6. 34:5-7, Moses calls on (or “called out”) the name of the Lord. This is one of a handful of texts that describe YHWH’s character (cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; Joel 2:13)

Knowing someone by name implies an intimacy (cf. Exod. 33:12); Moses knows YHWH’s name and in 33:17, YHWH knows Moses’ name. This is the context where Moses wants to see God’s glory (cf. v. 18), but God allows him to see “His goodness” (v. 19), which is parallel to “the name” (v. 19).

The Israelites are to destroy “the names” of Canaan’s gods (cf. Deut. 12:3) and call on Him (cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20; 26:2) at the special place He causes His name to dwell (cf. Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2).

YHWH has a universal purpose involving His name.

1. Gen. 12:3
2. Exod. 9:16
3. Exod. 19:5-6
4. Deut. 28:10,58
5. Micah 4:1-5

▣ “in that day” See Special Topic from my commentary on the Eighth Century Prophets below.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THAT DAY

This phrase, “in that day” or “on that day,” is a way for the eighth century prophets to speak of God’s visitation (presence), both for judgment and restoration.

Hosea		Amos		Micah	
positive	negative	positive	negative	positive	negative
1:11	1:5		1:14(2)		2:4
	2:3		2:16		3:6
2:15			3:14	4:6	
2:16			6:3		5:10
2:21	3:18(2)		8:3		7:4
	5:9		8:9(2)	7:11(2)	
	7:5		8:10	7:12	
	9:5	9:11	8:13		
	10:14				

This pattern is typical of the prophets. God is going to act against sin in time, but He also offers a day of repentance and forgiveness to those who change their hearts and actions! God’s purpose of redemption and restoration will be accomplished! He will have a people who reflect His character. The purpose of creation (fellowship between God and humanity) will be fulfilled!



NASB, NJB,

REB “Here I am”

NKJV “Behold, *it is I*”

NRSV “Here am I”

JPSOA “Am now at hand”

LXX “I am here”

Peshitta “It is I”

This phrase is usually a faith response from a human being who has been addressed by God (i.e., Gen. 22:1,11; Exod. 3:4; Isa. 6:8). It would denote availability to do God’s will.

It is only in Isaiah that it is used of God and denotes His presence, power, and ability to do what He promised (cf. 58:9; 65:1).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:7-10**

<sup>7</sup>How lovely on the mountains  
Are the feet of him who brings good news,  
Who announces peace  
And brings good news of happiness,  
Who announces salvation,  
And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

<sup>8</sup>Listen! Your watchmen lift up *their* voices,  
They shout joyfully together;  
For they will see with their own eyes  
When the LORD restores Zion.

<sup>9</sup>Break forth, shout joyfully together,  
You waste places of Jerusalem;  
For the LORD has comforted His people,  
He has redeemed Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD has bared His holy arm  
In the sight of all the nations,  
That all the ends of the earth may see  
The salvation of our God.

**52:7-9** These verses are using the metaphor of (1) a governmental messenger bringing good news (cf. v. 7) and (2) the watchman (cf. v. 9) at the gate announcing it to the whole city. The city is Zion; the good news is that YHWH reigns again as King over His restored people.

**52:7** The Hebrew VERB “bring good news” (BDB 142, KB 163, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, twice) is alluded to in Rom. 10:15 for the “good news” of the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12).

▣ Notice the parallelism between the announced good news.

1. peace (BDB 1022)
2. happiness/good (BDB 373 I)
3. salvation (BDB 447)

**SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE (*SHALOM*)**

The Hebrew term (BDB 1022, KB 1532) is common in Semitic cognates.

A. Akkadian

1. to be unharmed
2. stay well
3. to be in good condition

B. Ugaritic (Canaanite)

1. to be unharmed
2. healthy

C. Arabic

1. to be healthy
2. to be in a happy situation

- D. Aramaic
  - 1. to be complete
  - 2. to come to an end/completion
  - 3. conclude a peace
  - 4. stay unharmed
- E. Hebrew connotations
  - 1. completeness
  - 2. soundness
  - 3. welfare
  - 4. peace

Today the term *shalom* is a Hebrew greeting and farewell statement. It still denotes the absence of evil and the presence of good (i.e., contentment with life). It denotes a mental state of security and satisfaction.

▣ **“Your God reigns”** This (BDB 573, KB 590, *Qal* PERFECT) is the fulfillment of 24:23. It may reflect a well known cultic liturgy (cf. Ps. 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1).

#### 52:8

NASB, TEV,

NJB “they will see with their own eyes”

NKJV “they shall see eye to eye”

NRSV “in plain sight they see”

JPSOA “every eye shall behold”

NET Bible “they will see with their very own eyes”

The MT has “eye to eye.” Leupold, in his commentary on Isaiah, makes a good point.

“The phrase ‘eye to eye’ has an utterly different meaning in English than in Hebrew. In English it means something like agreeing completely in one’s approach and outlook with another. In Hebrew the meaning is ‘close at hand,’ something like being so near that you can see the whites of the eye of the person approaching” (p. 219).

**52:10** Israel was established by YHWH to be a kingdom of priests to the world (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:4-6). However, her covenant unfaithfulness required God’s judgment, therefore, the world never saw God’s true character. By God delivering Israel from captivity, first Egypt, then Assyria, and now Babylon, all the peoples of the earth will see God’s power, love, and blessing.

▣ **“has bared His holy arm”** The VERB (BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* PERFECT) is an anthropomorphic metaphor (see Special Topic at 41:2) for YHWH getting ready for action/deliverance (cf. Ezek. 4:7).

Often the phrase “with an outstretched arm” denotes the same divine actions (cf. Exod. 6:6; Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 26:8). See note at 51:9.

▣ **“In the sight of all the nations”** This is parallel to the next phrase, “all the ends of the earth may see.” This is also parallel to “all flesh will see it” (40:5; also note Joel 2:28 for another universal image).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:11-12**

<sup>11</sup>**Depart, depart, go out from there,  
Touch nothing unclean;  
Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves,  
You who carry the vessels of the LORD .**  
<sup>12</sup>**But you will not go out in haste,  
Nor will you go as fugitives;  
For the LORD will go before you,  
And the God of Israel *will be* your rear guard.**

**52:11-12** These verses are using God's directions to the priests (cf. v. 11d) as a way to assure all covenant people that God is with them and for them (cf. v. 12). It is a veiled warning to leave the idolatry of Mesopotamia behind!

The returnees will take the vessels from YHWH's temple with them (cf. Ezra 1:5-11; 5:14; 6:8; also note II Chronicles 4 where they are described). They left Babylon as they had Egypt (cf. Exod. 11:2; 12:35-36) by taking the spoils of the land with them (i.e., a symbol of the defeat of the nation and its gods).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was Isaiah using Abraham's call as an encouragement to the Jews in captivity?
2. How does creation and the Exodus bring encouragement to exiled Israel and Judah?
3. To whom does 51:16 refer?
4. How did God use Israel to reach the Gentiles?

# ISAIAH 53 (52:13-53:12)

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Suffering Servant	The Sin-Bearing Servant (52:13-53:12)	The Fourth Servant Song (52:13-53:12)	The Suffering Servant (52:13-53:12)	Fourth Song of the Servant (52:13-53:12)
53:1-3 (1-3)	53:1-3 (1-3)	53:1-3 (1-3)	53:1-3 (1-3)	53:1-7 (1-7)
53:4-6 (4-6)	53:4-6 (4-6)	53:4-6 (4-6)	53:4-6 (4-6)	
53:7-9 (7-9)	53:7-9 (7-9)	53:7-9 (7-9)	53:7-9 (7-9)	
				53:8-9 (8-9)
53:10-12 (10-12)	53:10-12 (10-12)	53:10-12 (10-12)	53:10-12 (10-12)	53:10 (10)
				53:11 (11)
				53:12 (12)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a crucial text for the NT understanding of the ministry and identification of Jesus as YHWH's Suffering Servant. Note the places that it is quoted or alluded to in the NT.
  1. 52:15 – Rom. 15:21
  2. 53:1 – Rom. 10:16; John 12:38

3. 53:3 – Luke 18:31-33 (allusion); Mark 10:33-34 (allusion); John 1:10-11 (allusion)
4. 53:4 – Matt. 8:17; I Pet. 2:24 (allusion)
5. 53:5 – Rom. 4:25 (allusion); I Cor. 15:3 (allusion); Heb. 9:28 (allusion); I Pet. 2:24-25 (allusion)
6. 53:6 – I Pet 2:25 (allusion)
7. 53:7-8 – Matt. 26:63 (allusion); Matt. 27:12-14 (allusion); Mark 14:61 (allusion); Mark 15:5 (allusion); Luke 23:9 (allusion); John 19:9 (allusion); Acts 8:22-23 (quote); I Pet. 2:23 (allusion)
8. 53:9 – Matt. 27:57-60 (allusion); I Pet. 2:22
9. 53:10 – John 1:29 (allusion); Mark 10:45 (allusion)
10. 53:11 – John 10:14-18 (allusion); Rom. 5:18,19 (allusion); I Pet. 2:24 (allusion)
11. 53:12 – Luke 22:37; II Cor. 5:21 (allusion); Phil. 2:6,7 (allusion)

- B. I am surprised that this very clear substitutionary text is not directly quoted more in the NT. My biases as a Christian evangelical are clearly seen in my understanding of this context. For me the OT must be interpreted in light of its own day (i.e., authorial intent), but also by the use of all Scripture (II Tim. 3:16), we must read the OT through the revelation of Jesus and the Apostles.
- C. I think a helpful way to approach this powerful, and in a sense unique, OT song/poem would be to
1. identify the strophes
  2. identify the speaker
  3. outline the message

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:13-15

- <sup>13</sup>**Behold, My servant will prosper,  
He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.**
- <sup>14</sup>**Just as many were astonished at you, *My people*,  
So His appearance was marred more than any man  
And His form more than the sons of men.**
- <sup>15</sup>**Thus He will sprinkle many nations,  
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;  
For what had not been told them they will see,  
And what they had not heard they will understand.**

**52:13 “will prosper”** This VERB (BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) has two connotations.

1. to consider, to give attention to, to ponder – Isa. 41:20; 44:18; Deut. 32:29; Ps. 64:9
2. to prosper, “to have success” – I Sam. 18:15; Isa. 52:13; Jer. 20:11; 23:5

The question is which of these best parallel the series of VERBS “high,” “lifted,” and “greatly exalted.”

Will the Servant be

1. listened to
2. lifted up

Both fit the context of chapters 44-55.



▣ **“He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted”** The threefold question of these VERBS with similar meaning intensifies the idea.

1. will be high – BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 6:1; 57:15
2. will be lifted up – BDB 669, KB 724, *Niphal* PERFECT (with *waw*), cf. 6:1; 33:10; 57:15
3. will be greatly exalted – BDB 146, KB 170, *Qal* PERFECT (with *waw*), cf. 5:16

**52:14**

**NASB, NKJV,**

<b>LXX</b>	<b>“were astonished at you”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“were astonished at him”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“were aghast at him”</b>
<b>JPSOA</b>	<b>“were appalled at him”</b>
<b>REB</b>	<b>“recoil at the sight of him”</b>
<b>Peshitta</b>	<b>“amazed at him”</b>

The MT has “you,” עֲלִיךָ (also LXX), but “him,” עָלָיו is read by the Targums and some Syriac versions. The UBS Text Project gives “you” a B rating.

There is a fluidity between the corporate focus (“you”) and the individual (“him”) in the Servant Songs. The individual ideal Israelite paid the price for corporate Israel (cf. 53:8) and corporate humanity!

▣ **“My people”** This is not in the Masoretic Hebrew text. The Servant is not identified with corporate Israel but an individual, ideal Israelite.

▣ **“His appearance was marred more than any man,**

**And His form more than the sons of men”** Jesus was beaten very badly, almost unrecognizable, first by the Sanhedrin and then by the Roman soldiers. The rabbis used this verse to say that the Messiah will have leprosy.

▣

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>“sprinkle”</b>
<b>NRSV, JPSOA,</b>	
<b>NET</b>	<b>“startle”</b>
<b>NJB, LXX</b>	<b>“astonished”</b>
<b>Peshitta</b>	<b>“purify”</b>

This is a sacrificial term (BDB 633 I, KB 683, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Exod. 29:21; Lev. 4:6; 8:11; 14:7). Many modern translations have “startle” (BDB 633 II, “cause to leap”), which comes from an Arabic root. This follows the LXX and the Vulgate.

The question is “What do the kings hear and see?”

1. a marred man (v. 14; 53:5)
2. a high, lifted up, and greatly exalted man (v. 13)

Does the VERB of v. 15a mean:

1. startle with joy
2. startle with shock
3. sprinkled as a sacrifice (cf. 53:4-5,10)

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 53:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Who has believed our message?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

<sup>2</sup>For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,

And like a root out of parched ground;

He has no *stately* form or majesty

That we should look upon Him,

Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

<sup>3</sup>He was despised and forsaken of men,

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;

And like one from whom men hide their face

He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

**53:1 “Who has believed our message”** The speaker (PLURAL) is uncertain, but possibly (1) the faithful Jewish remnant or (2) the prophets. It is obvious that very few understood the concept of a suffering Messiah (cf. John 12:38; Rom. 10:16)! However, one day the kings of the earth will understand (cf. 52:15 and Phil. 2:6-11)!

For “believed” (BDB 52, KB 63, *Hiphil* PERFECT) see Special Topic at 42:3.

▣ **“arm of the LORD”** This is an anthropomorphic phrase (cf. 51:9; 52:9,10; Deut. 5:15, see Special Topic at 41:2) for YHWH’s actions, here involving the ministry of the Servant.

**53:2 “like a tender shoot”** This (BDB 413) refers to His inconspicuous beginnings. It has some connotative relationship with the Messianic term “Branch” (BDB 666, cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1,10). Both are used together in Isa. 11:1.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE

There are several different Greek terms that the NT uses to speak of Jesus.

#### A. NT Terms

1. Nazareth – the city in Galilee (cf. Luke 1:26; 2:4,39,51; 4:16; Acts 10:38). This city is not mentioned in contemporary sources, but has been found in later inscriptions. For Jesus to be from Nazareth was not a compliment (cf. John 1:46). The sign over Jesus’ cross which included this place name was a sign of Jewish contempt.
2. *Nazarēnos* – seems to also refer to a geographical location (cf. Luke 4:34; 24:19).
3. *Nazōraios* – may refer to a city, but could also be a play on the Hebrew Messianic term “Branch” (*netzer*, BDB 666 [and its related terms], cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5 [BDB 855]; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; in the NT, Rev. 22:16). Luke uses this of Jesus in 18:37 and Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5; 26:9.
4. Related to #3 *nāzir* (BDB 634), which means “consecrated one by means of a vow.”

#### B. Historical usages outside the NT

1. It denoted a Jewish (pre-Christian) heretical group (Aramaic *nāsōrayyā*).
2. It was used in Jewish circles to describe believers in Christ (cf. Acts 24:5,14; 28:22, *nosri*).

3. It became the regular term to denote believers in the Syrian (Aramaic) churches. “Christian” was used in the Greek churches to denote believers.
4. Sometime after the fall of Jerusalem, the Pharisees reorganized at Jamnia and instigated a formal separation between the synagogue and the church. An example of the type of curse formulas against Christians is found in “the Eighteen Benedictions” from *Berakoth* 28b-29a, which calls the believers “Nazarenes.”

“May the Nazarenes and heretics disappear in a moment; they shall be erased from the book of life and not be written with the faithful.”

5. It was used by Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 126:1, who used Isaiah’s *netzer* of Jesus.

C. Author’s opinion

I am surprised by so many spellings of the term, although I know this is not unheard of in the OT as “Joshua” has several different spellings in Hebrew. The following items cause me to remain uncertain as to its precise meaning:

1. the close association with the Messianic term “Branch” (*netzer*) or the similar term *nāzir* (one consecrated by means of a vow)
2. the negative connotation of Galilee
3. little or no contemporary attestation to the city of Nazareth in Galilee
4. coming from the mouth of a demon in an eschatological sense (i.e. “Have you come to destroy us?”).

For a full bibliography on studies of this word group, see Colin Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p. 346 or Raymond E. Brown, *Birth*, pp. 209-213, 223-225.

▣ **“He has no *stately* form or majesty**

**That we should look upon Him”** Jesus was not physically unusual or attractive. He did not stand out in a crowd in any way (i.e., He could melt into the crowd, cf. John 8:59; 12:36).

**53:3 “He was despised”** This VERB (BDB 102, KB 117, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) is used as a title, “The Despised One” in 49:7. The *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE is used in Ps. 22:6, which Christians believe describes Jesus’ crucifixion (cf. Matt. 27:35,39,43,46; Mark 15:29,34; Luke 23:34; John 19:24; 20:25).

So many of the texts in this section of Isaiah are used in the NT. Isaiah clearly reveals God’s redemptive plan for all humans (see Special Topic at 40:15).

▣ The last two lines of v. 3 have been interpreted in several ways.

1. some of the rabbis said the Messiah would have leprosy (cf. v. 11)
2. some relate it to 52:14 and see it referring to the beatings Jesus received at the hands of Herod’s and Pilate’s guards
3. some relate it to Jesus’ words in Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27 (from Zech. 13:7) or John 16:32

▣ **“sorrows”** This word (BDB 456) can mean

1. physical pain – Exod. 3:7
2. emotional pain – Ps. 38:17-18; Jer. 45:3

It is used in this context (vv. 13 and 14) of the Servant suffering on behalf of Israel (cf. v. 8) and all mankind (cf. v. 6).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 53:4-6**

<sup>4</sup>Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup>But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.

<sup>6</sup>All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on Him.

**53:4 “griefs”** The word literally means “sickness” (BDB 318, cf. Deut. 28:59,61), but is used in a much wider sense in Hebrew (Ps. 107:3; Isa. 1:6; 6:10). This speaks of Jesus’ substitutionary work (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21).

Many have tried to interpret this strophe and v. 5d as teaching that Jesus’ death dealt with believers’ sins and sicknesses, but this is to misinterpret the parallelism (cf. Ps. 103:3). “Sickness” is a Hebrew idiom for sin (cf. Isa. 1:5-6). My favorite charismatic author, Gordon Fee, has written a powerful booklet on this issue entitled *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels*.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: IS HEALING GOD’S PLAN FOR EVERY AGE?**

1. Healing was a significant aspect of the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles.
2. It was intended primarily to confirm the radically new message about God and His kingdom.
3. It shows the heart of God for hurting people.
4. God has not changed (Mal. 3:6) and He still acts in love in healing.
5. There are examples where healing did not take place.
  - a. Paul, II Cor. 12:7-10
  - b. Trophimus, II Tim. 4:20
6. Sin and sickness were associated in the rabbis and James (cf. John. 9:2; James 5:13-18).
7. Healing is not a guarantee of the New Covenant. It is not part of the atonement described in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 103.
8. There is true mystery about why some are healed and some are not.
9. It is possible that although healing is present in every age, there was a significant increase during Jesus’ lifetime; this increase will occur again just before His return.

▣ **“bore. . .carried”** These two VERBS are parallel.

1. bore – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* PERFECT, used of bearing one’s guilt, Gen. 4:13; Lev. 5:1,17; 7:18; Num. 5:31; 14:34; Ezek. 14:10; 44:12, but it is also used of someone or some animal bearing another’s guilt, cf. Lev. 10:17; 16:22; Num. 14:33; Ezek. 4:4,5,6 and of the suffering Servant’s redemptive ministry in Isa. 53:4

2. carried – BDB 687, KB 741, *Qal* PERFECT; this is literally “bear a heavy load,” it is used of the Servant in v. 4 and v. 11 (*Qal* IMPERFECT)

Notice the series of VERBS in vv. 4-6 of what YHWH did to the Servant for humanity’s benefit.

1. smitten by God, v. 4 – BDB 645, KB 697, *Hophal* PARTICIPLE
2. afflicted (by God), v. 4 – BDB 776, KB 853, *Pual* PARTICIPLE
3. pierced through for our transgressions, v. 5 – BDB 319, KB 320, *Poal* PARTICIPLE
4. crushed for our iniquities, v. 5 – BDB 193, KB 221, *Pual* PARTICIPLE
5. the chastening for our well being (no VERB) upon Him, v. 5
6. by His scourging we are healed, v. 5

This is the textual foundation for the doctrine of the vicarious, substitutionary atonement.

▣ **“Smitten of God”** It was God’s will that Jesus die (cf. v. 10; John 3:16; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21). Jesus’ trial and death were not accidents or mistakes, but the plan of God (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; I Pet. 1:20).

**53:5 “pierced. . .crushed”** As “bore” and “carried” in v. 4 were parallel, so too, these VERBS.

1. pierced – BDB 319, KB 320, *Poal* PARTICIPLE usually by a sword in battle, but not here. The same root means “polluted” for mankind’s purification and forgiveness.
2. crushed – BDB 193, KB 221, *Pual* PARTICIPLE; this VERB is used several times in Isaiah
  - a. 57:15 – *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, “the heart of the contrite”
  - b. 3:15 – *Piel* IMPERFECT, “crushing My people”
  - c. 19:10; 53:5 – *Pual* PARTICIPLE, “to be crushed”
  - d. 53:10 – *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, “to crush”

It denotes one who is humbled. In this context by YHWH Himself for the greater good of all mankind.

**53:6** This is the OT counterpart to Rom. 3:9-18,23; 5:12,15,18; 11:32; Gal. 3:22. This shows the terrible development of the Fall of Genesis 3 (cf. Gen. 6:5,11-12; Ps. 14:3; 143:2).

▣ **“the iniquity of us all to fall on Him”** Jesus died for the sins of the entire world. Everyone is potentially saved by Christ (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; Rom. 5:18; Titus 2:11; I John 2:2; 4:14). Only willful unbelief keeps anyone from God.

Some commentators have tried to make a restrictive distinction between the “all” [twice] of v. 6 and “the many” of vv. 11d and 12e. However, the parallelism of Rom. 5:18, “all” and “the many” of 5:19, clearly shows that they refer to the same group (i.e., fallen humanity made in the image and likeness of YHWH, Gen. 1:26-27).

God desires all humans to be saved – John 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; II Pet. 3:9).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 53:7-9**

<sup>7</sup>He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He did not open His mouth;  
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,  
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,  
So He did not open His mouth.  
<sup>8</sup>By oppression and judgment He was taken away;  
And as for His generation, who considered  
That He was cut off out of the land of the living  
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke *was due*?  
<sup>9</sup>His grave was assigned with wicked men,

Yet He was with a rich man in His death,  
 Because He had done no violence,  
 Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

**53:7 “Like a lamb”** The sacrificial allusion is significant (cf. John 1:29 and II Cor. 5:21).

▣ **“He did not open His mouth”** This means the Servant did not attempt to defend Himself. There are several allusions to this in Jesus’ trials.

1. Jesus’ night trial before Caiaphas – Matt. 26:63; Mark 14:61
2. Jesus’ trial before Pilate – Matt. 27:12-14; Mark 15:5; John 19:9
3. Jesus before Herod the Tetrarch – Luke 23:9

**53:8 “For the transgression of my people”** This phrase shows that the term “Servant” in this context cannot be national Israel. The Servant dies (cf. 8c) for Israel.

This song/poem has several rare and unusual VERBALS.

1. 52:15, “what had not been told” – *Pual* PERFECT (BDB 707, KB 765)
2. 52:15, “they will understand” – *Hithpolel* PERFECT (BDB 106, KB 122)
3. 53:4, “smitten” – *Hophal* PARTICIPLE (BDB 645, KB 697)
4. 53:4, “afflicted” – *Pual* PARTICIPLE (BDB 776, KB 853)
5. 53:5, “pierced” – *Poal* PARTICIPLE (BDB 319, KB 320)
6. 53:5, “crushed” – *Pual* PARTICIPLE (BDB 193, KB 221)
7. 53:7, “led” – *Hophal* IMPERFECT (BDB 384, KB 383)
8. 53:8, “considered” – *Polel* IMPERFECT (BDB 967, KB 1319)

**53:9** This verse describes so explicitly the crucifixion and burial of Jesus (cf. Matt. 27:38,59), as does Psalm 22.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 53:10-12**

- <sup>10</sup>But the LORD was pleased  
 To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief;  
 If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering,  
 He will see *His* offspring,  
 He will prolong *His* days,  
 And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.
- <sup>11</sup>As a result of the anguish of His soul,  
 He will see *it and* be satisfied;  
 By His knowledge the Righteous One,  
 My Servant, will justify the many,  
 As He will bear their iniquities.
- <sup>12</sup>Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,  
 And He will divide the booty with the strong;  
 Because He poured out Himself to death,  
 And was numbered with the transgressors;  
 Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,  
 And interceded for the transgressors.

### 53:10 “But the LORD was pleased

#### To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief”

Notice the agent and object of these VERBS.

1. YHWH was pleased (lit. “it was the will of” – BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT). This VERB means “to delight in” (cf. 58:2; 62:4) or “desire” (55:11). It is even used of YHWH’s pleasure to put someone to death in Jdgs. 13:25; I Sam. 2:25. It is shocking to use a VERB like this in connection with the unfair, painful treatment of the righteous Servant. YHWH had a redemptive plan (see Special Topic at 40:15)!
2. YHWH’s will and purpose was “to crush” (*Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. v. 5) and “put to grief” (*Hiphil* PERFECT, BDB 317, KB 311). The VERB means “to make sick” (JPSOA) or “sore by hitting.” There was a high and costly price to pay for human redemption! YHWH and His Servant paid it fully and freely!



**NASB** “If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering”

**NKJV, NRSV** “When You make His soul an offering for sin”

**TEV** “His death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness”

**NJB** “if he gives his life as a sin offering”

**JPSOA** “if he made himself an offering for guilt”

**Peshitta** “he laid down his life as an offering for sin”

This phrase is so simple yet so profound. It involves

1. the will of YHWH
2. the will of the Servant
3. the sinful ones who chose to receive this guilt offering (implied)

This is the Hebrew theological concept of “corporality.” It is illustrated by

1. the sacrificial system (Leviticus 1-7), but especially the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16)
2. the sin of Achan affecting the Israeli army (Joshua 7)
3. the clear explanation in Romans 5:12-21
4. another great example in II Cor. 5:21

One innocent One paid the price to set free all the guilty ones!

▣ **“He will prolong His days”** It is obvious that the Servant dies (cf. vv. 8,9,12). Therefore, this verse must refer to life after death!

Notice all the things that YHWH will do for Him.

1. He will see *His* offspring (lit. “seed”), v. 10
2. He will prolong *His* days (this must refer to His afterlife), v. 10
3. the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand (i.e., YHWH’s plan to restore fellowship with mankind), v. 10
4. He will see *it* and be satisfied, v. 11 (refers to YHWH’s good pleasure [will]), v. 10b
5. He will justify the many, v. 11
6. allot Him a portion with the great, v. 12
7. He will divide the booty with the strong, v. 12

Poetry is always difficult to interpret. Some of these items are uncertain!

**53:11 “it”** The LXX and Dead Sea Scrolls have “lights” (NRSV, NJB). The MT does not have “it” (see NKJV). The UBS Text Project thinks “light” may have dropped out of the text (B rating).

▣ **“By His knowledge”** the NRSV has “he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.” The question of “what knowledge” seems to relate to

1. see His offspring (v. 10c)
2. prolong His life (v. 10d)
3. prospering of YHWH's will (v. 10e)
4. results of His anguish (v. 11a)

▣ **“the Righteous One. . .justify”** These are both formed from one root (BDB 842, 843). YHWH's sin-bearing (cf. vv. 11e) Servant will accomplish righteousness for all who believe and receive (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13).

▣ **“the many”** See note at “all” of v. 6.

▣ **“He will bear their iniquities”** The same VERB (BDB 687, KB 741, *Qal* IMPERFECT) was also used in v. 4. See note there.

**53:12a,b “He will divide the booty with the strong”** This is a war metaphor of victory. It is not to be taken literally, but figuratively of spiritual victory (cf. 52:13)!

▣ **“He poured out Himself to death”** This VERB (BDB 788, KB 881, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is literally “be naked” or “be bare” or “to empty.” It is used in Isaiah in several senses.

1. to uncover a weapon, Isa. 22:6
2. for the Spirit being given (i.e., poured out), Isa. 32:15
3. BDB calls it a metaphor in this text reflecting the *Piel* usage #3 (cf. Ps. 141:8)
4. KB calls it “to tip out,” a metaphor “to throw away one life to death”

▣ **“And was numbered with the transgressors”** Luke 22:37 quotes this verse as being spoken by Jesus in Gethsemane when the soldiers and guards came to arrest Him.

Notice the same word (BDB 833) was used of Israel's sin in v. 8 and all humans' sin in v. 5.

▣ **“He Himself bore the sin of many”** This means substitutionary, vicarious atonement (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; 14:24; II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; I Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14). The UBS Text Project thinks “sin” should be PLURAL (B rating).

▣ **“And interceded for the transgressors”** And He still does (cf. Rom. 8:27,34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; I John 2:1)!



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does the title “My Servant” refer to the Jews or the Messiah?
2. Why are the numerous references to the Gentiles’ inclusion so significant in this passage?
3. Why did God choose the Jews?
4. Why did the Servant suffer?
5. Why was God pleased to crush Him?
6. What does Isa. 53:6 say about sin?
7. Why has this passage been so influential on the church?

# ISAIAH 54

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Fertility of Zion	A Perpetual Covenant of Peace	Song of Assurance To Israel	The LORD'S Love For Israel	Jerusalem Restored To Yahweh's Favour
54:1-3 (1-3)	54:1-3 (1-3)	54:1-3 (1-3)	54:1-3 (1-3)	54 1-10 (1-10)
54:4-8 (4-8)	54:4-8 (4-8)	54:4-8 (4-8)	54:4-5 (4-5)	
			54:6-10 (6-10)	
54:9-10 (9-10)	54:9-10 (9-10)	54:9-10 (9-10)	The Future Jerusalem	The New Jerusalem
54:11-17 (11-17)	54:11-15 (11-15)	54:11-17 (11-17)	54:11-12 (11-12)	54:11-17 (11-17)
			54:13-15 (13-15)	
	54:16-17 (16-17)		54:16-17 (16-17)	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There are several allusions to the Patriarchal period (Genesis 12-50) in this chapter.
  1. childless mothers
  2. living in tents
  3. use of "seeds" for descendants

- B. There is also an allusion to the flood of Noah (Genesis 6-9) in v. 9.
- C. YHWH is renewing the covenant promises of deliverance.
1. from Egypt
  2. from Mesopotamia
  3. from end-time enemies

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 54:1-3

<sup>1</sup>“Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no *child*;  
Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed;  
For the sons of the desolate one *will be* more numerous  
Than the sons of the married woman,” says the LORD.  
<sup>2</sup>“Enlarge the place of your tent;  
Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not;  
Lengthen your cords  
And strengthen your pegs.  
<sup>3</sup>For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left.  
And your descendants will possess nations  
And will resettle the desolate cities.”

**54:1-3** This first strophe has several IMPERATIVES that relate to rebuilding restored Judah/Jerusalem (cf. 49:20).

1. shout for joy – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 943, KB 1247
2. break forth into joyful shouting – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 822, KB 953
3. cry aloud – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 843, KB 1007
4. enlarge the place of your tent – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, BDB 931, KB 1210
5. stretch out the curtains – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, BDB 639, KB 692, used in a JUSSIVE sense
6. spare not – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 362, KB 359, used in a JUSSIVE sense
7. lengthen your cords – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, BDB 72, KB 88
8. strengthen your pegs – *Piel* IMPERATIVE, BDB 304, KB 302

Paul uses this quote in his typology about Abraham’s sons and the two covenants in Gal. 4:21-31.

It always amazes me how modern believers take a verse like this totally out of context and use it for a sermon on building a new church building! If you allow a total disregard for the original setting and the inspired author’s intent, you can back up any action. It seems that modern evangelical Christians psychologically need a Scripture text to support all their events and projects! See Sermon on Biblical Interpretation online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)

**54:3 “your descendants will possess nations”** At first glance this phrase looks like another one of Isaiah’s universal texts, but note the parallelism of the next line. This is referring to taking over the tribal areas of Judah and Benjamin. It is referring to Cyrus II’s edict about the seed of Abraham returning to Palestine after the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles (cf. 14:1-2).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 54:4-8**

<sup>4</sup>**“Fear not, for you will not be put to shame;  
And do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced;  
But you will forget the shame of your youth,  
And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.**

<sup>5</sup>**For your husband is your Maker,  
Whose name is the LORD of hosts;  
And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,  
Who is called the God of all the earth.**

<sup>6</sup>**For the LORD has called you,  
Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,  
Even like a wife of *one*’s youth when she is rejected,”  
Says your God.**

<sup>7</sup>**“For a brief moment I forsook you,  
But with great compassion I will gather you.**

<sup>8</sup>**In an outburst of anger  
I hid My face from you for a moment,  
But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,”  
Says the LORD your Redeemer.**

**54:4 “Fear not”** This is a *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 431, KB 432) used in a JUSSIVE sense. This is a recurrent theme in Isaiah (cf. 7:4; 8:12; 35:4; 41:10,13,14; 43:15; 44:2; 51:7; 54:4,14; 57:11). Abraham’s seed are to remember that they are the recipients of

1. the presence of YHWH
2. the promises of YHWH
3. the purpose of YHWH

▣ **“For you will not be put to shame;  
Neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced”**

Notice the three promises to Abraham’s returning seed.

1. shame – negated *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 101, KB 116 (opposite of 1:29; 20:5)
2. feel humiliated – negated *Niphal* IMPERFECT, BDB 482, KB 480, cf. 45:17; 50:7
3. disgraced – negated *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 344, KB 340

▣ **“you will forget. . .you will remember no more”** Notice the parallelism. These returnees are encouraged by the use of two family terms.

1. your youth
2. your widowhood

Israel was sinful in her early days (and it continued), therefore, she was exiled by YHWH (i.e., widowhood), but now both will be forgotten and hopefully a new day of faith and faithfulness begins!

**54:5** Again, like v. 4, family metaphors are used. Notice the different titles for Israel’s husband (cf. vv. 6-8; Hosea 1-3).

1. your Maker, – YHWH as both husband and creator, cf. 43:1,7; 44:2,21,24; Deut. 32:18
2. the LORD of hosts – see Special Topic at below
3. your Redeemer – recurrent title in Isaiah (cf. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:41; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 63:16)

4. the Holy One of Israel – recurrent title in Isaiah (cf. 1:4; 5:19,24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19,23; 30:11,12,15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14,16,20; 43:3,14,15; 45:11; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9,14 (in both sections of Isaiah, 1-39 and 40-66))
5. the God of all the earth – this universalism is characteristic of Isaiah, i.e., 6:3; 11:9; 45:6; 52:10

These titles are a Hebraic way of highlighting the characteristics of Israel's God! For other wonderful texts on God's character see Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8-9. See Special Topic at 49:7.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: LORD OF HOSTS**

This title, "LORD of Hosts" is made up of

- A. the covenant name for God, YHWH. See Special Topic: Names For Deity at Isaiah 1:1
- B. the term "hosts" (BDB 838) can denote
  1. angels in general (cf. Neh. 9:6)
  2. the heavenly army of angels (cf. I Sam. 17:45; Dan. 8:10; Luke 2:13)
  3. the angelic council (cf. I Kgs. 22:19; Dan. 7:10)
  4. human army (i.e., Num. 2:4,6; Jdgs. 8:6; 9:29)
  5. the lights in the night sky thought to be spiritual powers (i.e., Babylonian astral worship, cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; II Kgs. 17:16; 21:3,5; 23:4-5; II Chr. 33:3,5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13)
  6. It became a title for YHWH in Amos 4:13; 5:27 (with ARTICLE in Amos 3:13; 6:14; 9:5 and without ARTICLE in Amos 5:14,15,16; 6:8; I Kgs. 19:10,14). It denoted YHWH fighting on Israel's behalf.
  7. There is a specialized use in Josh. 5:14-15, which may refer to Michael the angelic guardian of Israel. This is in some way parallel to the Angel of the Lord as a representation of Deity Himself.

**54:6** Israel is described as a faithless wife who has been divorced (cf. 49:14-21; 50:1,2; 62:4).

**54:7** YHWH divorced His faithless wife but now seeks her out again (cf. Hosea 1-3). This is shocking in light of Moses' writings about not remarrying the same woman.

▣ **"For a brief moment I forsook you"** See Isa. 26:20. God does get angry but it passes (cf. Ps. 103:9-14).

▣ **"I will gather you"** This (*Piel* IMPERFECT, BDB 867, KB 1062) is a way of referring to a reversal of the exile, a new exodus from Mesopotamia (cf. 11:12; 43:5; 49:18; 56:8; 60:4).

**54:8** In the OT the characteristics of YHWH as loving and compassionate are contrasted with Him as a God of justice and righteousness. Israel is the object of both YHWH's love and wrath (lit. "overflowing anger," BDB 1009, KB 1637, found only here). Theologically this is where the work of the Messiah (52:12-3:13) is needed. Love and justice meet at Calvary!

▣ **"But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you"** Wow! These are powerful words of God's love and promises.

1. "everlasting" – see Special Topic at 45:17

2. “lovingkindness” – see Special Topic at 40:6
3. “compassion” – *Piel* PERFECT, BDB 933, KB 1216; this is used of YHWH in 14:1; 30:18; 49:10,13,15; 54:7,8,10; 55:7; 60:10; Micah 7:19 (negatively in 9:17; 27:11)

▣ **“the LORD”** This is literally “YHWH”; see Special Topic at 40:3.

▣ **“Redeemer”** See Special Topic at 41:14.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 54:9-10**

<sup>9</sup>**“For this is like the days of Noah to Me,  
When I swore that the waters of Noah  
Would not flood the earth again;  
So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you  
Nor will I rebuke you.  
<sup>10</sup>For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake,  
But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you,  
And My covenant of peace will not be shaken,”  
Says the LORD who has compassion on you.**

**54:9-10** These two verses must be describing the “new covenant” of Jer. 31:31-34 (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38) because the Israelites who returned continued to sin (cf. Malachi).

**54:9** This verse is a direct allusion to the Flood of Genesis 6-9 (esp. 8:21; 9:11).

The Hebrew “waters of Noah” can easily be “like the days of Noah” (NASB) with DSS and other ancient versions, but not the LXX which has “from the waters at the time of Noah.”

**59:10 “My covenant of peace”** This is probably another way of referring to “the everlasting covenant” (cf. 55:2; 59:21; 61:8; Gen. 17:7; Ps. 105:10; Jer. 32:40; 50:5). This time period is described often in Ezekiel (cf. 16:60; 20:37; 34:25; 37:26; for more study see my commentary on Ezekiel online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org) ). The problem is that YHWH broke His covenant with Abraham’s seed by the destruction and exile of Jerusalem and the abandonment of the Temple (Ezekiel 8-10). Part of our problem is with the English word “forever” or “everlasting” (see Special Topic at 45:17). The other part of our problem in interpreting texts like this is the two covenants! Something really significant happened in Christ. He is the fulfillment of all OT promises. The NT is about Him and those who believe in Him, not about national Israel. This is difficult for us to accept because of our love and trust of the Bible and the powerful nature of these texts. However, neither Jesus nor any NT writer ever reaffirms a promise to national Israel (see Special Topic at 40:9).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 54:11-17**

<sup>11</sup>**“O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted,  
Behold, I will set your stones in antimony,  
And your foundations I will lay in sapphires.  
<sup>12</sup>Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies,  
And your gates of crystal,  
And your entire wall of precious stones.  
<sup>13</sup>All your sons will be taught of the LORD;  
And the well-being of your sons will be great.**

<sup>14</sup>In righteousness you will be established;  
 You will be far from oppression, for you will not fear;  
 And from terror, for it will not come near you.  
<sup>15</sup>If anyone fiercely assails *you* it will not be from Me.  
 Whoever assails you will fall because of you.  
<sup>16</sup>Behold, I Myself have created the smith who blows the fire of coals  
 And brings out a weapon for its work;  
 And I have created the destroyer to ruin.  
<sup>17</sup>No weapon that is formed against you will prosper;  
 And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn.  
 This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,  
 And their vindication is from Me,” declares the LORD.

**54:11-13** Notice the number of jewels used as a way to show God’s favor (cf. Ezek. 28:13).

1. antimony (BDB 806, KB 918) – either a black stone, cf. I Chr. 29:2, or black mortar, cf Isa. 54:11
2. sapphires (BDB 705, KB 764) – possibly lapis-lazuli
3. rubies (BDB 461, KB 460)
4. crystal (BDB 869, KB 82) – possibly beryl
5. precious stones, but not specified as to which ones

Only one of these jewels (#2) was used in the breastplate of the High Priest (cf. Exod. 28:17-19; 39:10-11).

The imagery of jeweled walls is taken over by John in Rev. 21:18-21.

**54:11 “O afflicted one”** This is poetically parallel to “O barren one” of v. 1. They both refer to the returnees.

**54:13 “All your sons will be taught of the LORD”** This sounds very much like Jer. 31:34 (i.e., “the new covenant”). Jesus quotes this verse in John 6:45 related to the Father drawing believers/disciples to Himself through Jesus.

The NEB revocalizes the MT and changes “and all your sons” to “your masons,” but the UBS Text Project gives “and all your sons” an A Rating (very high probability).

**54:14** This verse mentions four things that the returnees will experience of God’s care and protection.

1. you will be established in righteousness – *Hithpolel* IMPERFECT (BDB 465, KB 464)
2. oppression will be far from you – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 934, KB 1221)
3. you will not fear – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 431, KB 432)
4. terror will not come near you – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 897, KB 1132)

**54:15-17** This is surely a passage on YHWH’s sovereignty. One wonders how this truth relates to eschatological persecution of believers.

**54:15** This verse is similar in meaning to Gen. 12:3b. The returnees may experience problems but they are not from God and will be punished (cf. 41:11-16). There is a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, a *Qal* IMPERFECT, and a *Qal* PERFECT of the same Hebrew root (BDB 158, KB 184). This grammatical construction emphasizes their possible problem but God’s sure actions on their behalf.

**54:16-17** This verse, like John 6:45, emphasizes the sovereignty of YHWH to accomplish His purpose through the seed of Abraham (i.e., Israel and the Messiah).

**54:17 “the servants of the LORD”** The NASB Study Bible has a good note on this phrase (p. 1033).  
“After ch. 53 the singular ‘servant’ no longer occurs in Isaiah. The ‘servants’ (see 63:17; 65:8-9,13-15; 66:14) are true believers — both Jew and Gentile (see 56:6-8) — who are faithful to the Lord. They are in a sense the ‘offspring’ of the servant (53:10).”

▣ **“their vindication is from Me”** There is no VERB in the MT. YHWH will deliver His people.



# ISAIAH 55

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Free Offer of Mercy	An Invitation to Abundant Life	A Hymn of Joy and Triumph	God's Offer of Mercy	Final Invitation
55:1-5 (1-5)	55:1-5 (1-5)	55:1-5 (1-5)	55:1-2 (1-2)	55:1-3a (1-3a)
			55:3-5 (3-5)	55:3b-5 (3b-5)
55:6-13 (6-13)	55:6-7 (6-7)	55:6-9 (6-9)	55:6-9 (6-9)	55:6-11 (6-11)
	55:8-9 (8-9)			
	55:10-11 (10-11)	55:10-11 (10-11)	55:10-11 (10-11)	Conclusion
	55:12-13 (12-13)	55:12-13 (12-13)	55:12-13	55:12-13 (12-13)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

1. To whom is this chapter speaking? (Jews in Exile or all humans)
2. What is it offering to them: (restoration to the Promised Land or spiritual salvation [i.e., Ibn Ezra])

3. This is where two hermeneutical principles collide!
  - a. Every passage should be interpreted in light of the original, inspired author's intent. The way to judge a proper interpretation is, "What would the original hearers (i.e., the target audience) have understood?" Every text has only one meaning.
  - b. The NT is the proper fulfillment and interpreter of the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17-48). Jesus is the goal and purpose of the OT promises. In Him and in Him alone should the OT be interpreted. The NT is about Jesus and universal redemption, not about national Israel.
4. Notice that the return from exile is not specifically mentioned (unless v. 12a,b) or even alluded to. The invitation is more general, more broad!

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This setting is either the
  1. Messianic banquet, Matt. 25:6-8; Luke 14:15-24; 22:16,18; Rev. 19:9
  2. market place of Jerusalem
- B. The OT Prophets often used the historical events of their own day to foreshadow eschatological events (see Appendix Two).
- C. As a Great Commission Christian (i.e., Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8) who believes in the priority of evangelism and discipleship, this chapter holds a dear place in my heart and ministry. YHWH, through His prophet, pleads for fallen humanity to return to Him so that He can give them full and free forgiveness (cf. vv. 1-5). This is the goal of Gen. 3:15!
 

However, there is a mandated covenant response (cf. vv. 6-7). Humans must repent, believe, obey, and persevere.

YHWH has an eternal redemptive plan (cf. vv. 8-11). See Special Topic at 40:15! God's revelation through Abraham's seed was a message for the whole world. Abraham's seed is now all believers in Christ (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)!
- D. Notice the speaker in the poem is YHWH (or Personified Wisdom of Pro. 9:1-6). Only the invitation of vv. 6-7 is spoken by the prophet who was overwhelmed at the mercy of YHWH.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 55:1-5

- <sup>1</sup>**"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters;  
And you who have no money come, buy and eat.  
Come, buy wine and milk  
Without money and without cost.**
- <sup>2</sup>**Why do you spend money for what is not bread,  
And your wages for what does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,  
And delight yourself in abundance.**
- <sup>3</sup>**Incline your ear and come to Me.  
Listen, that you may live;  
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,  
*According to* the faithful mercies shown to David.**
- <sup>4</sup>**Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples,  
A leader and commander for the peoples.**
- <sup>5</sup>**Behold, you will call a nation you do not know,  
And a nation which knows you not will run to you,**

**Because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel;  
For He has glorified you.”**

**55:1-3** YHWH’s invitation to humanity (i.e., “everyone who thirsts,” cf. v. 1a) has many commands which are mostly emphatic divine invitations.

1. come to the waters – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 229, KB 246)
2. come – same as #1
3. buy – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 991, KB 1404)
4. eat – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 37, KB 46)
5. come – same as #1 and 2
6. buy – same as #3
7. listen carefully – *Qal* IMPERATIVE and an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root (BDB 1033, KB 1570) for emphasis
8. eat – same as #4
9. delight yourself – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 772, KB 851) used in a JUSSIVE sense
10. incline your ear – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 639, KB 692)
11. come to Me – same as #1,2,5; notice the personal element
12. listen – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570)
13. that you may live – *Qal* JUSSIVE (BDB 310, KB 309)
14. I will make an everlasting covenant with you – *Qal* COHORTATIVE (BDB 503, KB 560, see Special Topic: Covenant at 40:1)

**55:1 “Every one”** This speaks of the universal invitation of God (cf. vv. 4-5; Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; John 1:12; 3:16; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:1; 4:14).

▣ **“thirsts”** This seems to relate to a sense of spiritual need. This is always the first step a fallen human must take (cf. Matt. 5:6; Rev. 22:17).

▣ **“the waters”** The early church interpreted this as baptism. This is a good example of isogesis (reading into a text to back up what we believe). For desert people, this was a symbol of life and prosperity (cf. 41:17; 44:3).

▣ **“you who have no money. . .for what does not satisfy”** This refers to lack of personal resources. Grace, not merit, is mankind’s, even Israel’s, only hope (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ **“eat”** A meal was a very significant act in the Middle East. Covenants and friendships were sealed over food.

▣ **“buy. . .without cost”** This is obviously a paradoxical statement meant to highlight mankind’s search for peace with God.

1. it cannot be bought but a price must be paid
2. humans often desperately try to find peace and happiness, but to no avail (cf. Ecclesiastes 1-2)
3. God has provided a way through a new “David” to come to Him
4. there is still a cost, but it is now to repent and receive what God has freely offered in the Davidic Messiah

**55:2 “Why do you spend money. . .for what does not satisfy”** This reflects mankind’s continuing search for happiness in things, pleasure, or power (cf. the book of Ecclesiastes).

▣ **“delight yourself in abundance”** God wants us happy and content in fellowship with Himself (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28; John 5:11). The earth with its beauty and abundance is for mankind’s enjoyment!

**55:3 “come to Me”** Personal relationship is the key to biblical faith! YHWH Himself is the goal, not just truths about Him! See Special Topic at 45:5.

▣ **“Listen”** This is from the word *Shema* (cf. Deut. 6:4-5). It means “listen and do.”

▣ **“an everlasting covenant”** See note at 40:28. Everlasting (BDB 761, see Special Topic at 45:17) is used to describe many things in Isaiah 40-66.

▣ **“faithful mercies”** This is from the word *hesed* (BDB 338). It means “covenant loyalty. See Special Topic at 40:6.

▣ **“David”** This is an example of God’s love and care even to the undeserving (cf. Psalm 32,51). Also this reference has Messianic implications (cf. II Sam. 7:1ff), which have an eternal aspect.

**55:4 “. . . a leader and commander for the peoples”** This points beyond David to the Messiah (cf. II Samuel 7) because the object is the Gentiles (cf. vv. 4-5).

The MT and LXX have “him” referring to David’s seed (i.e., the Messiah), but for some reason, the Syrian versions have “you.” This is the same theological issue of the “Suffering Servant” text of 52:12-53:13.

▣ **“the peoples. . . a nation”** Gentiles are included (notice the PLURALS).

**55:5** The nations will come to the God of Israel and honor His people (cf. 45:14,22-25; 49:6,12,23; Zech. 8:20-23). The question remains: Is this a reference to a believing, restored Israel (not the secular state of modern Israel) or is this an eschatological reference to the Great Commission?

▣ Notice the names of Israel’s Deity (see Special Topic at 40:3).

1. YHWH
2. your *Elohim*
3. the Holy One of Israel (see note at Isa. 1:4 online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org))

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 55:6-13**

**<sup>6</sup>Seek the LORD while He may be found;**

**Call upon Him while He is near.**

**<sup>7</sup>Let the wicked forsake his way**

**And the unrighteous man his thoughts;**

**And let him return to the LORD,**

**And He will have compassion on him,**

**And to our God,**

**For He will abundantly pardon.**

**<sup>8</sup>“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,**

**Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.**

**<sup>9</sup>“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,**

**So are My ways higher than your ways**

**And My thoughts than your thoughts.**

<sup>10</sup>**For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
And do not return there without watering the earth  
And making it bear and sprout,  
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;**

<sup>11</sup>**So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;  
It will not return to Me empty,  
Without accomplishing what I desire,  
And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.**

<sup>12</sup>**For you will go out with joy  
And be led forth with peace;  
The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you,  
And all the trees of the field will clap *their* hands.**

<sup>13</sup>**Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up,  
And instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up,  
And it will be a memorial to the LORD,  
For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off.”**

**55:6 “Seek the LORD while He may be found”** “Seek” is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 205, KB 233). This VERB is often used of seeking God in a personal sense (cf. Deut. 4:29; Isa. 58:2; 65:10). This seeking is described well in Deut. 30:1-3, 10 and Jer. 29:13-14; Amos 5:14-15.

▣ **“while He may be found”** No one can come to God unless He draws them (cf. 45:22; John 6:44, 65), but when He draws, humans must respond then. God never forsakes His creation (cf. Ps. 103:8-14), but there is a time to choose. If that time passes, a hardness of the human heart develops into an inability to hear God and respond to Him.

▣ **“Call upon Him while He is near”** “Call” is also a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 894, KB 1128). This line of poetry is parallel to the line above. This language denotes a worship setting, as does Rom. 10:9-13 or John 1:12. Humans must respond in repentance and faith (cf. Jer. 3:12-13; 4:1-4; Joel 2:12-13; Amos 5:4-7, 14-15; Mark 1:15; John 3:16; Acts 20:21). This appropriate covenant response is true for the OT as well as the NT. YHWH desires a fellowship, a people!

**55:7 “Let the wicked forsake his way”** Lifestyle repentance is crucial. See Special Topic at 44:22.

▣ Notice the parallelism between the first two lines. Evil is described in two ways.

1. lifestyle actions
2. the thought life

The rabbis have a helpful thought about this. They describe the thought life as a garden ready for seed. What we let in through our eyes and ears falls on that ready soil. If we choose to dwell on it then it becomes who we are. Sin begins in the thought life, but in time reaches the hand/foot/mouth! Guard your thought life!

The first three VERBS of v. 7 are JUSSIVES.

1. forsake – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 736, KB 806) used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. return – *Qal* JUSSIVE (BDB 996, KB 1427, cf. 31:6; 44:22)
3. will have compassion – *Piel* IMPERFECT (BDB 933, KB 1216) used in a JUSSIVE sense, 49:10, 13; 54:8

▣ **“He will abundantly pardon”** Wow, I love this chapter! It is a wonderful invitation to spiritually hungry people who are being aggressively sought after by a loving, forgiving, creator God!

Notice the powerful VERBALS.

1. “He will abundantly” – *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
2. pardon – *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

Those who have experienced God’s love and forgiveness have a powerful, wonderful message to share with a frightened, confused, hurting, discouraged, sinful world!

▣ **“He will have compassion. . .abundantly pardon”** When God forgives, He forgets (cf. Ps. 103:12; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). What a wonderful truth of the love and forgiveness of God (cf. Heb. 9:14; I John 1:7). YHWH is willing, ready, and able to accept, forgive, and restore His fallen creation made in His image!

**55:8-11** These verses have a unified theme, YHWH’s redemptive purposes! The parallel lines of v. 8 speak of the uniqueness of His gracious character. Humans deserve death but He gives life, peace, and His personal presence! He is totally different from humans, but He loves humans. He created them like Himself (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:8; Lev. 26:12). He will not let us go! He is pursuing us in mercy and in Christ!

**55:11 “My word. . .shall not return to Me empty”** God is sovereign (cf. 40:8). God’s spoken word had great power in the OT (cf. Genesis 1). In this chapter His powerful, purposeful word is for mercy, forgiveness, and fellowship (cf. 14:24; 25:1; 45:23; 46:10; 59:21; Matt. 24:35)!

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE**

Assurance is (1) a biblical truth, (2) a believer’s faith experience, and (3) and a lifestyle.

- A. The biblical basis for assurance is
  1. God the Father’s character
    - a. Genesis 3:15; 12:3
    - b. Psalm 46:10
    - c. John 3:16; 10:28-29
    - d. Romans 8:38-39
    - e. Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:5,8-9
    - f. Philippians 1:6
    - g. II Timothy 1:12
    - h. I Peter 1:3-5
  2. God the Son’s work
    - a. His priestly prayer, John 17:9-24, especially v. 12
    - b. His substitutionary sacrifice
      - 1) Romans 8:31
      - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
      - 3) I John 4:9-10
    - c. His continuing intercession
      - 1) Romans 8:34
      - 2) Hebrews 7:25

- 3) I John 2:1
- 3. God the Spirit's enabling
  - a. His calling, John 6:44,65
  - b. His sealing
    - 1) II Corinthians 1:22; 5:5
    - 2) Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30
  - c. His personal assurance
    - 1) Romans 8:16-17
    - 2) I John 5:7-13
- B. The believer's necessary covenantal response is
  - 1. initial and continuing repentance and faith
    - a. Mark 1:15
    - b. John 1:12
    - c. Acts 3:16; 20:21
    - d. Romans 10:9-13
  - 2. remembering that the goal of salvation is Christlikeness
    - a. Romans 8:28-29
    - b. Ephesians 1:4; 2:10; 4:13
  - 3. remembering that assurance is confirmed by lifestyle
    - a. the book of James
    - b. the book of I John
  - 4. remembering that assurance is confirmed by active faith and perseverance
    - a. Mark 13:13
    - b. I Corinthians 15:2
    - c. Hebrews 3:14; 4:14
    - d. II Peter 1:10
    - e. Jude vv. 20-21

**55:12-13** In this OT context the visible sign of God's presence and blessing was agricultural abundance (i.e., vv. 1-2). Creation is often personified as rejoicing at the presence of God. The idyllic fellowship of the Garden of Eden is restored!

An interpreter must ask, was this fulfilled in the return under Zerubbabel, Joshua, Ezra, Nehemiah? The answer clearly is, it was not! Therefore, this must be viewed as an eschatological setting.

# ISAIAH 56

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Rewards For Obedience To God	Salvation For the Gentiles	A Blessing On All Who Keep the Sabbath	God's People Will Include All Nations	Promises To Foreigners
56:1-5 (1-5)	56:1-2 (1-2)	56:1 (1)  56:2 (2)	56:1-2   56:3a  56:3b-5	56:1-7 (1-7)
56:6-8 (6-8)	56:6-8 (6-8)	56:6-8 (6-8)	56:6-7  56:8	56:8-9 (8-9)
56:9-12 (9-12)	Israel's Irresponsible Leaders  56:9-12 (9-12)	Against Corrupt Leaders  56:9-12 (9-12)	Israel's Leaders Are Condemned  56:9-12	The Unworthiness of the Nations' Leaders  56:10-57:2

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

There is a change from Isaiah's message to the returnees from Mesopotamian exile (chapters 40-55) to faithless, covenant people in Palestine (chapters 56-66).



## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 56:1-3

- <sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD,  
“Preserve justice and do righteousness,  
For My salvation is about to come  
And My righteousness to be revealed.  
<sup>2</sup>How blessed is the man who does this,  
And the son of man who takes hold of it;  
Who keeps from profaning the sabbath,  
And keeps his hand from doing any evil.”  
<sup>3</sup>Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,  
“The LORD will surely separate me from His people.”  
Nor let the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”  
<sup>4</sup>For thus says the LORD,  
“To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths,  
And choose what pleases Me,  
And hold fast My covenant,  
<sup>5</sup>To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial,  
And a name better than that of sons and daughters;  
I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.”

**56:1** This chapter starts out with two commands related to an appropriate life of faith (cf. 55:7).

1. preserve justice – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1036, KB 1581, cf. 1:17); for “justice,” see Special Topic at 42:1
2. do righteousness – *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 793, KB 889); for “righteousness,” see special Topic at 48:1

▣ The reason for the life of faith is

1. My salvation is about to come – *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 97, KB 112, cf. 46:13; 51:5; Ps. 85:9)
2. My righteousness to be revealed – *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 162, KB 191, see same first two references as #1)

Believers must live every day as if the Lord was coming today! This attitude and lifestyle keeps us close to God (cf. Ps. 85:9).

**56:2** Notice the first two lines are parallel. Also the “blessed man” (cf. Ps. 112:1; 119:1-2,22,168; 128:1) is the one who obeys/observes God’s law.

▣ The second two lines describe two specific things that “the blessed man” will not do.

1. profane the sabbath (cf. Exod. 20:8-11)
2. do any evil (summary phrase)

The VERB “keep” (BDB 1036, KB 1581) occurs four times in this chapter (vv. 2 [twice],4,6). Lifestyle faith and obedience are vital and crucial aspects of a personal relationship with YHWH.

**56:3** This verse assures those who were normally excluded from Israel's God that they would be included.

1. the non-Israelite worshiper (cf. vv. 4-5)
2. the physically damaged person (cf. vv. 6-8, Deut. 23:1-8)

The word "says," which is repeated twice (foreigner, eunuch) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 55, KB 65) used in a JUSSIVE sense.

▣ **"the eunuch"** This refers to a person

1. with damaged testicles
2. a castrated person

The account of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 being fully accepted into the people of God by faith in Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant, is a great example of this type of persons' inclusion!

▣ **"surely separate"** This is a *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT from the same root (BDB 95, KB 110) used for emphasis. However, the great emphasis is that this statement is not true!

**56:5** Eunuchs could have no natural children so YHWH will give the faithful eunuchs a memorial in His house. He will give them "an everlasting name" (i.e., Hebrew idiom for descendants).



**NASB, REB** "memorial"

**NRSV, LXX,**

**Peshitta** "a place"

**NJB, JPSOA** "monument"

The Hebrew term is literally "hand" (BDB 388, #4) but used idiomatically for memorial (cf. I Sam. 15:12; II Sam. 18:18).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 56:6-8**

- <sup>6</sup>"Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,  
To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD,  
To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath  
And holds fast My covenant;  
<sup>7</sup>Even those I will bring to My holy mountain  
And make them joyful in My house of prayer.  
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar;  
For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."  
<sup>8</sup>The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares,  
"Yet *others* I will gather to them, to those *already* gathered."**

**56:6** Notice how the faithful foreigners are characterized.

1. join themselves to the LORD – *Niphal* PARTICIPLE (BDB 530, KB 522)
2. minister to Him – *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 1058, KB 1661)
3. love the name of the LORD – *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 12, KB 17)
4. be His servants – *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 224, KB 243)
5. keep from profaning the sabbath – *Qal* PARTICIPLE (BDB 1036, KB 1581, cf. vv 2,4) and a *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 320, KB 319)
6. holds fast My covenant – *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE (BDB 304, KB 302)

YHWH's true followers are known by their lifestyle faith (cf. Matthew 5-7, esp. 7:15-23,24-27).

**56:7-8** As v. 6 described the faithful foreigners' actions, so vv. 7-8 describe what the faithful God will do for them.

1. I will bring to My holy mountain (i.e., temple)
2. I will make them joyful in My house of prayer
3. I will accept their sacrifices on My altar
4. I will gather them and others

**56:7** “My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples” This was the stated purpose of Solomon’s temple (cf. I Kgs. 8:41-43). Jesus quotes this verse in Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46 as He cleansed the temple of the animal sellers and money changers.

**56:8**

**NASB** “Yet *others* I will gather to them”

**NKJV** “Yet I will gather to him *others* besides”

**NRSV, Peshitta** “I will gather others to them”

**TEV** “has promised that he will bring still other people to join them”

**NJB** “there are others I shall gather”

There are two possibilities.

1. YHWH will gather even more of the exiled descendants of Abraham (JPSOA)
2. YHWH will gather other outcasts (i.e., foreigners, eunuchs)

Jesus’ use of this text (cf. Mark 11:17 following the LXX) shows its wider intended scope.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 56:9-12**

<sup>9</sup>All you beasts of the field,  
All you beasts in the forest,  
Come to eat.

<sup>10</sup>His watchmen are blind,  
All of them know nothing.  
All of them are mute dogs unable to bark,  
Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber;

<sup>11</sup>And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied.  
And they are shepherds who have no understanding;  
They have all turned to their own way,  
Each one to his unjust gain, to the last one.

<sup>12</sup>“Come,” *they say*, “let us get wine, and let us drink heavily of strong drink;  
And tomorrow will be like today, only more so.”

**56:9** This is a parody of the invitation to the Divine supper (cf. v. 12; 55:1-2), but here in the context of judgment (vv. 10-12) it is a command (“come” – *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). This will be a banquet of judgment!

There is an interpretive question related to vv. 9-12, as to when this occurs.

1. pre-exilic
2. exilic
3. post-exilic

The issue is to which period of Israel’s history do these verses refer? Possibly it relates to some in each period. There were always faithless leaders and people.

**56:10-12** These verses are in sharp contrast to the faithful outcasts of vv. 1-8. These describe Israel's spiritual condition (mostly her leaders).

1. the watchmen are blind
2. all of them know nothing
3. all of them are dumb dogs
4. dream/rave (from Arabic root or "pant" [KB 243], referring to "dogs" of v. 10c)
5. love to sleep
6. greedy
7. never satisfied
8. shepherds without understanding
9. all tuned to their own ways
10. each one turned to unjust gain

Wow! What a terrible description of the covenant people. Their leaders are corrupt and the proverb is true, like leader, like people! God's revelation, temple, and godly leaders had made no difference. Their fruit is obvious (i.e., self)!

**56:10 "His watchmen are blind"** The MT scholars noted a problem in the Hebrew text. It reads a *Qal* PERFECT (BDB 859, KB 1044), but they suggest a *Qal* PARTICIPLE. Either one does not change the sense of the text.

**56:12 "Come"** This IMPERATIVE (*Qal*, BDB 87, KB 102) matches the one in v. 9c! The humans come to get drunk and ignore God (v. 12b), so now the animals are invited by God to devour His covenant people (cf. 18:6; Jer. 7:33; 12:9; 15:3; 34:20).

# ISAIAH 57

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Evil Leaders Rebuked	Israel's Futile Idolatry	Against Idolatry	Israel's Idolatry Is Condemned	The Unworthiness of the Nations' Leaders (56:10-57:2)
57:1-10 (1-10)	57:1-2 (1-2)	57:1-12 (1-12)	57:1-2	(56:10-57:2)
				Against Idolatry
	57:3-6 (3-6)		57:3-10	57:3-13 (3-13)
	57:7-10 (7-10)			
57:11-13 (11-13)	57:11-13 (11-13)		57:11-13	
	Healing For the Backslider		God's Promises of Help and Healing	Salvation For the Weak
57:14-21 (14-21)	57:14 (14)		57:14	57:14-16 (14-16)
	57:15-18 (15-18)		57:15-17	
				57:17 (17)
			57:18-21	57:18-21 (18-21)
	57:19-20 (19-20)			
	57:21 (21)			

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Obviously the context of Israel's sin continues from chapter 56.
- B. This describes the OT choice of "the two ways"; one of life and peace and the other of self, sin, and ruin (cf. Deut. 30:15,19).
- C. Leupold makes the interesting comment (p. 271) that as chapter 56 ended on faithless leaders, chapter 57 deals with faithless people.
- D. The setting of the idolatry is not Mesopotamia but Canaan's fertility cults (i.e., *Ba'al*, *Asherah*, *Molech*). This reached its apex under King Manasseh.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 57:1-10

<sup>1</sup>"The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart;  
And devout men are taken away, while no one understands.  
For the righteous man is taken away from evil,

<sup>2</sup>He enters into peace;  
They rest in their beds,  
*Each one* who walked in his upright way.

<sup>3</sup>But come here, you sons of a sorceress,  
Offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute.

<sup>4</sup>Against whom do you jest?  
Against whom do you open wide your mouth  
And stick out your tongue?  
Are you not children of rebellion,  
Offspring of deceit,

<sup>5</sup>*Who* inflame yourselves among the oaks,  
Under every luxuriant tree,  
Who slaughter the children in the ravines,  
Under the clefts of the crags?

<sup>6</sup>Among the smooth *stones* of the ravine  
Is your portion, they are your lot;  
Even to them you have poured out a drink offering,  
You have made a grain offering.  
Shall I relent concerning these things?

<sup>7</sup>Upon a high and lofty mountain  
You have made your bed.  
You also went up there to offer sacrifice.

<sup>8</sup>Behind the door and the doorpost  
You have set up your sign;  
Indeed, far removed from Me, you have uncovered yourself,

And have gone up and made your bed wide.  
 And you have made an agreement for yourself with them,  
 You have loved their bed,  
 You have looked on *their* manhood.  
<sup>9</sup>You have journeyed to the king with oil  
 And increased your perfumes;  
 You have sent your envoys a great distance  
 And made *them* go down to Sheol.  
<sup>10</sup>You were tired out by the length of your road,  
 Yet you did not say, 'It is hopeless.'  
 You found renewed strength,  
 Therefore you did not faint."

**57:1** Evil triumphs when the righteous are persecuted and murdered, and no one seems to care!

1. no man takes it to heart
2. no one understands

▣ **"is taken from evil"** As the wicked seek self and sin, the righteous are delivered from the terrible influence of the Fall (cf. Genesis 3; 6:5,11-12).

**57:2** This verse describes the spiritual condition of the righteous man.

1. enters into peace (because of v. 1 this must be mental)
2. rest in their beds (BDB 1012). There is a word play on this word used here of the righteous, but in vv. 7,8, of the wicked.
  - a. bed for sleep
  - b. bed for sex
  - c. the grave
3. walked in his upright way (i.e., lifestyle faithfulness)

**57:3-4** These verses describe the wicked ones mentioned in v. 1. They are characterized as

1. sons of a sorcerer (BDB 778 II)
  2. offspring of an adulterer (BDB 610)
  3. offspring of a prostitute (BDB 275)
- YHWH calls them to approach (*Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 897, KB 1132) His presence for judgment.
4. offspring of deceit (BDB 833)
    - a. against whom do you jest
    - b. against whom do you open wide your mouth
    - c. against whom do you stick out your tongue (these described their accusations against the righteous)
  5. children of rebellion (BDB 1055)

**57:5-6** The idolatry is described as

1. inflame yourself among the oaks (*Niphal* PARTICIPLE, BDB 328, KB 328, this refers to the fertility worship of *Ba'al* and *Asherah*, i.e., Jer. 2:23-27)
2. slaughter the children (*Qal* PARTICIPLE, BDB 1006, KB 1458, this refers to the worship of *Molech*)
3. pour out a libation (*Qal* PERFECT, BB 1049, KB 1629)
4. make a grain offering (*Hiphil* PERFECT, BDB 748, KB 828)

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST**

### **I. Reasons For**

- A. Ancient humans began as a hunter-gatherers, but as nomadic life became settled, the need for crops and herds developed.
- B. Ancient Near Eastern inhabitants were vulnerable to the forces of nature. As civilizations developed around the major bodies of fresh water they became dependant on the regular order of the seasons.
- C. The forces of nature became gods who needed to be supplicated and controlled.

### **II. Where and Why**

- A. Fertility religions developed in
  - 1. Egypt (Nile)
  - 2. Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates)
  - 3. Canaan (Jordan)
- B. There is a basic commonality among the fertility cults of the Ancient Near East.
- C. The changing and unpredictable seasons and weather conditions caused the development of myths using human/divine analogies as the basis of life in the spiritual realm and on earth.

### **III. Who and How**

- A. Who (the gods and goddesses)
  - 1. Egypt
    - a. Isis (female)
    - b. Osiris (male)
  - 2. Mesopotamia
    - a. Ishtar/Inanna (female)
    - b. Tammuz/Dumuzi (male)
  - 3. Canaan
    - a. Ba'al (male)
    - b. Asherah, Astarte, Anath (female)
- B. Each of these pairs was mythologized in similar ways.
  - 1. one dies
  - 2. the other restores
  - 3. the pattern of dying and rising gods mimics the annual cycles of nature
- C. Imitation magic saw human sexual unions (i.e., marriage of the gods) as a way of insuring fertility of crops, herds, and people.

### **IV. The Israelites**

- A. YHWH's people were warned (i.e., Leviticus and Deuteronomy) to avoid the fertility cults (especially of Canaan).
- B. These cults were very popular because of the superstition of human beings and the added incentive of sexual activity.



- C. Idolatry involves the blessing of life to be sought in cultic or ritual ways instead of a personal faith and trust in YHWH.

V. Suggested Reading

- A. W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*  
B. J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*  
C. James G. Frazer  
    1. *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*  
    2. *Folklore in the Old Testament*  
    3. *The Worship of Nature*  
D. C. H. Gordon, *Before the Bible*  
E. S. N. Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*

**SPECIAL TOPIC: MOLECH**

This YHWH prohibits the worship of *Molech* (BDB 574), the Canaanite (Ammon) fire god worshiped by sacrificing the firstborn child of every family in the community in order to insure fertility. His name (as used by Israelites) is a Hebrew pun on the consonants for “king” and the vowels for “shame.” Israel is warned about this god early and often (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2,3,4,5; I Kgs. 11:7; II Kgs. 23:10; Jer. 32:35; Micah 6:7). This worship was often characterized by the phrase, “passing through the fire” (cf. 12:31; 18:10; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17,31; 21:6; Ps. 106:37; Jer. 7:31; 19:5).

**57:6e**

- NASB** “shall I relent concerning these things”  
**NKJV** “Should I receive comfort in these”  
**NRSV** “Shall I be appeased for these things”  
**TEV** “Do you think I am pleased with all this”

The Israelites’ fertility worship, even if done in YHWH’s name, was unacceptable!

**57:7** This refers to the *Ba’al* and *Asherah* altars which were placed on the tops of hills (cf. Deut. 12:2; II Kgs. 17:10; Jer. 3:6; 17:2; Hos. 4:13). The phrase “made their bed” refers to the ritual sexual activities offered for the fertility of the land, herds, and human population (cf. v. 8b-d).

**57:8** The first two lines are ambiguous. This could refer to an idolatrous image set up

1. in their homes
2. on their village walls
3. in the temple itself (cf. Ezekiel 8-10)

One wonders if this is somehow related to political/military alliances with pagan nations who demanded the worship of foreign gods (cf. vv. 8d-e, 9).



- NASB** “you have looked on *their* manhood”  
**NKJV** “where you saw *their* hand”  
**TEV** “there you satisfy your lust”  
**NJB** “with your eyes on the sacred symbol”

**JPSOA** “you have chosen lust”

**NRSV, NIV,**

**Peshitta** “where you saw their nakedness”

**NET Bible** “gaze longingly on their genitals”

The problem is **ט** (BDB 388, KB 386) which is literally “hand.” In Ugaritic **ṭṭ** means “love”; in Arabic **ṭṭ** means “penis” (cf. NIDOTTE, vol 2, p. 56). It could refer to “strength” here in a fertility worship sense. There are several euphemisms used by Hebrew authors to refer to the sex organs (another example is “feet,” BDB 919, cf. Exod. 4:25; Deut. 28:57; Jdgs. 3:24; Ruth 3:8; I Sam. 24:3; Ezek. 16:25).

**57:9-10** This seems to refer to the political rituals to assure their safety against foreign invasion.

**57:9 “king”** This could be understood as referring to the fertility god *Molech*, whose name has the same consonants as “king” in Hebrew. The UBS Text Project gives “king” a B rating (some doubt).

▣ **“Sheol”** See Special Topic: Where Are The Dead? at 44:23.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 57:11-13**

<sup>11</sup>**“Of whom were you worried and fearful  
When you lied, and did not remember Me  
Nor give Me a thought?  
Was I not silent even for a long time  
So you do not fear Me?**

<sup>12</sup>**I will declare your righteousness and your deeds,  
But they will not profit you.**

<sup>13</sup>**When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you.  
But the wind will carry all of them up,  
And a breath will take them away.  
But he who takes refuge in Me will inherit the land  
And will possess My holy mountain.”**

**57:11-13** This strophe starts with a series of questions from YHWH to His faithless covenant people. The tragedy was that they were “religious” (cf. vv. 12,13a) but had

1. not remembered (*Qal* PERFECT, BDB 269, KB 269, negated) Him
2. nor give Me a thought (lit. “lay it to heart of you,” *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 962, KB 1321, negated)

The reasons they had neglected YHWH was His silence (v. 11d). This may refer to true prophets who were not sent or at least not heard.

The idols are “vanity” and “emptiness.” The wind will carry them away and along with them, those who trust in them.

#### **57:11**

**NASB, NJB** “for a long time”

**NKJV** “from of old”

**TEV** “for so long”

**JPSOA** “so long”

**REB** “look away”

**NAB** “unseeing”

The JPSOA mentions an emendation that results in “and shut my eyes” (p. 898), which is followed by REB and NAB. The same Hebrew consonants וּמִעַלְמָם can be translated “and from eternity” or “and being hidden.”

**57:13d-e** But those few faithful ones who trust in YHWH and take “refuge” (*Qal* PARTICIPLE, BDB 340, KB 337) in Him will be preserved and rewarded by the giving of

1. the Promised Land
2. YHWH’s presence (i.e., the temple)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT:57:14-21**

<sup>14</sup>And it will be said,

“Build up, build up, prepare the way,  
Remove *every* obstacle out of the way of My people.”

<sup>15</sup>For thus says the high and exalted One

Who lives forever, whose name is Holy,  
“I dwell *on* a high and holy place,  
And *also* with the contrite and lowly of spirit  
In order to revive the spirit of the lowly  
And to revive the heart of the contrite.

<sup>16</sup>For I will not contend forever,

Nor will I always be angry;  
For the spirit would grow faint before Me,  
And the breath *of those whom* I have made.

<sup>17</sup>Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry and struck him;

I hid *My face* and was angry,  
And he went on turning away, in the way of his heart.

<sup>18</sup>I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;

I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners,

<sup>19</sup>Creating the praise of the lips.

Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near,”  
Says the LORD, “and I will heal him.”

<sup>20</sup>But the wicked are like the tossing sea,

For it cannot be quiet,  
And its waters toss up refuse and mud.

<sup>21</sup>“There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”

**57:14** There is a series of IMPERATIVES whereby YHWH commands that all necessary preparations be made for His faithful ones to return from exile (cf. 40:3-4; 62:10).

1. build up (twice) – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 699, KB 757
2. prepare the way – *Piel* IMPERATIVE, BDB 815, KB 937
3. remove *every* obstacle – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, BDB 926, KB 1202

**57:15** Notice the titles and characterizations of God.

1. the high One – *Qal* PARTICIPLE, BDB 926, KB 1202 (same VERB used in v. 14 translated “remove,” i.e., lift up)
2. the exalted One – *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, BDB 669, KB 724 (same VERB used in vv. 7,13, but in different senses)

3. who lives forever – *Qal* PARTICIPLE, BDB 1014, KB 1496, (lit. “who inhabits eternity”; the NET Bible [p. 1275] thinks in this context it should be understood as “the One who rules forever”)
4. whose name is Holy
5. dwells on a high and holy place – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 1014, KB 1496 (in contrast to the fertility gods)
6. with a contrite (BDB 194 I) and lowly (BDB 1050) spirit (BDB 924)
7. to revive the heart of the contrite – *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, BDB 310, KB 309, used twice
  - a. of YHWH, #6
  - b. of His faithful

**57:16a-b** This continues a description of YHWH by YHWH.

1. “I will not contend forever” – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 936, KB 1224, cf. Gen. 6:3
2. “neither will I always be angry” – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 893, KB 1124, cf. Ps. 79:5; 85:5; 103:9; Micah 7:18-19

This should not be interpreted as a period of time set by God after which His grace ceases, but the reality that when humans ignore and violate His word and will, there is a terrible consequence of hardening. The human heart becomes unable to hear and respond!

It is interesting that the OT contrasts the human emotions of love and anger when describing God.

1. love is long lasting and sure – Deut. 5:10; 7:9; Ps. 30:5; Isa. 54:7-8; Jer. 31:3
2. anger is short lived – Deut. 5:9; Ps. 30:5; Isa. 26:20; 54:7-8; 57:16-19

**57:16c-d** YHWH reveals the reasons why He does not remain angry (see Special Topic: God Described As Human at 41:2). This is very similar to Ps. 103:8-14.

1. for the spirit (see Special Topic at 40:7) would grow faint before Me
2. the breath would grow faint

Notice the parallelism of “spirit” (BDB 924) and “breath” (BDB 675) as in 42:5. The frail physical and now psychological condition of fallen mankind cannot endure the silence (vv. 11,17) and anger (vv. 16,17) of their Creator and Redeemer!

**57:17** YHWH’s judgment is analogous to a parent’s punishment (cf. Hosea 11). He does it so His children will learn and turn from it, but sadly some will not, cannot (v. 17c; 1:3,4).

**57:18-21** There is an obvious contrast between the way YHWH will treat the contrite and the rebellious.

1. contrite – vv. 15-16,18-19
2. rebellious – v. 17,20-21

**57:18-19** Notice what YHWH will do for the contrite and lowly of spirit (v. 15), those both near and far (v. 19).

1. revive, v. 15 – *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 310, KB 309)
2. I will not contend, v. 16 – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 936, KB 1224)
3. I will not always be angry, v. 16 – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 893, KB 1124)
4. I will heal, v. 18 – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 950, KB 1272)
5. I will lead, v. 18 – *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (BDB 634, KB 685)
6. I will restore comfort, v. 18 – *Piel* IMPERFECT (BDB 1022, KB 1532)
7. I will create their praise of peace, v. 19 *Qal* PARTICIPLE (BDB 135, KB 153)
8. I will heal them, v. 19 *Qal* PERFECT (BDB 950, KB 1272)

**57:20-21** The rebellious, faithless covenant people are described as

1. the tossing sea
2. sea that cannot be quiet
3. sea that tosses up refuse
4. sea that tosses up mud
5. no peace

# ISAIAH 58

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Observance of Fasts	Fasting That Pleases God	The LORD Does Not Desire Fasting, but Kindness and Justice	True Fasting	Fasting Pleasing To God
58:1-12 (1-12)	58:1-3a (1-3a)	58:1-5 (1-5)	58:1-2	58:1-12 (1-12)
			58:3a	
	58:3b-5 (3b-5)		58:3b-5	
	58:6-9a (6-9a)	58:6-9a (6-9a)	58:6-7	
			58:8-9a	
	58:9b-12 (9b-12)	58:9b-12 (9b-12)	58:9b-12	
Keeping the Sabbath			The Reward For Keeping the Sabbath	The Sabbath
58:13-14 (13-14)	58:13-14 (13-14)	58:13-14 (13-14)	58:13-14	58:13-14 (13-14)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### BACKGROUND

- A. This chapter is a condemnation of religious ritual without personal faith (cf. Isa 29:13; Jeremiah 7).
- B. This is the spiritual problem that caused the Exile.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 58:1-12

<sup>1</sup>“Cry loudly, do not hold back;  
Raise your voice like a trumpet,  
And declare to My people their transgression  
And to the house of Jacob their sins.

<sup>2</sup>Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways,  
As a nation that has done righteousness  
And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God.  
They ask Me *for* just decisions,  
They delight in the nearness of God.

<sup>3</sup>“Why have we fasted and You do not see?  
*Why* have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?’  
Behold, on the day of your fast you find *your* desire,  
And drive hard all your workers.

<sup>4</sup>Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist.  
You do not fast like *you do* today to make your voice heard on high.

<sup>5</sup>Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself?  
Is it for bowing one’s head like a reed  
And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed?  
Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD?

<sup>6</sup>Is this not the fast which I choose,  
To loosen the bonds of wickedness,  
To undo the bands of the yoke,  
And to let the oppressed go free  
And break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup>Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry  
And bring the homeless poor into the house;  
When you see the naked, to cover him;  
And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

<sup>8</sup>Then your light will break out like the dawn,  
And your recovery will speedily spring forth;  
And your righteousness will go before you;  
The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

<sup>9</sup>Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
You will cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’  
If you remove the yoke from your midst,  
The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness,

<sup>10</sup>And if you give yourself to the hungry  
And satisfy the desire of the afflicted,  
Then your light will rise in darkness  
And your gloom *will become* like midday.

<sup>11</sup>And the LORD will continually guide you,  
And satisfy your desire in scorched places,  
And give strength to your bones;  
And you will be like a watered garden,  
And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

<sup>12</sup>Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins;  
 You will raise up the age-old foundations;  
 And you will be called the repairer of the breach,  
 The restorer of the streets in which to dwell.

**58:1** This chapter, like many chapters in Isaiah (i.e., a typical literary marker for a new poem), starts with a series of IMPERATIVES. The questions of interpretation are:

1. who is the speaker?
2. who is the recipient?

Here is the list of what is commanded (note the parallelism):

1. cry loudly – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 894, KB 1128
2. do not hold back – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 362, KB 359, used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. raise your voice – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, BDB 926, KB 1202
4. declare – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, BDB 616, KB 665

The speaker is YHWH by the mouth of His prophet and the recipients are:

1. pre-exilic Israel
2. exilic Israel
3. returning Israel
4. eschatological people of God

▣ “trumpet” This is BDB 1051. See Special Topic below.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL

There are four words in Hebrew associated with horns/trumpets:

1. “the ram’s horn” (BDB 901) – turned into an instrument of sound, cf. Josh. 6:5. This same word is used for the ram caught by his horns which Abraham substituted for Isaac in Gen. 22:13.
2. “trumpet” (BDB 1051) – from Assyrian term for wild sheep (ibex). This is the horn that was used in Exod 19:16,19 at Mt. Sinai/Horeb. #1 and #2 are parallel in Josh. 6:5. It was used to communicate times to worship and times to fight (i.e., Jericho was both, cf. Josh. 6:4).
3. “ram’s horn” (BDB 385) – from Phoenician word for ram (cf. Josh. 6:4,6,8,13). It also stands for the Year of Jubilee (cf. Lev. 25:13,28,40,50,52,54; 27:17,18,23,24).

(These first three seem interchangeable with no distinction intended. The Mishnah (RH 3.2) allowed any animal horn—sheep, goat, or antelope, but not from a cow).

4. “trumpets” (BDB 348) – possibly from the VERB “stretch out,” implying a straight bone (not curved as the animal horns). These were made of silver (after the shape and form of Egypt). These are used:
  - a. with worship rites (cf. Num. 10:2,8,10; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:35,41)
  - b. for military purposes (cf. Num. 10:9; 31:6; Hosea 5:8)
  - c. for royal purposes (cf. II Kgs. 11:14)

One of these metal horns is depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome; also Josephus describes them in *Antiq.* 3.12.6.



▣ **“their transgression. . .their sins”** Formal ritual had replaced personal righteousness. They were religious but far from YHWH (cf. II Tim. 3:5). Religion can be a barrier to true personal faith!

**58:2** Notice how the false faith is characterized.

1. They seek Me day by day.
2. They delight to know My ways.
3. A nation. . .has not forsaken the ordinance of their God.
4. They ask Me for just decisions.
5. They delight in the nearness of God.

All of this sounds great but it was a show, a farce, a religious game; words, not deeds (cf. 29:13).

▣ **“As a nation that has done righteousness”** This is sarcasm.

▣ **“ask Me for just decisions”** This refers to

1. the Urim and Thummin (i.e., the High Priest, cf. Exod. 28:30; Num. 27:23; Deut. 33:8; Neh. 7:65)
2. the prophets
3. local Levites

**58:3 “fasted. . .humbled ourselves”** The word “fasted” (*Qal* PERFECT, BDB 847, KB 1012) parallels “humbled” (*Piel* PERFECT, BDB 776, KB 853, cf. Lev. 6:29,31). They thought God must bless their religious acts. The OT has only one fast a year (Leviticus 16), the Day of Atonement (cf. v. 6a). During the Exile the Jews had multiplied this to four fast days to commemorate tragic events in their national life (i.e., the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, etc., cf. Zech. 7:3,5; 8:19).

▣ **“on the day of your fast you find *your* desire**

**And drive hard all your workers”** They fasted for “religious” reasons and would not allow their laborers off to participate! The effects of the Fall continue!

**58:4** The fast days produced irritation not faith.

▣

**NASB “to strike with a wicked fist”**

**AB “strike the poor with the fist”**

**LXX “strike a humble person with your fists”**

The MT has “to hit the wicked with fist,” but notice how the LXX takes a clue from v. 3c-d.

▣ **“to make your voice heard on high”** One purpose of fasting was to help with prayers, but it caused the opposite reaction (cf. 1:15; 59:2).

**58:5** This is a list of outward signs of mourning, like sackcloth and ashes, but in reality these were only for show (cf. Matt. 6:5,16-18). See Special Topic at 47:1.

**58:6-7 “Is this not the fast which I chose”** God lists what He really wants from His people (i.e., daily social justice, cf. Exod. 21:2; Lev. 25:39-41; Deut. 15:12; and Jer. 34:8-11, which refers to the year of Jubilee; Titus 1:16).

1. to loosen the bonds of wickedness – *Piel* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, BDB 834, KB 986
2. to undo the bonds of the yoke – *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, BDB 684, KB 736
3. to let the oppressed go free – *Piel* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, BDB 1018, KB 1511

4. to break every yoke – *Piel* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, BDB 954, KB 1285
5. to divide your bread with the hungry – *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, BDB 828, KB 969
6. to bring the homeless poor into the house – *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, BDB 97, KB 112, cf. Matt. 25:35; Rom. 12:13; I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; Heb. 13:2; I Pet. 4:9
7. to cover the naked – *Piel* PERFECT, BDB 491, KB 487, cf. James 2:14-18
8. not to hide yourself from your own flesh – *Hithpael* PERFECT, BDB 761, KB 834, cf. I Tim. 5:8

This is the origin of the glorified Messiah's criteria for dividing the sheep (faithful believers) from the goats (unbelievers who act selfishly) in Matt. 25:31-46. This is not a works-righteousness, but lifestyle evidence that the results of the Fall (i.e., self) have been reversed (i.e., others).

**58:8-9b** This is the promised restoration if they will repent and exhibit lifestyle faith. Notice what true faithfulness brings.

1. your light will break out like the dawn
2. your recovery will speedily spring forth
3. your righteousness will go before you
4. the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard
5. you will call and the LORD will answer
6. you will cry, and He will say "Here I am" (cf. 65:1)

This is what God wanted to do for His people, but their sin and rebellion caused judgment and separation!

**☐ "the LORD will be your rear guard"** This refers to the *Shekinah* cloud of glory being their protection as it was during the Exodus period (cf. Exod. 14:19 and Isa. 52:12).

**58:9c-10 "If"** This (cf. vv. 9 and 10) shows the conditional element of God's reciprocal covenantal relationship with His people. Note the conditions.

1. remove the yoke
2. stop the pointing of the finger, cf. Pro. 6:13
3. stop speaking wickedness
4. give yourself to the hungry (*Hiphil* JUSSIVE, BDB 807, KB 920)
5. satisfy the desire of the afflicted

**58:9 "the pointing of the finger"** This refers to evil gestures and words (cf. Pro 6:13).

**58:10c-12** The "then" (blessing) part of the conditional covenant (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28-29) is spelled out.

1. your light will rise in darkness
2. your gloom will become like midday
3. the Lord will continually guide you
4. the Lord will satisfy your desire
5. the Lord will give strength to your bones
6. you will be like a watered garden
7. you will be like a spring of water whose waters do not fail
8. you will rebuild the ancient ruins
9. you will raise up the age old foundations
10. you will be called the repairer of the breach
11. you will be called the restorer of the streets

The prophet uses several sources of imagery to describe YHWH's presence and blessing.

1. light vs. darkness
2. shepherd imagery
3. agricultural blessing
4. rebuilding imagery

**58:11** There are two textual issues in this verse.

1. v. 11b

**NASB** "satisfy your desire"

**NKJV** "satisfy your soul in drought

**TEV** "satisfy you with good things"

**NJB** "will satisfy your needs in the scorched land"

**JPSOA** "He will slake your thirst in parched places"

**Peshitta** "satisfy your soul with rich food"

**LXX** "you shall be satisfied exactly as your soul desires"

The word "desire" is *nephesh* (BDB 659) which has many connotations.

The "scorched places" is found only here (BDB 850, KB 1019) and the meaning is uncertain.

2. v. 11e

**NASB, NKJV** "whose waters do not fail"

The MT's VERB (BDB 469, KB 467, *Piel* IMPERFECT) means "to lie" or "to deceive." The sense seems to be "the waters God provides never 'lie' or 'deceive'" (i.e., always flows [NJB])

**58:12**

**NASB** "the restorer of the streets in which to dwell"

**JPSOA** "restorer of lanes for habitation"

**LXX** "you shall cause the paths between them to rest"

**Peshitta** "the restorer of paths to dwell in"

**REB** "the restorer of houses in ruins"

The MT has "paths" (BDB 677), probably to be understood as "streets" because of the VERB "to dwell" (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, BDB 442, KB 444).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 58:13-14**

<sup>13</sup>"If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot

From doing your *own* pleasure on My holy day,

And call the sabbath a delight, the holy *day* of the LORD honorable,

And honor it, desisting from your *own* ways,

From seeking your *own* pleasure

And speaking *your own* word,

<sup>14</sup>Then you will take delight in the LORD ,

And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;

And I will feed you *with* the heritage of Jacob your father,

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

**58:13-14** This strophe uses obedience to the Sabbath requirements as a way to know a person's attitude and faithfulness.

1. turn your foot from doing your own pleasure, to YHWH's sabbath (cf. v. 13)

2. delight in the sabbath by calling it “honorable” (the VERB כָּבֵד, BDB 457, KB 455, is used twice in v. 13)

Notice again the conditional covenant (“if. . . then”). The benefits are listed in v. 14b,c.

**58:13 “the sabbath”** See Exodus 20:8-11 and Isaiah 56. See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SABBATH**

This term (BDB 992) means “rest” or “cessation of activity.” The usage as a day of worship starts with Gen. 2:2-3, where YHWH uses His rest as a pattern for animals (cf. Exod. 23:12) and mankind (humans need a regular schedule of work, rest, and worship). The first specialized use of this day by Israel was in Exod. 16:25-26 in the gathering of manna. It then becomes part of “the Ten Words” (cf. Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15). This is one example where the Ten Words in Exodus 20 are slightly different from the Ten Words in Deuteronomy 5. Deuteronomy is preparing Israel for the settled, agricultural life in Canaan.

**58:14 “For the mouth of the Lord has spoken”** This expresses the trustworthiness and power of God’s promises (cf. Isa. 55:11)!

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the difference between biblical faith and religiosity?
2. How is ethics related to theology?
3. What is the purpose of fasting?
4. What is the purpose of the Sabbath? Is it valid in our day?

# ISAIAH 59

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Separation From God	Separation From God	Call to National Repentance	The Prophet Condemns the People's Sins	Penitential Psalm
59:1-8 (1-8)	59:1-3 (1-3)	59:1-8 (1-8)	59:1-3	59:1-4 (1-4)
	59:4-5 (4-5)		59:4-8	
				59:5-8 (5-8)
	59:6-8 (6-8)			
A Confession of Wickedness	Sin Confessed		The People Confess Their Sin	
59:9-15a (9-15a)	59:9-15a (9-15a)	59:9-15a (9-15a)	59:9-11	59:9-11 (9-11)
			59:12-15a	59:12-15a
	The Redeemer of Zion		The Lord Prepares To Rescue His People	
59:15b-20 (15b-20)	59:15b-19 (15b-19)	59:15b-19 (15b-19)	59:15b-21	59:15b-20
	59:20 (20)	59:20 (20)		Prophecy
59:21	59:21	59:21		59:21

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. It is difficult to see how the different poems (i.e., chapters) relate in this section of Isaiah. I agree with R. K. Harrison that Isaiah is an anthology of Isaiah's preaching/teaching/writing assembled after his death. It is organized in an eastern way (thematic, word play) not a western chronological way.
- B. One wonders about these prophecies.
1. Are they multiple fulfillment (i.e., 7:14; and Dan. 11:31; 12:11)?
  2. Do they express God's heart and desire for Israel, knowing that even with all the benefits of covenant (cf. Rom. 9:4-5) they could not perform?
  3. Are they poems/prophecies from different periods of Isaiah's ministry, addressing different periods of Israel's history, but now arranged in a pattern that moderns do not comprehend?
- C. Modern interpreters must remember
1. this is poetry, not historical narrative
  2. these poems are presented without their specific historical setting
  3. many of the words are used only once in the Bible or known Semitic literature.
  4. Be careful of dogmatic doctrinal assertions from limited lines of poetry. Attempt to see
    - a. parallelism
    - b. parallel passages especially in Isaiah and Micah
    - c. NT usage of the text/concept (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Answers To Questions*, pp. 87-88)
- D. The Jewish Study Bible (p. 901) sees this chapter in three parts.
1. the prophet addresses the peoples' sin (i.e., corporately)
  2. the faithful in the nation acknowledge their sin (individually)
  3. the prophet announces YHWH's
    - a. mercy to the faithful who repent (cf. vv. 20,21)
    - b. judgment to the hardened
      - (1) Jews
      - (2) the coastlands (i.e., Gentiles)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT:59:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short  
That it cannot save;  
Nor is His ear so dull  
That it cannot hear.

<sup>2</sup>But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,  
And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.

<sup>3</sup>For your hands are defiled with blood  
And your fingers with iniquity;  
Your lips have spoken falsehood,  
Your tongue mutters wickedness.

<sup>4</sup>No one sues righteously and no one pleads honestly.  
They trust in confusion and speak lies;

**They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity.**

**<sup>5</sup>They hatch adders' eggs and weave the spider's web;**

**He who eats of their eggs dies,**

**And *from* that which is crushed a snake breaks forth.**

**<sup>6</sup>Their webs will not become clothing,**

**Nor will they cover themselves with their works;**

**Their works are works of iniquity,**

**And an act of violence is in their hands.**

**<sup>7</sup>Their feet run to evil,**

**And they hasten to shed innocent blood;**

**Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity,**

**Devastation and destruction are in their highways.**

**<sup>8</sup>They do not know the way of peace,**

**And there is no justice in their tracks;**

**They have made their paths crooked,**

**Whoever treads on them does not know peace.**

**59:1-2** These opening phrases clearly show the problem with God's promises to Israel; it was not His word, character, or power but their repeated and continuing sin.

Verse 1 reflects the prophet's reaction to the questioning he hears from the Israelites of his day (i.e., where are the Lord's promises?). Isaiah records the murmurings of the people several times (i.e., 40:27; 49:4,14).

**59:1 "hand"** This is often a Hebrew idiom for activity (cf. 51:9). See Special Topic at 40:2.

Notice the number of human body parts used to describe Deity (see Special Topic at 41:2).

1. hand
2. ear
3. face

Also notice how many human body parts describe human evil.

1. hands, v 3
2. fingers, v. 3
3. lips, v 3
4. tongue, v. 3
5. feet alluded to in v. 8

**59:2 "dull"** This word (BDB 457, KB 455, *Qal* PERFECT) means "to be heavy," "to be burdensome," or "to be honored." In this context it refers to an inability to hear. It is used in this same way as the "eyes" in Gen. 48:10 and of Pharaoh's "heart" in Exod. 9:7.

**☐ "made a separation between you and your God"** The VERB (BDB 95, KB 110, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) is used in several senses.

1. God separating light from dark in Gen. 1:4
2. God setting Israel apart from other peoples
3. making a distinction between clean and unclean
4. dividing into parts (i.e., sacrifices)
5. YHWH and Moses setting apart Levites (especially Aaron, I Chr. 23:13)
6. cutting off a person from Israel (cf. Deut. 29:30)
7. excluding foreigners (cf. Neh. 13:3)

8. setting apart musicians
9. separating oneself from foreigners and pagans in one's society (cf. Ezra 6:21; 9:1; 10:11; Neh. 9:2)
10. separating oneself to a leader (i.e., David, I Chr. 12:8)

In this context it is used in a unique sense. Israel's sins had emotionally and spiritually separated the covenant people from the covenant God and His presence, promises, provisions, and protection!

One way to illustrate this terrible spiritual condition is the next parallel line of poetry. God hid His face from them (i.e., He would not hear their prayers)!

**59:3-8** These verses list (in parallel lines) the sins of Israel that had caused the separation.

1. your hands are defiled with blood, v. 3
2. your lips have spoken falsehood, v. 3
3. courts are corrupt, v. 4 (notice the four INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES)
4. you plan evil and violence, vv. 5-7 (cf. Job 8:14-15; 15:35; Pro. 1:16; for v. 7 see Rom. 3:15-17)
5. they did not know the way of peace (cf. 26:3,12; 57:20-21; Luke 1:79) or justice, v. 8 (notice the four PERFECT VERBS)

**59:4** Verse 4, like v. 13, uses INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES to describe evil human behavior.

1. they trust in confusion, *Qal*, BDB 105, KB 120
2. they speak lies, *Piel*, BDB 180, KB 210
3. they conceive mischief, *Qal*, BDB 247, KB 255 (cf. Job 15:35)
4. they bring forth iniquity, *Hiphil* BDB 408, KB 411

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT:59:9-20**

- <sup>9</sup>Therefore justice is far from us,  
And righteousness does not overtake us;  
We hope for light, but behold, darkness,  
For brightness, but we walk in gloom.
- <sup>10</sup>We grope along the wall like blind men,  
We grope like those who have no eyes;  
We stumble at midday as in the twilight,  
Among those who are vigorous *we are* like dead men.
- <sup>11</sup>All of us growl like bears,  
And moan sadly like doves;  
We hope for justice, but there is none,  
For salvation, *but* it is far from us.
- <sup>12</sup>For our transgressions are multiplied before You,  
And our sins testify against us;  
For our transgressions are with us,  
And we know our iniquities:
- <sup>13</sup>Transgressing and denying the LORD,  
And turning away from our God,  
Speaking oppression and revolt,  
Conceiving *in* and uttering from the heart lying words.
- <sup>14</sup>Justice is turned back,  
And righteousness stands far away;



**For truth has stumbled in the street,  
And uprightness cannot enter.**

**<sup>15</sup>Yes, truth is lacking;  
And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey.  
Now the LORD saw,  
And it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice.**

**<sup>16</sup>And He saw that there was no man,  
And was astonished that there was no one to intercede;  
Then His own arm brought salvation to Him,  
And His righteousness upheld Him.**

**<sup>17</sup>He put on righteousness like a breastplate,  
And a helmet of salvation on His head;  
And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing  
And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.**

**<sup>18</sup>According to *their* deeds, so He will repay,  
Wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies;  
To the coastlands He will make recompense.**

**<sup>19</sup>So they will fear the name of the LORD from the west  
And His glory from the rising of the sun,  
For He will come like a rushing stream  
Which the wind of the LORD drives.**

**<sup>20</sup>“A Redeemer will come to Zion,  
And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares the LORD.**

**59:9-11** These verses describe the results of Israel’s sins (vv. 3-8).

1. justice is far from us
2. righteousness does not overtake us
3. hope for light, but darkness comes
4. hope for brightness but walk in gloom
5. grope along the wall like blind men (BDB 178, KB 206, *Piel* COHORTATIVE, twice, cf. Deut. 28:29; Jer. 13:16; Amos 5:18,20)
6. growl like bears
7. moan like doves
8. hope for justice, but none comes
9. hope for salvation but it is far away

Number 6 is a metaphor, found only here in the OT. The TEV translates (paraphrases) it and the next line as “we are frightened and distressed.” The NASB Study Bible footnote characterizes it as “impatient and frustrated.”

Number 7's metaphor is found in 38:14; Ezek. 7:16; and Nahum 2:7.

**59:12** Verse 12 describes the current spiritual situation.

1. Israel’s transgressions are multiplied before YHWH
2. Israel’s sins testify against them
3. Israel’s transgressions are present with them
4. Israel knows her sins

Notice that Isaiah, like Ezra, confesses the corporate sin of the covenant people (cf. Ezra 9:6-7). This is what the High Priest did on the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16). There is corporate guilt with consequences, as there is individual sin and its consequences!

**59:13** Verse 13 describes the sins.

1. transgressing – BDB 833, KB 981, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
2. denying the Lord – BDB 471, KB 469, *Piel* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
3. turning away from God – BDB 690, KB 744, *Niphal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
4. speaking oppression and revolt – BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
5. conceiving from the heart lying words – BDB 247, KB 255, *Poel* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
6. speaking/uttering from the heart lying words – BDB 211, KB 237, *Poel* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE

Notice how the author artistically uses the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES in vv. 4 and 13! The faithless seed of Abraham show their true orientation (i.e., self) by their lifestyle (cf. Titus 1:16). They speak of YHWH but live for self (cf. 6:9-10; 29:13).

**59:14-15a** What are the results of these premeditated spiritual rebellions?

1. justice is turned back
2. righteousness stands far away
3. truth stumbles in the street
4. uprightness cannot enter
5. truth is lacking

Notice the personifications! The one who tries to be righteous is a target and prey for the sinful!

**59:15b-16b** Israel, the covenant people, was YHWH's means of revealing Himself to the world. They had miserably failed.

1. their actions and attitudes were displeasing
2. there was no justice
3. there was no righteous man
4. there was no one to intercede (cf. Ezek. 22:30)

Therefore, YHWH must act Himself. This is similar theologically to Ezek. 36:22-38, which describes the "new covenant" of Jer. 31:31-34.

Notice that the prophet speaks about YHWH in vv. 15b-20. YHWH speaks for Himself in v. 21.

**59:16d** In light of fallen humanity's (even covenant humanity) ability YHWH chooses to act.

1. His own arm brought salvation to Him, cf. 52:10; 63:5
2. His righteousness upheld Him

Who is the "Him"? In context it could be the Suffering Servant (i.e., Messiah) or YHWH's prophet (i.e., Isaiah).

**59:17** YHWH is described as a "warrior" preparing for battle. This text is the OT background for Paul's use of this military imagery in Eph. 6:10-17.

1. He puts on righteousness like a breastplate
2. He puts on a helmet of salvation
3. He puts on garments of vengeance
4. He wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle

**59:18** "According to *their* deeds, so He will repay" This is a recurrent truth in Scripture.

1. Job 34:11
2. Psalm 28:4; 62:12
3. Proverbs 24:12
4. Ecclesiastes 12:14
5. Jeremiah 17:10; 32:19
6. Matthew 16:27; 25:31-46

7. Romans 2:6; 14:12
8. I Corinthians 3:8; II Corinthians 5:10
9. Galatians 6:7-10
10. II Timothy 4:14
11. I Peter 1:17
12. Revelation 2:23; 20:12; 22:12

All humans reap what they sow! There are consequences to choices and actions that follow us through time. Thank God for divine forgiveness and forgetfulness!

▣ **“the coastlands”** This word (BDB 15 I) is used often in this section of Isaiah (cf. 40:15; 41:1,5; 42:4,10,12,15; 49:1; 51:5; 59:18; 60:9; 66:19). It is used often in the sense of other nations or Gentile nations.

**59:19-20** The purpose of YHWH’s recompense (BDB 168) is for redemption (i.e., fear the name of the LORD). A Redeemer (cf. 41:14; 43:1; 44:22) comes from Israel (i.e., the Messiah). He comes for all who “turn” (BDB 996, KB1427, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, see special Topic at 44:22).

In the NT the context that struggles with Jewish unbelief and rebellion is Romans 9-11. Paul uses v. 20 in 11:26-27. I think that Rom. 3:21-31; 9-10; Galatians 3; and the book of Hebrews are the best NT texts to understand how the Old Covenant and New Covenant diverge and merge again!

**59:19 “the name of the LORD”** See Special Topic at 52:6.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT:59:21**

**<sup>21</sup>“As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says the LORD: “My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring’s offspring,” says the LORD, “from now and forever.”**

**59:21** YHWH speaks (“as for Me”) to Israel (or the spiritual faith seed of Abraham, cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6; Gal. 6:16). He promises

1. His Spirit
2. His revelation
3. His influence through generations

▣ **“from now and forever”** See Special Topic at 45:17. One of my favorite books on interpreting prophecy is D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*. He has a good discussion of the metaphorical use of “forever,” see pp. 99-101. He states that often it “serves to intensify the verb it modifies.”

# ISAIAH 60

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Glorified Zion	The Gentiles Bless Zion	Jerusalem's Glorious Restoration	The Future Glory of Jerusalem	The Splendor of Jerusalem
60:1-3 (1-3)	60:1-3 (1-3)	60:1-3	60:1-3 (1-3)	60:1-11 (1-11)
60:4-9 (4-9)	60:4-7 (4-7)	60:4-16 (4-16)	60:4-5 (4-5)	
			60:6-7 (6-7)	
	60:8-9 (8-9)		60:8-9 (8-9)	
60:10-14 (10-14)	60:10-12 (10-12)		60:10-12 (10-12)	
				60:12 (12)
	60:13-14 (13-14)		60:13-14 (13-14)	60:13-18 (13-18)
60:15-22 (15-22)	60:15-16 (15-16)		60:15-16 (15-16)	
	60:17-18 (17-18)	60:17-22 (17-22)	60:17-18 (17-18)	
	God the Glory of His People			
	60:19-22 (19-22)		60:19-22 (19-22)	60:19-22 (19-22)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There is a radical change in the mood between chapter 59 and chapters 60-62.
- B. Chapters 60-62 form a unit that deals with the glorious future of God's people as depicted in the restoration of Jerusalem.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 60:1-3

- <sup>1</sup>**“Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.**
- <sup>2</sup>**For behold, darkness will cover the earth  
And deep darkness the peoples;  
But the LORD will rise upon you  
And His glory will appear upon you.**
- <sup>3</sup>**Nations will come to your light,  
And kings to the brightness of your rising.**

**60:1 “Arise, shine”** Two *Qal* IMPERATIVES implore the covenant people to be what they were called to be for themselves and for the world.

Light is a recurrent metaphor in this chapter to describe:

1. God's presence, 60:1,2,9-20; Rev. 21:23; 22:5
2. spiritual holiness, 60:1,3,5,21; 62:1
3. this recurring metaphor of light in Isaiah (cf. 9:2; 58:8; 59:9)

▣ **“your light has come”** The subject of vv. 1-22 is “Zion” (cf. v. 14), which symbolizes the people of God.

The common VERB “come” (BDB 97, KB 112) is used several times in this chapter.

1. has come – *Qal* PERFECT, v. 1
2. come – *Qal* PERFECT, v. 4
3. will come – *Qal* IMPERFECT, v. 4
4. will come – *Qal* IMPERFECT, v. 5
5. will come – *Qal* IMPERFECT, v. 6
6. will bring – *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, v. 9
7. bring – same as #6, v. 11
8. will come – *Qal* IMPERFECT, v. 13
- 9-10. will bring – *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, twice, v. 17
11. will set – *Qal* IMPERFECT, v. 20

Remember the time element is not in the Hebrew VERB but in its use in context.

▣ **“the glory of the LORD”** This is parallel to “light” in line 1. It is used in other places in Isaiah connected to light/lights (cf. 24:23; 58:8) and agricultural abundance (cf. 35:2). The Hebrew term for “glory” (BDB 458), because of its association with the *Shekinah* cloud of glory (cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19,20,24; 19:16-18; 20:21), symbolized YHWH's personal presence with the Israelites during the Exodus. Fire and lightning were associated with the coming of YHWH to Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 19-20), so brightness became an aspect of “glory.”

**60:2** This has some allusion to the physical darkness of Gen. 1:1-2 or Exod. 10:21-23 or even 9:1, and the spiritual darkness caused by sin. YHWH will not allow the darkness of the Fall (cf. Genesis 3), which covers all humans, to remain. His light of revelation and salvation will rise (*Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 280, KB 281).

**60:3 “Nations will come to your light”** It is obvious that God’s original purpose for Israel was to bring the world to Himself (cf. 61:6,11b; 62:2,11; Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). See Special Topic at 40:15.

Of all the prophets, with the possible exceptions of Micah and Jonah, it is Isaiah who saw the universal implications of

1. monotheism
2. OT Patriarchal promises
3. Israel’s evangelistic purpose

Note 2:3; 45:14,22-25; 49:23. This is surely the precursor of John 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet 3:9. The NT, following the teachings of Jesus, universalized the OT promises to Israel, to the whole world (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 60:4-9**

<sup>4</sup>**“Lift up your eyes round about and see;  
They all gather together, they come to you.  
Your sons will come from afar,  
And your daughters will be carried in the arms.**

<sup>5</sup>**Then you will see and be radiant,  
And your heart will thrill and rejoice;  
Because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you,  
The wealth of the nations will come to you.**

<sup>6</sup>**A multitude of camels will cover you,  
The young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
All those from Sheba will come;  
They will bring gold and frankincense,  
And will bear good news of the praises of the LORD.**

<sup>7</sup>**All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you,  
The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you;  
They will go up with acceptance on My altar,  
And I shall glorify My glorious house.**

<sup>8</sup>**Who are these who fly like a cloud  
And like the doves to their lattices?**

<sup>9</sup>**Surely the coastlands will wait for Me;  
And the ships of Tarshish *will come* first,  
To bring your sons from afar,  
Their silver and their gold with them,  
For the name of the LORD your God,  
And for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you.**

**60:4 “Lift up. . .see”** These are two *Qal* IMPERATIVES (cf. 49:18; John 4:35). IMPERATIVES often begin a new strophe.

▣ **“Your sons will come from afar”** In chapters 60-62, there are two major eschatological signs that deal with traveling.

1. the people of God will return to their ancestral home, symbolized by the city of Jerusalem
2. the nations, instead of taking the Jews prisoner and deporting them, will flow into the people of God with gifts and praise

**60:5** As a result of God’s repentant people “seeing” (*Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 906, KB 1157), notice the stated consequences of seeing the light of God (cf. vv. 1,4,19,20).

1. be radiant – *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 626, KB 676
2. thrill (lit. tremble) – *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 808, KB 922
3. rejoice – *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 931, KB 1210

The reasons for this hope and joy are God’s gracious acts.

1. the abundance of the seas will be turned to you (i.e., the wealth of the seafaring peoples)
2. the wealth of the nations will come to you (cf. vv. 6-7,11; 61:6)

These parallel lines of poetry describe the gratitude of the nations for Israel’s

1. revealing of YHWH
2. bringing the reality of YHWH’s presence to earth
3. opening a way for their inclusion to God’s covenant family (cf. 56:7)

**60:6 “will bear good news of the praises of the LORD”** The VERB (*Piel* IMPERFECT, BDB 142, KB 163) refers to the grace of God to Israel and to all nations (cf. 40:9-10; 41:27; 42:10-13; 52:7). Isn’t it shocking to hear of the pagan nations praising the God of Israel? This is the obvious theological goal of monotheism (see Special Topic at 40:14). There is one God and all humans are created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (implication of Gen. 3:8; Lev. 26:12). The promise of Gen. 3:15 to all humans and the hope of covenant blessings to the families of the earth in of Gen. 12:3 have come to fruition.

**60:7 “Nabaioth”** This refers to Arabian tribes, as the phrase, “the flocks of Kedar,” does. This tribe is mentioned in Gen. 25:13. They are called the Nabateans by the Greeks and Romans.

**60:8 “Who are these who fly like a cloud**

**And like the doves to their lattices”** This refers to sails of ships on the horizon coming to the restored and renewed Jerusalem (cf. v. 9).

**60:9 “Surely the coastlands will wait for Me”** The “coastlands” (or “islands”) is used in this section of Isaiah as a metaphor for all Gentiles.

The VERB “wait” (*Piel* IMPERFECT, BDB 875, KB 1082) is often used of trusting in YHWH (cf. 8:17; 25:9; 26:8; 33:2). Notice how it is used of YHWH in 30:18!

▣ **“the ships of Tarshish”** Tarshish could refer to

1. Southern Spain
2. Sardinia
3. a proverbial use of the ends of the earth

▣ Notice the covenant names for Deity (also notice vv. 14,16).

1. YHWH (God as Savior and Redeemer)
2. *Elohim* (God as creator and provider)
3. Holy One of Israel (covenant God)

See Special Topic at 40:3.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 60:10-14**

- <sup>10</sup>**“Foreigners will build up your walls,  
And their kings will minister to you;  
For in My wrath I struck you,  
And in My favor I have had compassion on you.**
- <sup>11</sup>**Your gates will be open continually;  
They will not be closed day or night,  
So that *men* may bring to you the wealth of the nations,  
With their kings led in procession.**
- <sup>12</sup>**For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish,  
And the nations will be utterly ruined.**
- <sup>13</sup>**The glory of Lebanon will come to you,  
The juniper, the box tree and the cypress together,  
To beautify the place of My sanctuary;  
And I shall make the place of My feet glorious.**
- <sup>14</sup>**The sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you,  
And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet;  
And they will call you the city of the LORD,  
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.**

**60:10 “For in My wrath I struck you,**

**And in My favor I have had compassion on you”** Here we see the two major actions of YHWH in the Bible: His grace (long term, cf. Ps. 103:10-14) and His wrath (short term, cf. 57:16; Ps. 103:9). His judgment is parental in nature and meant to cause His creation to return to Him (cf. Romans 1-3; Heb. 12:1-13).

**60:11 “Your gates will be open continually”** This phrase is used to show (1) security is assured (2) availability is certain (cf. Rev. 21:25).

**60:12 “the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish”** This warning is similar to God’s covenant with Abraham in Gen. 12:3 (cf. 27:29).

**60:13** This verse speaks of the construction of a new Holy Place (i.e., temple) with the beautiful lumber from Lebanon.

▣ **“the place of My sanctuary;**

**And I shall make the place of My feet glorious”** The Ark of the Covenant and the Holy of Holies symbolize God’s presence on earth. The Jews conceived of the space between the wings of the Cherubim as the footstool of God (cf. Ps. 99:5; 132:7); His throne was in heaven.

**60:14 “Zion”** The term “Zion” (BDB 851) is synonymous with the City of Jerusalem. The Temple was built on Mt. Moriah, but the city was seldom referred to by this term (cf. 62:1).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 60:15-22**

- <sup>15</sup>**“Whereas you have been forsaken and hated  
With no one passing through,**



**I will make you an everlasting pride,  
A joy from generation to generation.**

**<sup>16</sup>You will also suck the milk of nations  
And suck the breast of kings;  
Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior  
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.**

**<sup>17</sup>Instead of bronze I will bring gold,  
And instead of iron I will bring silver,  
And instead of wood, bronze,  
And instead of stones, iron.  
And I will make peace your administrators  
And righteousness your overseers.**

**<sup>18</sup>Violence will not be heard again in your land,  
Nor devastation or destruction within your borders;  
But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise.**

**<sup>19</sup>No longer will you have the sun for light by day,  
Nor for brightness will the moon give you light;  
But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light,  
And your God for your glory.**

**<sup>20</sup>Your sun will no longer set,  
Nor will your moon wane;  
For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light,  
And the days of your mourning will be over.**

**<sup>21</sup>Then all your people *will be* righteous;  
They will possess the land forever,  
The branch of My planting,  
The work of My hands,  
That I may be glorified.**

**<sup>22</sup>The smallest one will become a clan,  
And the least one a mighty nation.  
I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time.”**

**60:15-22** This passage is very similar to Rev. 21:1-27, which describes “New Jerusalem.” There have been two major opinions on the relationship of the OT promises to the NT:

1. They are meant to be taken literally and Jerusalem will be rebuilt with its central sacrificial temple, i.e., dispensational premillennialism.
2. These passages are symbolic of the church and their significance is caught up in the NT as the new people of God, i.e., a millennialism.

The same ambiguity can be seen in 61:6, where Israel is referred to as a “Kingdom of Priests” (cf. Exod. 19:6). But these same terms are used in I Pet. 2:5,9 and Rev. 1:6 to describe the church. Israel’s purpose has always been to bring the world to God (cf. 62:2,11; see Special Topic at 40:15). However, they failed and God has chosen the church to fulfill this task. See Special Topic at 40:9!

**60:15 “you have been forsaken and hated”** This phrase is a Hebrew idiom relating to marriage. We can see this in the terms to describe “Leah” in Gen. 29:21ff. This same idiom of marriage is continued in 62:4-5 and in the NT as the church in Eph. 5:21-31. “Hate” is a Hebrew idiom of comparison.

**60:17** This is possibly an allusion to I Kgs. 14:26-27 relating to the stripping of precious metals from the Temple to pay a tribute to Egypt.

▣ **“And I will make peace your administrators**

**And righteousness your overseers”** This may reflect the Messianic government mentioned in chapters 7-14.

**60:18** This prophecy is surely not applicable to Israel’s subsequent history! This seems to show the absence of social violence and problems in the Messianic Age.

**60:19-20** John uses this imagery in Rev. 21:23; 22:5. YHWH’s presence is the true light!

**60:20 “your mourning will be over”** A new day has/will dawn, cf. Isa. 35:10; 65:19; Rev. 21:4.

**60:21 “all your people *will be* righteous”** God’s blessings will come only when the people repent (see Special Topic at 44:22). He, Himself, will provide a new heart and a new mind (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38).

This type of promise is the source of the theological debate over sovereignty and free will. Can fallen mankind do anything toward their own salvation or is everything (i.e., faith, repentance) a gift from God (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18; II Tim. 2:25). Other texts point toward a preaching that draws humans to repent (i.e., free will response to a Divine offer, cf. Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8; John 1:12; Acts 2:38; etc.). somehow both are biblical! This is the western problem with eastern paradox!

▣ **“They will possess the land forever”** This may be an allusion to Gen. 17:8. The word “forever” is the interpretive problem. See Special Topic at 45:17.

▣ **“The branch of My planting”** This same metaphor is used in 61:3. It seems to reflect Psalm 1, but is also seen in Isa. 11:1. The OT uses many agricultural metaphors.

**60:22 “clan”** This term can mean “thousands.” See Special Topic below.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: THOUSAND (*ELEPH*)**

This is the Hebrew word for “thousand” (BDB 48). However, it is used in several senses.

1. a family unit, Josh. 22:14; Jdgs. 6:15; I Sam. 23:23; Zech. 9:7; 12:6
2. a military unit, Exod. 18:21,25; Deut. 1:15
3. a literal thousand, Gen. 20:16; Exod. 32:28
4. a symbolic number, Gen. 24:60; Exod. 20:6; 34:7; Deut. 7:9; Jer. 32:18
5. the Ugaritic cognate *alluph* means “chieftain,” Gen. 36:15

▣ **“I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time”** History is in God’s hands (cf. 45:23; 61:11).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is this chapter replete with metaphors that describe “brightness” or “light”?
2. Will there be a literal restoration of the Jews or does this refer to the Messianic Age?
3. Why would the Gentiles flow into Jerusalem?
4. What is the connection between vv. 15-22 and the book of Revelation?

# ISAIAH 61

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Exaltation of the Afflicted	The Good News of Salvation	The Mission to Zion	The Good News of Deliverance (61:1-62:12)	A Prophet's Mission
61:1-3 (1-3)	61:1-3 (1-3)	61:1-4 (1-4)	61:1-4 (1-4)	61:1-9 (1-9)
61:4-9 (4-9)	61:4-7 (4-7)			
		61:5-7 (5-7)	61:5-7 (5-7)	
	61:8-9 (8-9)	61:8-11 (8-11)	61:8-9 (8-9)	Thanksgiving
61:10-11 (10-11)	61:10-11 (10-11)		61:10-11 (10-11)	61:10-11 (10-11)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 60 describes the end result, while chapter 61 describes the means of God's blessing.
- B. Jesus uses this passage of Himself in Luke 4:16-21; 7:18-23. Because of this, this passage must be Messianic (i.e., the Servant).
- C. The Spirit of the Lord here is obviously analogous (i.e., foreshadowing) to the Spirit in the NT Trinitarian sense.
  1. see Special Topic: "Spirit" in the Bible at 40:7
  2. see Special Topic: The Trinity at 40:13

- D. It is obvious that this is an example of a local historical situation in the life of Israel being used to depict future events in the time of the Messiah (i.e., typology).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 61:1-3

<sup>1</sup>The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
Because the LORD has anointed me  
To bring good news to the afflicted;  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to captives  
And freedom to prisoners;  
<sup>2</sup>To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn,  
<sup>3</sup>To grant those who mourn *in* Zion,  
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,  
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.  
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,  
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

**61:1 “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me”** This occurred visibly in Jesus’ life at His baptism (cf. 11:1-2; 42:1; Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21,22; John 1:31-34), but the spirit had always been with Jesus. See Special Topic: The Personhood of the Spirit at 42:1.

▣ **“anointed”** This is the same word meaning “Messiah” (BDB 602, see Special Topic at 40:10) or the Anointed One. This was a sign of God’s unique blessing and equipping for a task (cf. Ps. 23:5). In the OT prophets, priests, and kings were anointed as a symbolic act of God’s unique presence and call upon their lives. From this John Calvin derived his threefold category for describing Christ’s ministry as prophet, priest, and king (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE (BDB 603)

- A. Used for beautification (cf. Deut. 28:40; Ruth 3:3; II Sam. 12:20; 14:2; II Chr. 28:15; Dan. 10:3; Amos 6:6; Mic. 6:15)
- B. Used for guests (cf. Ps. 23:5; Luke 7:38,46; John 11:2)
- C. Used for healing (cf. Isa. 61:1; Jer. 51:8; Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34; James 5:14) [used in hygienic sense in Ezek. 16:9]
- D. Used for preparation for burial (cf. Gen. 50:2; II Chr. 16:14; Mark 16:1; John 12:3,7; 19:39-40)
- E. Used in a religious sense (of an object, cf. Gen. 28:18; 31:13 [a pillar]; Exod. 29:26 [the altar]; Exod. 30:26; 40:9-16; Lev. 8:10-13; Num. 7:1 [the tabernacle])
- F. Used for installing leaders
  - 1. Priests
    - a. Aaron (Exod. 28:41; 29:7; 30:30)

- b. Aaron's sons (Exod. 40:15; Lev. 7:36)
  - c. standard phrase or title (Num. 3:3; Lev. 16:32)
- 2. Kings
  - a. by God (cf. I Sam. 2:10; II Sam. 12:7; II Kgs. 9:3,6,12; Ps. 45:7; 89:20)
  - b. by the prophets (cf. I Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 15:1,17; 16:3,12-13; I Kgs. 1:45; 19:15-16)
  - c. by priests (cf. I Kgs. 1:34,39; II Kgs. 11:12)
  - d. by the elders (cf. Jdgs. 9:8,15; II Sam. 2:7; 5:3; II Kgs. 23:30)
  - e. of Jesus as Messianic king (cf. Ps. 2:2; Luke 4:18 [Isa. 61:1]; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb. 1:9 [Ps. 45:7])
  - f. Jesus' followers (cf. II Cor. 1:21; I John 2:20,27 [*chrisma*])
- 3. possibly of prophets (cf. Isa. 61:1)
- 4. unbelieving instruments of divine deliverance
  - a. Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1)
  - b. King of Tyre (cf. Ezek. 28:14, where he uses Garden of Eden metaphors)
- 5. term or title "Messiah" means "an Anointed One" (BDB 603)

▣ **"To bring good news to the afflicted"** The Messiah's (see Special Topic: Messiah at 40:10) message will be one of hope and forgiveness to the outcast, ostracized, and socially oppressed (cf. 35:5-6).

Notice the series of INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS in vv. 1-3 that describe the Messiah's task.

- 1. to bring good news to the afflicted – *Piel*, BDB 142, KB 163
- 2. to proclaim liberty to captives – *Qal*, BDB 894, KB 1128
- 3. to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord – same as #2
- 4. to comfort all who mourn – *Piel* BDB 636, KB 688
- 5. to grant those who mourn in Zion a garland instead of ashes
  - a. grant – *Qal*, BDB 962, KB 1321
  - b. give – *Qal* BDB 678, KB 733
- 6. another INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT but directed towards the Messiah, Himself – "that He may be glorified" – *Hithpael*, BDB 802, KB 908

**61:2 "the favorable year of the LORD"** This is an allusion to the year of Jubilee (cf. Lev. 25:10). This was a year of release from all debts and a return of all lands to the original owners every fifty years. There is not one example in the OT that this was ever historically enacted.

▣ **"the day of vengeance of our God"** It is significant to notice that the favorable year and the day of vengeance occur at the same time. To those who know God in the Messiah, it is a day of reward. To those who do not know our Christ, it is a day of judgment and great sorrow. There must be bad news before there is good news! (cf. Romans 1-3).

**61:3** Notice the contrasts (i.e., "instead").

- 1. a garland instead of ashes
- 2. all of gladness instead of mourning
- 3. the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting

Also notice the same contrast in v. 7.

1. double portion instead of shame
2. shout of joy instead of humiliation

▣ **“garland. . .ashes”** These are examples of types of things put on the head (cf. Ezek. 24:17).

▣ **“The oil of gladness”** The ancients lacked the availability of makeup, therefore, to prepare themselves for times of joy and festival, they anointed themselves with olive oil (cf. Ps. 45:7).

▣ **“The mantle of praise”** Here is an OT example of clothing used as a metaphor for attitude and spiritual position.

▣ **“oaks of righteousness. . .The planting of the LORD”** In Psalm 1 it refers to God’s initiating love and ongoing support and provision (cf. Jer. 17:7-8). Here it refers to the Messiah (cf. 60:12).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 61:4-9**

<sup>4</sup>Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,  
They will raise up the former devastations;  
And they will repair the ruined cities,  
The desolations of many generations.  
<sup>5</sup>Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks,  
And foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.  
<sup>6</sup>But you will be called the priests of the LORD;  
You will be spoken of *as* ministers of our God.  
You will eat the wealth of nations,  
And in their riches you will boast.  
<sup>7</sup>Instead of your shame *you will have a double portion*,  
And *instead of* humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion.  
Therefore they will possess a double *portion* in their land,  
Everlasting joy will be theirs.  
<sup>8</sup>For I, the LORD, love justice,  
I hate robbery in the burnt offering;  
And I will faithfully give them their recompense  
And make an everlasting covenant with them.  
<sup>9</sup>Then their offspring will be known among the nations,  
And their descendants in the midst of the peoples.  
All who see them will recognize them  
Because they are the offspring *whom* the LORD has blessed.

**61:4 “they will rebuild the ancient ruins”** It is hard for a non-Jew to imagine the intensity of the feeling that is connected with the Promised Land (cf. 49:8; 58:12; 60:10).

This verse lists several things the one set free will do.

1. rebuild the ancient ruins
2. raise up the former devastations
3. repair the ruined cities

The last line of v. 4 shows that the author is addressing those returning from Mesopotamian exile.

**61:5** Verse 5 continues the theme of foreigners coming to Jerusalem with gifts and service, to worship the God of Israel.

From NT revelation we now know that this refers to the new covenant in Christ available for all through repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21)!

I interpret the OT promises to national Israel as multiple fulfillment prophecies. They were never fulfilled in Israel's history because of their sin and rebellion. They only find fulfillment in Christ. See the Special Topics at 40:9 and 40:15!

▣ **“you will be called the priests of the LORD”** Israel was meant to be a nation of priests, now they will be! Peter uses this very same phrase to describe the church in I Pet. 2:5,9 (cf. Exod. 19:56-6; also see the usage in Rev. 1:6).

**61:7 “double portion”** This seems to refer to the inheritance of the eldest son in the inheritance structure of ancient Israel (cf. Deut 21:17). As Israel had a double portion of YHWH's wrath (cf. 40:2), now a double reward.

▣ **“Everlasting joy will be theirs”** This same wonderful promise is found in Ps. 16:11. The question is when will this happen.

1. it did not happen to the returnees from Mesopotamian exile
2. it did not happen to the Jews under Greece or Rome
3. the future then
  - a. Israel after the Messiah comes
  - b. the church
  - c. the millennium
  - d. restored Garden of Eden

This is ancient, inspired poetry! It does not address all the modern questions. It is best to take the central meaning of the strophe and view it through NT revelation!

**61:8 “For I, the LORD, love justice”** YHWH is an ethical, moral being. He demands ethical, moral actions from His people!

Note His listed characteristics.

1. loves justice
2. hates robbery in sacrifices

Other wonderful texts that describe YHWH's character are Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8-14; 145:8-9! See Special Topic at 49:7.

▣ **“in burnt offerings”** The Septuagint and possibly some variations of the Masoretic Text have “with iniquity” (same consonants). The UBS Text Project gives the sacrificial phrase a B rating.

▣ **“I will. . .make an everlasting covenant with them”** The Jews continually broke the first covenant, as a reading of I and II Kings and I and II Chronicles will show. Because of this, God finally allowed the Covenant to be terminated (His Spirit leaving the temple; Fall of Jerusalem). The purpose of this termination was the beginning of a new covenant with even greater spiritual significance (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38).

**61:9** Here is another reference to Israel as a sign and message (i.e., a light, cf. 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; Acts 13:47) about the nature of God to other nations.



**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 61:10-11**

**<sup>10</sup>I will rejoice greatly in the LORD,  
My soul will exult in my God;  
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,  
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,  
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.**

**<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,  
And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up,  
So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
To spring up before all the nations.**

**61:10 “I will rejoice greatly in the LORD,**

**My soul will exult in my God”** This verse could refer to the Messiah or the nation (cf. 12:1-2; 25:9; 41:16) rejoicing in YHWH’s provision. The AB suggests that this chapter has three speakers.

1. the prophet, vv. 1-7 (possibly the Servant)
2. YHWH, vv. 8-9
3. personified Zion, vv. 10-11 (p. 181)

This shows the ambiguity of these poems as to speakers and recipients (i.e., period of time). Many commentators think 61:1-3 is a fifth Servant Song.

I think vv. 10-11 are the restored and redeemed humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15), which is described in Eph. 2:11-3:13; Romans 9-11.

The VERBAL PHRASE, “I will rejoice greatly,” is a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Qal* IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 965, KB 1314). It was a Hebraic grammatical way of showing intensity.

The next line is parallel and the VERB “exalt” is a *Qal* JUSSIVE (BDB 162, KB 189).

▣ **“He has clothed me with garments of salvation”** Here is an example of the joy of a wedding feast used as a metaphor for the spiritual joy of knowing God. This metaphor is extended to the NT to refer to believers as having Christ’s robes of righteousness (cf. II Cor. 5:21).

**61:11** See Isa. 40:8 and 55:10-11.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. If this refers to the Messiah, why is it phrased in such nationalistic terms?
2. Define the term Messiah.
3. In what sense and to what purpose are the Jews a kingdom of priests?
4. Why did God break His first everlasting covenant with the Jewish nation?
5. Why is v.10's use of a clothing metaphor so significant? How is it used in the NT for the believer standing before God?

# ISAIAH 62

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Zion's Glory and New Name	Assurance of Zion's Salvation	The Glory of God's People	The Good News of Deliverance (61:1-62:12)	The Splendor of Jerusalem
62:1-5 (1-5)	62:1-5 (1-5)	62:1-9 (1-9)	62:1-5 (1-5)	62:1-5 (1-5)
62:6-9 (6-9)	62:6-7 (6-7)		62:6-7 (6-7)	62:6-9 (6-9)
	62:8-9 (8-9)		62:8-9 (8-9)	Conclusion
62:10-12 (10-12)	62:10-12 (10-12)	62:10-12 (10-12)	62:10-12 (10-12)	62:10-11 (10-11)
				62:12 (12)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 62:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup>For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet,  
Until her righteousness goes forth like brightness,  
And her salvation like a torch that is burning.**

**<sup>2</sup>The nations will see your righteousness,  
And all kings your glory;**

And you will be called by a new name  
 Which the mouth of the LORD will designate.  
<sup>3</sup>You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD ,  
 And a royal diadem in the hand of your God.  
<sup>4</sup>It will no longer be said to you, “Forsaken,”  
 Nor to your land will it any longer be said, “Desolate”;  
 But you will be called, “My delight is in her,”  
 And your land, “Married”;  
 For the LORD delights in you,  
 And *to Him* your land will be married.  
<sup>5</sup>For *as* a young man marries a virgin,  
 So your sons will marry you;  
 And *as* the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
 So your God will rejoice over you.

**62:1 “Zion. . .Jerusalem”** These are in a Hebrew parallel relationship. Jerusalem was built on seven hills. Mount Zion was not the site of the Temple, but the location of David’s palace and came to be a reference to the whole city of Jerusalem.

▣ The VERBS “be silent” (*Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 364, KB 361) and “be quiet” (*Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 1052, KB 1641), negated, are related to the positive statement of 61:1. The “I” could refer to the prophet or the Servant/Messiah (Deity breaks the silence mentioned in 42:14; 57:11; 64:12; 65:6). Obviously chapters 60-62 are a literary unit.

▣ **“righteousness. . .salvation”** These two words also are in a parallel relationship. Righteousness (see Special Topic at 48:1) speaks of the position and lifestyle of the people of God which results in their physical deliverance from their enemies. In the OT the term “salvation” primarily refers to a physical deliverance, while in the NT the term refers primarily to spiritual forgiveness and a standing before God. Zion’s (cf. 61:10-11) new day has come and will affect the whole world (cf. v. 2; 60:3)!

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION (OT Term)**

This term (BDB 447) has several connotations.

1. welfare, prosperity, Job 30:15
2. divine salvation which encompasses both physical and spiritual aspects
  - a. Gen. 49:18
  - b. Deut. 32:15
  - c. Ps. 3:2,8; 22:1; 35:3; 62:2; 69:29; 70:5; 78:22; 80:3; 89:26; 91:16; 106:4; 140:7
  - d. Isa. 12:2; 33:2; 51:6,8; 52:7,10; 56:1; 59:11; 60:18; 62:1
3. the idea of physical and spiritual deliverance is clearly present in Jonah 2:9-10
4. often “rejoicing” is related to YHWH’s salvation, I Sam. 2:1; Isa. 25:9; 26:1; Ps. 9:14; 13:5; 35:9

Salvation involves the implementation of YHWH’s original intended fellowship with society and His human creatures. It involves individual and societal wholeness!

▣ **“brightness. . .burning”** Again the presence of YHWH is connected to light, as it was on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 19-20). See note at 60:1.

Israel was meant to be “the light” of YHWH to the darkness of paganism and fertility worship. However, she was captured by them. The NT gives this same mission of revelation (cf. Jesus is God’s ultimate Light, cf. John 1:4; 8:12; 12:35) and evangelism to believers (cf. Matt. 5:14-16).

**62:2 “The nations will see your righteousness”** Israel was chosen by God to be a witness to the entire world to bring them to YHWH (cf. v. 11; 52:10; 60:3; 61:6,11; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). This is the true meaning of the phrase “a kingdom of priests” (cf. Exod. 19:5-6).

▣ **“And you will be called by a new name”** The imparting of a new name implies the new age of the Spirit. The new covenant is realized.

The term “new” (BDB 294 I) is used extensively in the second part of Isaiah to describe the new day of righteousness.

1. new things, 42:9; 48:6
2. new song, 42:10 (cf. Rev. 5:9; 14:3)
3. something new, 43:19 (cf. Rev. 3:12)
4. new name, 62:2 (cf. 56:5)
5. new heavens and a new earth, 65:17; 66:22 (cf. II Pet 3:13)

The “new” day (cf. Rev. 21:5) was, in reality, the day that God always wanted for humans, but the Fall in Genesis 3 caused a terrible disruption! It is surely possible that the Bible’s imagery of heaven is a restored Garden of Eden (cf. Rev. 21:2).

**62:3** *The Jerome Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 383, mentions that ancient eastern people believed their gods wore a crown shaped like the city that worshiped them. If so, then this may be a cultural allusion to this concept. This view depends on

1. YHWH being the speaker of chapter 62
2. how widespread this pagan concept was known

The Bible does use pagan imagery to describe and magnify YHWH. Four of many possible examples:

1. “God of Heaven” in Nehemiah
2. allusion to Persian deity, Mal. 4:2
3. allusion to the twelve signs of the zodiac in Rev. 12:1
4. allusion to evil as a dragon

In Isa. 28:5 YHWH Himself is the crown of the covenant people. He is their glory, light, provision, protection, and victory!

In Zech. 9:16 the covenant people are the jewels in YHWH’s crown.

**62:4 “forsaken. . .desolate”** This describes Israel’s own interpretation of the Exile (i.e., this is their title for themselves). They felt they had been forsaken (cf. 54:6-7) by God and wondered if He would ever love them again.

▣ **“My delight is in her”** “Delight” may be the name “Hephzibah” (BDB 343, cf. II Kgs. 21:1). This is the beginning of a sustained metaphor about God as marriage partner (cf. vv. 4-5). It is hard to describe an infinite Holy Creator God, therefore, we have to use human analogies (see Special Topic at 41:2). It is common in the Bible to describe God as Father, as husband, as near kinsman.

▣ **“married”** This can also be translated “Beulah” (BDB 127). Lines 4 and 5 may be the “new name” of v. 2.

This VERB (BDB 127, KB 42) is used four times in vv. 4-5.

1. *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, v. 4
2. *Niphal* IMPERFECT, v. 4

3. *Qal* IMPERFECT, v. 5
4. same as #3

## 62:5

**NASB, NKJV** “so your sons will marry you”  
**NRSV** “so shall your builder marry you”  
**TEV** “He who formed you will marry you”  
**NJB** “your rebuilders will wed you”  
**REB** “so will you be wedded to him who rebuilds you”  
**LXX** “so shall your son dwell with you”

By a revocalization of the consonants (בְּנֵי) “sons” becomes “builder” (i.e., YHWH, cf. Ps. 51:18; 102:16; 147:2), which fits the marriage imagery of the strophe.

*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 336, says of this verse

“Verse 5 presents as strange an analogy as that in 60:16. In both cases there seems to be an intentional breach in the normal application of the analogy, perhaps in the interests of vivid impression. Such analogies puzzle us, but we do not forget them!”

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 62:6-9**

**6**On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen;  
All day and all night they will never keep silent.  
You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves;  
**7**And give Him no rest until He establishes  
And makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.  
**8**The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm,  
“I will never again give your grain as food for your enemies;  
Nor will foreigners drink your new wine for which you have labored.”  
**9**But those who garner it will eat it and praise the LORD;  
And those who gather it will drink it in the courts of My sanctuary.

**62:6** This refers to prophets (cf. 52:8; 56:10 [negated]; Jer. 6:17; Ezek. 3:17; 33:7), although the rabbis see it referring to angels (cf. Zech. 1:12-17).

☐ **“You who remind the LORD. . .give Him no rest until He establishes. . .Jerusalem”** This may refer to the theological truth that God has limited Himself to the prayers of His children (cf. James 4:2). It is not overcoming the reluctance of an apathetic Deity, but it is the intercessory ministry of the people of God claiming the promises of God (see Special Topic in Vol. 11A, at 37:21-24).

The VERBS “appointed” and “remind” are both *Hiphils*.

**62:8 “The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm”** This is an anthropomorphic phrase (see Special Topic at 41:2). God does not have a body. He is Spirit (cf. John 4:24), yet He swears by His own ability to act! YHWH is a God who has, will, and does act in individual lives, as well as nations.

God’s oath is a significant promise (cf. 54:9; Heb. 6:13-20; 7:20-28). It reminds us of

1. the power of God’s word, 55:11; 66:2d
2. the trustworthy character of God, 45:22-23

God has an eternal redemptive plan for all humans made in His image and likeness (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; I Pet. 1:20, see Special Topic at 40:15). The Suffering Servant Song of 52:13-53:12 is the

mechanism for universal redemption (cf. Rom. 5:12-21). The fellowship of Eden will be restored for those who repent and believe in God's Messiah.

▣ **“enemies. . . foreigners”** This refers to the invasion of Palestine by foreigners. It is a direct reference to the blessing versus cursing action of Lev. 26:16 and Deut. 28:30-33. Israel broke the Covenant. Israel suffered the consequences. YHWH promises a future day when the blessings will be a reality.

**62:9 “will drink it in the courts of My sanctuary”** This refers to the fellowship meal between God and His covenant partner (cf. Deut. 12:18). These people are back in the land and the temple is restored.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 62:10-12**

- <sup>10</sup>**Go through, go through the gates,  
Clear the way for the people;  
Build up, build up the highway,  
Remove the stones, lift up a standard over the peoples.**  
<sup>11</sup>**Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth,  
Say to the daughter of Zion, “Lo, your salvation comes;  
Behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.”**  
<sup>12</sup>**And they will call them, “The holy people,  
The redeemed of the LORD”;  
And you will be called, “Sought out, a city not forsaken.”**

**62:10-11** This is a message for the people given by the prophet on YHWH's behalf. There is a series of eight IMPERATIVES.

1. go through – *Qal*, BDB 716, KB 778
2. go through – same as #1
3. clear the way – *Piel*, BDB 815, KB 937
4. build up – *Qal*, BDB 699, KB 757
5. build up – same as #4
6. remove the stones – *Piel*, BDB 709, KB 768
7. lift up a standard – *Hiphil*, BDB 926, KB 1202
8. say – *Qal*, BDB 55, KB 65

**62:10 “go through the gates”** This could refer to

1. the gates of the cities of Mesopotamia where the Israelites and Judeans were exiled (esp. Babylon)
2. possibly out of chronological order and referring to the gates of the rebuilt
  - a. Jerusalem (Ezra, Nehemiah)
  - b. the temple

▣ **“lift up a standard”** This refers to the flag of a tribe or military unit. Notice here the standard is over “the peoples” and v. 11a “to the end of the earth.” The insignia of Israel is now the flag of all who believe, receive, and acknowledge YHWH.

▣ **“Clear the way for the people;  
Build up, build up the highway”**

This is a common metaphor of preparing the road for a royal visit (cf. Isa. 35:6-10; 40:3-4; 57:14). This is used several ways in the Bible.

1. it is used of the return of the exiled
2. it is used by John the Baptist as a self-designation of his own ministry

**62:11 “to the end of the earth”** It is this universal aspect of YHWH’s promises that signal that His love and salvation are for all humans, not just Israel. See Special Topic at 40:15.

▣ **“Say. . .”** There are three truths to be spoken (*Qal* IMPERATIVES).

1. your salvation comes (cf. 49:6)
2. His reward is with Him
3. His recompense before Him (cf. 40:10)

**62:12 “they will call them”** This is an allusion to “the new name” of v. 2. The non-Israelites will now call them, not “Forsaken” or “Desolate” (v. 4), but

1. the holy people
2. the redeemed of the LORD
3. sought out

▣ **“The redeemed of the LORD”** “Redeemed” (BDB 145 I, see Special Topic at 41:14) is related to the concept of *Go’el*. This was the kinsman redeemer who bought back his relative from poverty or capture. YHWH as a *go’el* is another example of Deity described in close intimate personal family terms.

▣ **“Sought out, a city not forsaken”** This title was very significant because it states the truth that God was not running from the Jews but running toward the Jews!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does Isaiah 62 refer only to the Exile or is it a typology referring to the reign of the Messiah?
2. Define the OT terms “righteousness” and “salvation.”
3. Why does God have to be reminded in v. 6 of His promises?
4. Does God have a special love for Israel that He does not have for other nations?

# ISAIAH 63

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Vengeance on the Nations	The LORD in Judgment and Salvation	Poem on Divine Vengeance	The LORD'S Victory Over the Nations	Judgment on the Nations
63:1-6 (1-6)	63:1a (1a)	63:1a (1a)	63:1a	63:1-6 (1-6)
	63:1b (1b)	63:1b (1b)	63:1b	
	63:2 (2)	63:2 (2)	63:2	
	63:3-6 (3-6)	63:3-6 (3-6)	63:3-6	
The Ancient Mercies Recalled	God's Mercy Remembered	Psalm of Intercession (63:7-64:12)	The LORD'S Goodness to Israel	Mediation of the History of Israel (63:7-64:11)
64:7-14 (7-14)	63:7-10 (7-10)	63:7-9 (7-9)	63:7 (7)	63:7 (7)
			63:8-10	63:8-10 (8-10)
		63:10-14 (10-14)		
	63:11-14 (11-14)		63:11-13a	63:11-14 (11-14)
			63:13b-14	
"You Are Our Father"	A Prayer of Penitence (63:15-64:12)		A Prayer For Mercy and Help (63:15-64:12)	
63:15-19 (15-19)	63:15-19 (15-19)	63:15-19 (15-19)	63:15-17	63:15-19b (15-19b)
			63:18-64:7	
				63:19c-64:11 (19c-64:11)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.



1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 63:1-6

<sup>1</sup>Who is this who comes from Edom,  
 With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah,  
 This One who is majestic in His apparel,  
 Marching in the greatness of His strength?  
 “It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”  
<sup>2</sup>Why is Your apparel red,  
 And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?  
<sup>3</sup>“I have trodden the wine trough alone,  
 And from the peoples there was no man with Me.  
 I also trod them in My anger  
 And trampled them in My wrath;  
 And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,  
 And I stained all My raiment.  
<sup>4</sup>For the day of vengeance was in My heart,  
 And My year of redemption has come.  
<sup>5</sup>I looked, and there was no one to help,  
 And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold;  
 So My own arm brought salvation to Me,  
 And My wrath upheld Me.  
<sup>6</sup>I trod down the peoples in My anger  
 And made them drunk in My wrath,  
 And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

**63:1-6** This is a dialogue or diatribe (question-answer) between the prophet/Servant and YHWH.

1. Prophet asks the first question, v. 1 – YHWH is described as coming from Edom in majestic apparel, vv. 1a-d,2
2. YHWH speaks, v. 1e
  - a. speak in righteousness
  - b. mighty to save
3. Prophet asks a second question, v. 2
4. YHWH answers, vv. 3-6
  - a. trodden the wine trough alone (i.e., judgment)
  - b. no one from the peoples with Him (cf. v 5; 59:16)

**63:1 “Edom”** This neighboring nation is often a symbol for all Gentile nations (cf. 34:5-15) that are judged by YHWH.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: EDOM AND ISRAEL

- A. Edom is the nation east of the Dead Sea, which came from Esau, Jacob's brother (cf. Genesis 25:28; 32-33). Edom means "red" while Esau means "hairy" (cf. Gen 25:25, 30).
- B. Israel was commanded to respect Edom (cf. Deut. 23:7)
- C. Israel and Edom had continuing problems.
  - 1. Num. 20:14-21
  - 2. Jdgs. 11:16-17
  - 3. I Sam. 14:47-48
  - 4. II Sam. 8:14
  - 5. I Kgs. 11:14-22
  - 6. II Kgs. 14:22; 16:5-6
  - 7. II Chr. 20:10-30; 21:8ff
  - 8. Amos 1:6, 9
- D. Other prophecies against Edom.
  - 1. Isa. 34:5ff; 63:1ff
  - 2. Jer. 49:7-22
  - 3. Lam. 4:21-22
  - 4. Ezek. 25:12-14; 35:1-15; 36:2-6
  - 5. Amos 1:11-12
- E. In Obadiah Edom was condemned because of
  - 1. her pride, vv. 3-4
    - a. in geographical security
    - b. in political alliances and military power
    - c. in commercial wealth
    - d. in traditional wisdom
  - 2. her violation of Judah, her kinsman, vv. 10-14
    - a. rejoiced over the fall of Jerusalem (Lam. 2:15-17; 4:21)
    - b. refused to help (v. 15)
    - c. active support of enemy (v. 14)
    - d. took Judah's property (Jer. 13:19)
  - 3. her rejection and disdain of YHWH (v. 16)
- F. Edom may be a symbol (type) for all nations who rebelled against God and His people, vv. 15-21 (cf. Psalm 2).
- G. Possible historical fulfilment of this prophecy
  - 1. destruction of Edom by Neo-Babylon about 5 years after the fall of Jerusalem, 580 B.C.
  - 2. displacement of Edom from Petra by Nabatean Arabs about 550-449 B.C. (cf. Mal. 1:2-5). Edom not mentioned in Nehemiah's list of surrounding enemies, but is replaced by Arab tribes. Edom moved to the Negev.
  - 3. defeat of Edom by Alexander's general, Antigonus, in 312 B.C. (recorded in Diodorus Seculus)
  - 4. defeat of Edom in the Negev by Judas Maccabaeus around 175 B.C. (cf. I Maccabees 5:3,15; II Maccabees 10:15; Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* 12:8:1; 13:9:1)

5. Edom forced to accept Judaism by John Hyrcanus in 125 B.C. They are now called Idumeans.
6. The Roman General, Titus, completely destroyed the Idumean influence in A.D. 70.

▣ **“Bozrah”** This was a major city in Edom, often its capital. It is mentioned often in the “Woe” oracles of judgment (cf. Isa. 34:6; 63:1; Jer. 49:13,22; Amos 1:12).



NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB

“marching”

NKJV

“traveling”

JPSOA

“pressing forward”

REB

“striding along”

In 51:14 the word (הִלָּצַח, BDB 858, KB 1040) is understood as “stooping,” but here that connotation does not fit. Some suggest an emendation to the root, הִלָּץ (KB 1040), which means “marching” or “striding.” The UBS Text Project gives “stooping” a B rating, but it does not fit the parallelism.

**63:3 “the wine trough”** This imagery of judgment is also found in Lam. 1:15; Joel 3:13; Rev. 14:19,20; 19:15. This is God/Messiah as the Divine Warrior.

**63:4** Notice how the day of vengeance (cf. 34:8; 35:4,8; 61:2) is a necessary precursor to the day (year) of redemption!

The Day of the Lord and the day of salvation are two sides of one coming! For the faithful God’s coming is a great reunion of fellowship; for those who are unfaithful His coming is the final act of separation and rejection (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15)!

**63:5 “So My own arm brought salvation to Me,**

**And My wrath upheld Me”** This is related to lines 1-2. YHWH could depend on no human help in bringing salvation. He and He alone could do it (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). This text may be the imagery the Apostle John used in Revelation 5, only one is worthy to open the book, only one, the crucified, risen Lamb of God/Messiah/Servant!

**63:6** YHWH’s judgment is described by the use of three metaphors (i.e., YHWH as the Divine Warrior, cf. 59:17; Exod. 15:3).

1. trod down – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 100, KB 115 (parallel to “tread,” used three times in vv. 2-3)
2. made them drunk – *Piel* IMPERFECT, BDB 1016, KB 1500 (judgment as drunkenness, cf. 51:22-23; Ps. 75:8)
3. poured out (lit. “brought down their juice to the earth”) – *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, BDB 432, KB 434 (people lying dead on the ground)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 63:7-14**

**⁂I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the LORD , the praises of the LORD ,  
According to all that the LORD has granted us,  
And the great goodness toward the house of Israel,**

Which He has granted them according to His compassion  
And according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses.

<sup>8</sup>For He said, “Surely, they are My people,  
Sons who will not deal falsely.”  
So He became their Savior.

<sup>9</sup>In all their affliction He was afflicted,  
And the angel of His presence saved them;  
In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them,  
And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.

<sup>10</sup>But they rebelled  
And grieved His Holy Spirit;  
Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy,  
He fought against them.

<sup>11</sup>Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses.  
Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock?  
Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them,

<sup>12</sup>Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses,  
Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name,

<sup>13</sup>Who led them through the depths?  
Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble;

<sup>14</sup>As the cattle which go down into the valley,  
The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.  
So You led Your people,  
To make for Yourself a glorious name.

**63:7 “the lovingkindness of the LORD”** This is the special covenant NOUN, *hesed*. See Special Topic at 40:6.

▣ **“according”** Notice how the NASB uses this word three times to describe YHWH.

1. the great goodness
2. His compassion
3. multitude of His lovingkindness

**63:8 “they are My people”** This is covenant language (cf. Exod. 6:7; Isa. 51:4).

▣ **“Sons who will not deal falsely”** This is the exact opposite of 1:2-3 (cf. Jer. 3:22).

▣ **“So He became their Savior”** Notice the contrast between vv. 5 and 8b. Although God’s sovereignty is emphasized, still there is a place for Israel’s faithfulness!

**63:9 “In all their affliction He was afflicted”** In English this is a powerful statement of the unity between YHWH and His covenant people (cf. 57:15), but the MT is difficult to follow.

1. This phrase may relate with the last line of v. 8 (NRSV, TEV).
2. This phrase may relate to the second line of v. 9 (NJB).

The MT has “not” (אֵין) but the Masoretic scholars suggest לוֹ, “him” (*qere*, JPSOA).

▣ **“the angel of His presence”** This is a direct allusion to Exod. 23:20-23; 33:14,15. It refers to events during the Wilderness Wandering Period. Israel’s sin caused YHWH to replace Himself with a personal representative (i.e., the angel of the Lord).

YHWH affirmed His personal presence (cf. Deut. 32:9-14).

1. He redeemed them – *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 145, KB 169
2. He lifted them – *Piel* IMPERFECT, BDB 642, KB 694
3. He carried them – *Piel* IMPERFECT, BDB 669, KB 724 (cf. 46:3; Deut. 1:31)

Also note the three NT Divine Persons in vv. 9-10.

1. the Father, v. 9a
2. the pre-incarnate Messiah, v. 9b
3. the Holy Spirit, v. 10b

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY**

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity in unified contexts. The term “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

### **A. the Gospels**

1. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
2. John 14:26

### **B. Acts – Acts 2:32-33, 38-39**

### **C. Paul**

1. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
2. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
3. II Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14
4. Gal. 4:4-6
5. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
6. I Thess. 1:2-5
7. II Thess. 2:13
8. Titus 3:4-6

### **D. Peter – I Pet. 1:2**

### **E. Jude – vv. 20-21**

A plurality in God is hinted at in the OT.

### **A. Use of PLURALS for God**

1. Name *Elohim* is PLURAL, but when used of God always has a SINGULAR VERB
2. “Us” in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7

### **B. The Angel of the Lord was a visible representative of Deity**

1. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
2. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
3. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
4. Zechariah 3:1-2

### **C. God and His Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14**

### **D. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12**

### **E. The Messiah and the Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10**

F. All three are mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The Deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers.

1. Tertullian – subordinated the Son to the Father
2. Origen – subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
3. Arius – denied Deity to the Son and Spirit
4. Monarchianism – believed in a successive chronological manifestation of the one God as Father, Son, and Spirit

The Trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material

1. the full Deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, was affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea (cf. John 1:1; Phil. 2:6; Titus 2:13)
2. the full personality and Deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed in A.D. 381 by the Council of Constantinople
3. the doctrine of the Trinity is fully expressed in Augustine's work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

**63:10** Notice two VERBS describe Israel's sin and two VERBS describe YHWH's reaction (synonymous parallelism).

1. rebelled – *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 598, KB 632
2. grieved His Holy Spirit – *Piel* PERFECT, BDB 780, KB 864 (cf. Acts 7:51; see Special Topic: The Personhood of the Spirit at 42:1; for a good article entitled "Who Is the OT Holy Spirit?" see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 273-274, also pp. 306-207)
3. He turned Himself to become their enemy – *Niphal* PERFECT, BDB 245, KB 253, cf. Exod. 23:22; Lam. 2:4-5
4. He fought against them – *Niphal* PERFECT, BDB 535, KB 526

**63:11-14** This lists the things that YHWH did for Israel during the Exodus.

1. brought them up out of the sea (cf. Exodus 14-15)
2. put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them (cf. Num. 11:17,25,29; Haggai 2:5)
3. caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:16)
4. divided the waters before them
  - a. Red Sea – Exodus 14-15 (Isa. 11:15; 51:10)
  - b. Jordan River – Joshua 3
5. led them through the depths (same as #4)
6. gave them rest (i.e., the Spirit, cf. Josh. 21:44; 23:1)
7. led Your people

YHWH did all of this for Israel "to make Thyself a glorious name." YHWH wanted to reveal Himself to all humanity through Israel. His acts toward them were for the greater good (i.e., eternal redemptive plan, see Special Topic at 40:15).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 63:15-19**

<sup>15</sup>Look down from heaven and see from Your holy and glorious habitation;  
Where are Your zeal and Your mighty deeds?  
The stirrings of Your heart and Your compassion are restrained toward me.

<sup>16</sup>**For You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us  
And Israel does not recognize us.  
You, O LORD, are our Father,  
Our Redeemer from of old is Your name.**

<sup>17</sup>**Why, O LORD, do You cause us to stray from Your ways  
And harden our heart from fearing You?  
Return for the sake of Your servants, the tribes of Your heritage.**

<sup>18</sup>**Your holy people possessed Your sanctuary for a little while,  
Our adversaries have trodden *it* down.**

<sup>19</sup>**We have become *like* those over whom You have never ruled,  
*Like* those who were not called by Your name.**

**63:15 “Look. . .see”** These are two IMPERATIVES seeking YHWH’s attention.

1. look – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, BDB 613, KB 661, cf. Deut. 26:15
2. see – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 906, KB 1157, cf. Ps. 80:14

▣ **“Your holy and glorious habitation”** This is a way of speaking about the temple. For the ancient Israelites, the Ark of the Covenant was a footstool for YHWH, who dwelt in heaven (cf. I Chr. 28:2; Ps. 99:5; 132:7; Isa. 66:1; Lam. 2:1; Matt. 5:35; Acts 7:49).

A new book by John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, asserts that Gen. 1:1-2:3 is YHWH building His temple.

▣ **“The stirrings of Your heart and Your compassion are restrained toward me”** This powerful poetry is personifying Jerusalem pleading for YHWH to again recognize and return to her.

**63:16 “You are our Father”** This is the logical conclusion from Israel being called “sons” (i.e., 1:2). The phrase is repeated in 64:8.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD**

### **I. Old Testament**

A. There is a sense that God is father by means of creation.

1. Gen. 1:26-27
2. Mal. 2:10
3. Acts 17:28

B. Father is an analogy used in several senses.

1. father of Israel (by election)
  - a. “Son” – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:19; 31:20; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; Mal. 1:6
  - b. “firstborn” – Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9
2. father of the king of Israel (Messianic)
  - a. II Sam. 7:11-16
  - b. Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5
  - c. Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15

3. analogy of loving parent
  - a. father (metaphor)
    - (1) carries his son – Deut. 1:31
    - (2) disciplines – Deut. 8:5; Pro. 3:12
    - (3) provision (i.e., Exodus) – Deut. 32:1
    - (4) will never forsake – Ps. 27:10
    - (5) loves – Ps. 103:13
    - (6) friend/guide – Jer. 3:4
    - (7) healer/forgiver – Jer. 3:22
    - (8) mercy giver – Jer. 31:20
    - (9) trainer – Hosea 11:1-4
    - (10) special son – Mal. 3:17
  - b. mother (metaphor)
    - (1) will never forsake – Ps. 27:10
    - (2) love of a nursing mother – Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 and Hosea 11:4 (with the proposed textual emendation of “yoke” to “infant”)

## II. New Testament

### A. The Trinity (texts where all three are mentioned)

1. Gospels
  - a. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19
  - b. John 14:26
2. Paul
  - a. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
  - b. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
  - c. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14
  - d. Gal. 4:4-6
  - e. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
  - f. I Thess. 1:2-5
  - g. II Thess. 2:13
  - h. Titus 3:4-6
3. Peter – I Pet. 1:2
4. Jude – vv. 20-21

### B. Jesus

1. Jesus as “only begotten” – John 1:18; 3:16,18; I John 4:9
2. Jesus as “Son of God” – Matt. 4:3; 14:33; 16:16; Luke 1:32,35; John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27
3. Jesus as Beloved Son – Matt. 3:17; 17:5
4. Jesus’ use of *abba* for God – Mark 14:36
5. Jesus’ use of PRONOUNS to show both His and our relationship to God
  - a. “My Father,” e.g., John 5:18; 10:30,33; 19:7; 20:17
  - b. “your Father,” e.g., Matt. 17:24-27



- c. “our Father,” e.g., Matt. 6:9,14,26
- C. One of many family metaphors to describe the intimate relationship between God and humankind:
  - 1. God as Father
  - 2. Believers as
    - a. sons of God
    - b. children
    - c. born of God
    - d. born again
    - e. adopted
    - f. brought forth
    - g. family of God

▣ “. . .though Abraham does not know us  
And Israel does not recognize us”

The Patriarchs would not know/recognize these Judeans because of

- 1. the time between their generations
- 2. the sin of these descendants

▣ “Redeemer” See note at 41:14. For the concept of “redeem” see Special Topic at 41:14.

**63:17** The first two lines of this verse show how the concept of the sovereignty of God can be used to diminish personal responsibility. See Special Topics: Election/Predestination and the Need for Theological Balance at 44:18 and Predestination versus Human Free Will below.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: PREDESTINATION (CALVINISM) VERSUS HUMAN FREE WILL (ARMINIANISM)**

Titus 2:11 is a balance to other NT passages on election. I thought it might be theologically helpful to provide my commentary notes from Romans 8:29 and 9, as well as Ephesians 1.

- I. Romans 8:29 – Paul uses “foreknew” (*proginōskō*, “to know before”) twice, here and 11:2. In 11:2 it refers to God’s covenant love for Israel before time began. Remember that the term “know” in Hebrew related to intimate, personal relationship, not to facts about someone (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Here it was included in a chain of eternal events (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). This term was linked with predestination. However, it must be stated that God’s foreknowledge is not the basis of election because if that were so, then election would be based on fallen humanity’s future response, which would be human performance. This term is also found in Acts 26:5; I Pet. 1:2,20 and II Pet. 3:17.

- A. “foreknew” (*proginōskō*, “to know before”)

The terms “foreknow” and “predestine” are both compounds with the PREPOSITION “before” and, therefore, should be translated “to know before,” “to set bounds before,” or “mark off before.” The definitive passages on predestination in the NT are Rom. 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:13-14; and Romans 9. These texts obviously stress that God is sovereign. He is

in total control of all things. There is a preset divine plan being worked out in time. However, this plan is not arbitrary or selective. It is based, not only on God's sovereignty and foreknowledge, but on His unchanging character of love, mercy, and undeserved grace.

We must be careful of our western (American) individualism or our evangelical zeal coloring this wonderful truth. We must also guard against being polarized into the historical, theological conflicts between Augustine versus Pelegius or Calvinism versus Arminianism.

B. "predestined" (*proorizō*, "to set the bounds before")

Predestination is not a doctrine meant to limit God's love, grace, and mercy nor to exclude some from the gospel. It is meant to strengthen believers by molding their world-view. God is for all mankind (cf. I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). God is in control of all things. Who or what can separate us from Him (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)? God views all history as present; humans are time bound. Our perspective and mental abilities are limited. There is no contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will. It is a covenantal structure. This is another example of truth given in dialectical tension. Biblical doctrines are presented from different perspectives. They often appear paradoxical. The truth is a balance between the seemingly opposite pairs. We must not remove the tension by picking one of the truths. We must not isolate any biblical truth into a compartment by itself.

It is also important to add that the goal of election is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; 2:10). We were chosen to be "holy and blameless." God chooses to change us so that others may see the change and respond by faith to God in Christ. Predestination is not a personal privilege, but a covenantal responsibility. This is the major truth of the passage. This is the goal of Christianity. Holiness is God's will for every believer. God's election is to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4), not a special standing. The image of God, which was given to man in creation (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6), is to be restored.

C. "conformed to the image of His Son"—God's ultimate goal is the restoration of the image lost in the Fall. Believers are foreordained to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4).

II. Romans 9

A. Romans 9 is one of the strongest NT passages on God's sovereignty (the other being Eph. 1:3-14), while chapter 10 states humans' free will clearly and repeatedly (cf. "everyone" v. 4; "whosoever" vv. 11,13; "all" v. 12 [twice]). Paul never tries to reconcile this theological tension. They are both true! Most Bible doctrines are presented in paradoxical or dialectical pairs. Most systems of theology are logical half-truths. Augustinianism and Calvinism versus semi-Pelegianism and Arminianism have elements of truth and error. Biblical tension between doctrines is preferable to a proof-texted, dogmatic, rational, theological system that forces the Bible onto a preconceived interpretive grid.

B. This same truth (found in Rom. 9:23) is stated in Rom. 8:29-30 and Eph. 1:4,11. This chapter is the strongest expression of God's sovereignty in the NT. There can be no dispute that God is in total charge of creation and redemption. This great truth should never be softened or diminished.

However, it must be balanced with God's choice of covenant as a means of relating to human creation, made in His image. It is surely true that some OT covenants, like Genesis 15, are unconditional and do not relate at all to human response, but other covenants are conditioned on human response (e.g., Eden, Noah, Moses, David). God has a plan of redemption for His creation; no human can affect this plan. God has chosen to allow

individuals to participate in His plans. This opportunity for participation is a theological tension between sovereignty (Romans 9) and human free will (Romans 10).

It is not appropriate to select one biblical emphasis and ignore another. There is tension between doctrines because eastern people present truth in dialectical or tension-filled pairs. Doctrines must be held in relationship to other doctrines. Truth is a mosaic of truths.

### III. Ephesians 1

- A. Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool, or means of others' redemption! In the OT the term was used primarily for service; in the NT it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven only, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths (God as transcendent versus God as immanent; security vs. perseverance; Jesus as equal with the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility to a covenant partner, etc).

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant faith response from man. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology.

- B. "He chose us" in Eph. 1:4 is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE which emphasizes the SUBJECT. This focuses on the Father's choice before time. God's choice must not be understood in the Islamic sense of determinism, nor in the ultra-Calvinistic sense as some versus others, but in the covenantal sense. God promised to redeem fallen mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15). God called and chose Abraham to choose all humans (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). God Himself elected all persons who would exercise faith in Christ. God always takes the initiative in salvation (cf. John 6:44,65). This text and Romans 9 are the biblical basis for the doctrine of predestination emphasized by Augustine and Calvin.

God chose believers not only to salvation (justification), but also to sanctification (cf. Colossians 1: 10-12). This could relate to (1) our position in Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:21) or (2) God's desire to reproduce His character in His children (cf. 2:10; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19). God's will for His children is both heaven one day and Christlikeness now!

"In Him" is a key concept of Eph. 1:4. The Father's blessings, grace, and salvation flow through Christ (cf. John 14:6). Notice the repetition of this grammatical form (LOCATIVE of SPHERE) in v. 3, "in Christ"; v. 4, "in Him"; v. 7, "in Him"; v. 9, "in Him"; v. 10, "in Christ," "in Him"; v. 12, "in Christ" and v. 13, "in Him" (twice). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind (Karl Barth). Jesus is the elect man and all are potentially elect in Him. All of God the Father's blessings flow through Christ.

The phrase “before the foundation of the world” is also used in Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; I Pet. 1:19-20 and Rev. 13:8. It shows the Triune God’s redemptive activity even before Gen. 1:1. Humans are limited by their sense of time; everything to us is past, present, and future, but not to God.

The goal of predestination is holiness, not privilege. God’s call is not to a selected few of Adam’s children, but to all! It is a call to be what God intended mankind to be, like Himself (cf. I Thess. 5:23; II Thess. 2:13); in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). To turn predestination into a theological tenet instead of a holy life is a tragedy. Often our theologies speak louder than the biblical text.

The term “blameless” (*amōmos*) or “free from blemish” is used of (1) Jesus (cf. Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19); (2) Zachariah and Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:6); (3) Paul (cf. Phil. 3:6); and (4) all true Christians (cf. Phil. 2:15; I Thess. 3:13; 5:23). God’s unalterable will for every Christian is not only heaven later, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; Gal. 4:19; I Pet. 1:2). Believers are to reflect God’s characteristics to a lost world for the purpose of evangelism.

Grammatically the phrase “in love” in this verse could go with either v. 4 or v. 5. However, when this phrase is used in other places in Ephesians it always refers to human love for God (cf. 3:17; 4:2,15,16).

- C. In Eph. 1:5 the phrase “He predestined us” is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This Greek term is a compound of “before” and “mark off.” It refers to God’s predetermined redemptive plan (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 17:31; Rom. 8:29-30). Predestination is one of several truths related to mankind’s salvation. It is part of a theological pattern or series of related truths. It was never meant to be emphasized in isolation! Biblical truth has been given in a series of tension-filled, paradoxical pairs. Denominationalism has tended to remove the biblical tension by emphasizing only one of the dialectical truths (predestination versus human free will; security of the believer versus perseverance of the saints; original sin versus volitional sin; sinlessness versus sinning less; instantaneously declared sanctification versus progressive sanctification; faith versus works; Christian freedom versus Christian responsibility; transcendence versus immanence).

God’s choice is not based on foreknowledge of human performance, but on His gracious character (cf. vv. 9 & 11). He wishes that all (not just some special ones like the Gnostics or modern-day ultra-Calvinists) would be saved (cf. Ezek. 18:21-23,32; John 3:16-17; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9). God’s grace (God’s character) is the theological key to this passage (cf. vv. 6a, 7c, 9b), as God’s mercy is the key to the other passage on predestination, Romans 9-11.

Fallen mankind’s only hope is the grace and mercy of God (cf. Isa. 53:6 and several other OT texts quoted in Rom. 3:9-18). It is crucial in interpreting these first theological chapters to realize that Paul emphasizes those things which are totally unrelated to human performance: predestination (chap. 1), grace (chap. 2), and God’s eternal plan of redemption (mystery, 2:11- 3:13). This was to counterbalance the emphasis of the false teachers on human merit and pride.

▣ “return for the sake of Your servants” This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 996, KB 1427) used as a prayer.

**63:18-19** These verses show how the Judeans perceived themselves.

1. they had the temple for only a short time
2. their enemies had taken control of it
3. they had become like “just another nation”
4. they had become like the nations who were never called by YHWH’s name

# ISAIAH 64

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prayer for Mercy and Help	A Prayer of Penitence (63:15-64:12)	Psalms of Intercession (63:7-64:12)	A Prayer for Mercy and Help (63:15-64:12)	Meditation on the History of Israel (63:7-64:12) (63:19b-64:12)
			63:18-64:7	
64:1-7 (1-7)	64:1-5 (1-5)	64:1-12		
	64:6-7 (6-7)			
64:8-12 (8-12)	64:8-12 (8-12)		64:8-12	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 64:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>Oh, that You would rend the heavens *and* come down,  
That the mountains might quake at Your presence—

<sup>2</sup>As fire kindles the brushwood, *as* fire causes water to boil—  
To make Your name known to Your adversaries,  
*That* the nations may tremble at Your presence!

<sup>3</sup>When You did awesome things which we did not expect,  
You came down, the mountains quaked at Your presence.

<sup>4</sup>For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear,

Nor has the eye seen a God besides You,  
 Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.  
<sup>5</sup>You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness,  
 Who remembers You in Your ways.  
 Behold, You were angry, for we sinned,  
*We continued* in them a long time;  
 And shall we be saved?  
<sup>6</sup>For all of us have become like one who is unclean,  
 And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;  
 And all of us wither like a leaf,  
 And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.  
<sup>7</sup>There is no one who calls on Your name,  
 Who arouses himself to take hold of You;  
 For You have hidden Your face from us  
 And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities.

**64:1** The first two lines are labeled as 63:19 in the MT. There is a series of PERFECT VERBS from v. 18 through v. 19.

YHWH, who lives on high, “rends” (*Qal* PERFECT, BDB 902, KB 1146, cf. 34:4; Rev. 6:14) the atmosphere of the earth (i.e., heavens, cf. Gen. 1:1).

As the creator approaches the creation quakes (*Niphal* PERFECT, BDB 272, KB 272 [this form occurs only here and Jdgs. 5:5, which is Deborah’s praise/psalm of the defeat of Hazor and its army], cf. v. 2; Ps. 18:7-15; 68:8; 77:18; 144:5)

For “heavens” see Special Topic below.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEAVENS

In the OT the term “heaven” is usually PLURAL (i.e., *shamayim*, BDB 1029). The Hebrew term means “height.” God dwells on high. This concept reflects the holiness and transcendence of God.

In Gen. 1:1 the PLURAL “heavens and earth” has been viewed as God creating (1) the atmosphere above this planet or (2) a way of referring to all of reality (i.e., spiritual and physical). From this basic understanding other texts were cited as referring to levels of heaven: “heaven of heavens” (cf. Ps. 68:33) or “heaven and the heaven of heavens” (cf. Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 148:4). The rabbis surmised that there might be

1. two heavens (i.e., R. Judah, Hagigah 12b)
2. three heavens (Test. Levi 2-3; Ascen. of Isa. 6-7; Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 114:1)
3. five heavens (III Baruch)
4. seven heavens (R. Simonb. Lakish; II Enoch 8; Ascen. of Isa. 9:7)
5. ten heavens (II Enoch 20:3b; 22:1)

All of these were meant to show God’s separation from physical creation and/or His transcendence. The most common number of heavens in rabbinical Judaism was seven. A. Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud* (p. 30), says this was connected to the astronomical spheres, but I think it refers to seven being the perfect number (i.e., days of creation with seven representing God’s rest in Gen. 1).

Paul, in II Cor. 12:2, mentions the “third” heaven (Greek *ouranos*) as a way of identifying God’s personal, majestic presence. Paul had a personal encounter with God!

**64:2 “fire”** See Special Topic at 47:14.

☐ Notice the purpose of YHWH is that His name be known and that the nations tremble (hopefully in repentance, cf. Ps. 99:1-5; Jer. 33:9).

**64:3**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV, REB “awesome things”**

**TEV “terrible things”**

**NJB “unexpected miracles”**

**JPSOA “wonders”**

The Hebrew word (BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) literally means “fear,” but in this form it can denote the majestic, awesome miracles of YHWH on behalf of Israel (cf. Deut. 10:21; II Sam. 7:23; I Chr. 17:21; Ps. 66:3,5-6; 106:22; 145:6).

In Ps. 139:14 several Hebrew words are used in parallel.

1. BDB 431 – fearful
2. BDB 811 and 810 – wonderful

See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: WONDERFUL THINGS (פלא)**

This word (BDB 810) denotes actions that humans cannot accomplish themselves or can even explain, acts which cause wonder and awe (cf. Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17,27; Zech. 8:6).

#### **The VERB**

1. the Exodus, Exod. 3:20; 34:10; Mic. 7:15
2. plagues, Deut. 28:59
3. crossing of Jordan, Josh. 3:5
4. past events of God, Jdgs. 6:13; I Chr. 16:9,12,24; Neh. 9:17
5. birth of Samson, Jdgs. 13:19
6. David’s love for Jonathan, II Sam. 1:26
7. often in Job, 5:9; 9:10; 10:16; 37:5,14; 42:3
8. thirty-two times in the Psalms
9. YHWH’s counsel, Isa. 28:29
10. YHWH’s acts, Isa. 29:14 (twice); Joel 2:26

#### **The NOUN**

1. the Exodus, Exod. 15:11; Ps. 77:11,14; 78:12
2. in relation to the dead, Ps. 88:10,12
3. heaven praises YHWH’s acts, Ps. 89:5
4. YHWH’s laws, Ps. 119:129
5. YHWH’s Messiah, Isa. 9:6
6. YHWH’s acts, Isa. 25:1; 29:14
7. end-time actions, Dan. 12:6



God acts in powerful, redemptive ways to reveal Himself to His highest creation (mankind). He wants them to know Him and trust Him. His acts are revelation, the recording of those acts is inspiration, and the understanding of those acts is illumination. YHWH wants the world to know Him!

**64:4** The interpretive question is to whom does the PRONOUN “they” refer.

1. national Israel
2. the faithful returnees
3. the nations (cf. v. 2)
4. #2 and #3 together

▣ **“a God besides you”** See Special Topic: Monotheism at 40:14.

▣ **“Who acts. . .”** The word is “works” (*Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 793, KB 889). This is the theological distinction between YHWH and the idols. They cannot see, hear, act, speak, but He can and does!

▣ **“the one who waits for Him”** This describes the person of faith. He/she waits (*Piel* PARTICIPLE, BDB 314, KB 313). This word has the connotation of “hoping, trusting, waiting” of God (cf. 8:17; 30:18; Hab. 2:3). Another root (BDB 875 I) is also translated “wait,” but often not as theologically significant (cf. Isa. 25:9; 26:8; 33:2; 40:31; Ps. 25:3; 27:14; 37:34; 40:1; 130:5; Pro. 20:22).

**64:5 “You meet him who. . .”** The VERB (*Qal* PERFECT, BDB 803, KB 910) in this context denotes an encounter of/for fellowship and/or kindness.

Notice the kind of people YHWH “meets” with.

1. him who rejoices in doing righteous
2. him who remembers You in Your ways

These are parallel (see Appendix One: Hebrew Poetry).

▣ Lines 3-5 ask a pertinent question. Israel is a covenant-breaking people. Can a sinful people be “saved” (i.e., “delivered,” BDB 446, KB 448)

1. from the physical consequences of sin
2. from the spiritual consequences of sin

I want to believe, “Yes, yes, yes” (cf. vv. 8-9)! But only divine mercy and grace (this chapter is a prayer for YHWH’s intervention) can do it (recommended translation of UBS Text Project, p. 164). The consequences of Genesis 3 are staggering and relentless.

However, in this context (i.e., vv. 4-7) this verse is not redemptive but condemnatory (vv. 8-12 are a cry for mercy). Israel sinned in the past and the present. If this is to be accepted as the meaning then the VERB “delivered” (וְנִשָּׁעַ, BDB 446, KB 448) must be changed to “and we were evil” (וְנִרְשָׁע, UBS Text Project, p. 163; NET Bible, #16, p. 1283).

▣

**NASB** “*We continued in them a long time;  
And shall we be saved?*”

**NKJV** “*In these ways we continue’  
And we need to be saved*”

**NRSV** “*Because you hid yourself we transgressed*”

**NJB** “*now we persist in your ways and we shall be saved*”

**JPSOA “We have been steeped in them from of old**

**And can we be saved?”**

**LXX “therefore we went away”**

The MT is uncertain. AB suggests an emendation involving two consonants which yields, “we have long been rebels” (p. 190).

**64:6-7** Notice the consequences of sin.

1. all of us – scope of the problem (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22)
2. unclean (BDB 379)
3. our righteousness is a polluted garment (cloth of menstruation, BDB 723, cf. Lev. 15:19-24)
4. wither (BDB 614, KB 663, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 1:30; 34:4) like a leaf
5. the wind takes us away
6. none call on the name of the Lord (i.e., worship)

YHWH reacts to this tragedy of a sinful covenant people, meant to promote and clarify His own character.

1. He hid His face (cf. 1:15; 54:8; Deut. 31:18)
2. He delivered us (MT “melted,” BDB 556, KB 555) into the power (i.e., consequences) of our iniquities (this is theologically parallel to Rom. 1:24,26,28!)

These verses serve as a petition of confession. There is no reason why YHWH should forgive/forget, but He does (cf. 55:6-7)! The new covenant is in view here (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). YHWH will deal with them (i.e., Israel) and with all humans in a new way based on His character, His acts, His purposes, and through His Son and Spirit!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 64:8-12**

**<sup>8</sup>But now, O LORD, You are our Father,  
We are the clay, and You our potter;  
And all of us are the work of Your hand.  
<sup>9</sup>Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD,  
Nor remember iniquity forever;  
Behold, look now, all of us are Your people.  
<sup>10</sup>Your holy cities have become a wilderness,  
Zion has become a wilderness,  
Jerusalem a desolation.  
<sup>11</sup>Our holy and beautiful house,  
Where our fathers praised You,  
Has been burned *by* fire;  
And all our precious things have become a ruin.  
<sup>12</sup>Will You restrain Yourself at these things, O LORD?  
Will You keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?**

**64:8-12** This is a prayer of hope for YHWH to remember His covenant and not His children’s sin.

1. You are our Father (see Special Topic at 63:16)
2. You are the potter
3. we are the work of Your hands (cf. 29:16; 45:9)

**64:8** There is a series of commands in the sense of prayer requests.

1. do not be angry beyond measure – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 893, KB 1124) used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 54:7-8

2. do not remember iniquity forever – *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 269, KB 269) used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 43:25
3. look, all of us are Your people – *Hipihil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 613, KB 661)

All of these are similar to 57:16-17; Ps. 103:8-14.

**64:10-11** All of the VERBS are PERFECTS (“become” used four times). They describe the complete destruction of YHWH’s wrath.

1. the cities of Palestine are a wilderness
2. Jerusalem is desolate
3. the temple burnt with fire (i.e., Babylon in 586 B.C. and Titus in 70 A.D.)
4. all Israel’s precious things are in ruin

**64:12** God’s people cry out for restraint and compassion. Please, please, no more, they cry. Please come to us again!

# ISAIAH 65

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Rebellious People	The Righteousness of God's Judgment	God's Answer	God's Punishment of the Rebellious	The Coming Judgment
65:1-7 (1-7)	65:1-7 (1-7)	65:1-16 (1-16)	65:1-5	65:1-7 (1-7)
			65:6-7	
65:8-12 (8-12)	65:8-12 (8-12)		65:8-10	65:8-25 (8-25)
			65:11-16	
65:13-16 (13-16)	65:13-16 (13-16)			
New Heaven and New Earth	The Glorious New Creation		The New Creation	
65:17-25 (17-25)	65:17-19 (17-19)	65:17-25 (17-25)	65:17-25	
	65:20-23 (20-23)			
	65:24-25 (24-25)			

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. These last two chapters are contained in a literary unit which runs from chapter 56 to chapter 66. It could be characterized as “A New Day” or “The New Age.”
- B. OT prophets used contemporary occurrences to foreshadow future events. The return of the exiles seems to be the foreshadowing of the spiritual return of all of God’s human creation to an original Adamic fellowship of Eden (cf. Special Topic at 40:15).
- C. Chapter 65 is possibly a response to Isaiah’s corporate prayer for help and mercy which is recorded in 63:7-64:12. God’s basic answer is that He has always been ready (cf. 55:6-7), but His people have always turned away from Him (v. 5).
- D. It is quite interesting that Paul uses Isa. 65:1-2 in Rom. 10:20-21. Paul interprets v. 1 as referring to the Gentiles and v. 2 as referring to the Jews. In context they both seem to be related to the returning Judeans of Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s day. However, v. 1d, which contains the phrase, “to a nation which did not call on My name,” could refer to the Jewish nation unless it is used in some kind of idolatrous, sarcastic, ironical way.
- E. Chapter 65 is also unique in prophecy because it takes the concept of corporality into the area of individual response. The two groups can be clearly seen in 65:10c and 11a. God will make a distinction within the nation between those who know Him and those who reject Him (cf. Ezek. 18:1-21; 33:10-20; and Jer. 31:29-30).
- F. Isaiah 65 culminates Isaiah’s unique emphasis on the universal love of God and its inclusion of the Gentiles (i.e., 2:2-4; 42:6; 49:6; 51:4-5; 56:7; 60:1,3). He goes so far as to say that God will even make some Gentiles priests and Levites (cf. v. 21). This is very significant in light of the obvious conclusions of Jewish monotheism and the call of Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3, which also included all of the world (see Special Topic at 40:15).
- G. It is surprising that this new age is described without any allusions to the Messiah of chapters 9 and 11.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 65:1-7

- <sup>1</sup>“I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask *for Me*;  
I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me.  
I said, ‘Here am I, here am I,’  
To a nation which did not call on My name.
- <sup>2</sup>I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people,  
Who walk *in* the way which is not good, following their own thoughts,
- <sup>3</sup>A people who continually provoke Me to My face,  
Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks;
- <sup>4</sup>Who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places;  
Who eat swine’s flesh,  
And the broth of unclean meat is *in* their pots.
- <sup>5</sup>Who say, ‘Keep to yourself, do not come near me,

**For I am holier than you!**  
**These are smoke in My nostrils,**  
**A fire that burns all the day.**  
**<sup>6</sup>Behold, it is written before Me,**  
**I will not keep silent, but I will repay;**  
**I will even repay into their bosom,**  
**<sup>7</sup>Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together,” says the LORD.**  
**“Because they have burned incense on the mountains**  
**And scorned Me on the hills,**  
**Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom.”**

**65:2 “I permitted Myself to be sought. . .to be found”** God always takes the initiative in spiritual matters (i.e., John 6:44,65). Even in this context He is allowing Himself to be found, really presenting Himself to the Jews and to the Gentiles. These opening verses remind me of Romans 11.

▣ **“Here am I, here am I”** The doubling is for emphasis! These are words of a Hebrew idiom of availability (i.e., 6:8). God was always available but His people would not respond (“ask,” “seek”).

▣ **“To a nation which did not call on My name”** In context this refers either to (1) the Jewish nation who called upon idols, particularly the fertility gods or (2) the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 10:20-21). The concept of calling upon someone’s name is the idea of responding to them. Paul uses this same concept of calling upon the name of the Lord in Rom. 10:9-13 (cf. Acts 7:59; 9:14,21; 22:16; I Cor. 1:2; II Tim. 2:22). This was considered an act of trust and worship.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD**

This was a common NT phrase for the personal presence and active power of the Triune God in the church. It was not a magical formula, but an appeal to God’s character.

Often this phrase refers to Jesus as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:11)

1. at the profession of one’s faith in Jesus at baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Acts 2:38; 8:12,16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; I Cor. 1:13,15; James 2:7)
2. at an exorcism (cf. Matt. 7:22; Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49; 10:17; Acts 19:13)
3. at a healing (cf. Acts 3:6,16; 4:10; 9:34; James 5:14)
4. at an act of ministry (cf. Matt. 10:42; 18:5; Luke 9:48)
5. at the time of church discipline (cf. Matt. 18:15-20)
6. during preaching to Gentiles (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 9:15; 15:17; Rom. 1:5)
7. in prayer (cf. John 14:13-14; 15:2,16; 16:23; I Cor. 1:2)
8. a way of referring to Christianity (cf. Acts 26:9; I Cor. 1:10; II Tim. 2:19; James 2:7; I Pet. 4:14)

Whatever we do as proclaimers, ministers, helpers, healers, exorcists, etc., we do in His character, His power, His provisions—in His Name!

**65:2 “I spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people”** This is an anthropomorphic (see Special Topic at 41:2) metaphor which shows the intensity and openness of God’s love (cf. Rom. 10:21). Usually it is a gesture of prayer but here of welcome.

▣ **“Who walk *in* the way which is not good, following their own thoughts”** The following verses list several aspects of idolatry which characterize the Jewish people. It is very difficult in this period of history to completely understand each one of these aspects in detail (cf. vv. 3-7). Some say that they are all caught up in the garden worship mentioned in v. 3, while others differentiate between the groups. What is obvious is that God’s people had turned to other gods. Some possible enumerations of these idolatrous traits are

1. offering sacrifice in gardens
2. burning incense on bricks
3. sitting among graves
4. spending nights in secret places
5. eating swine’s flesh
6. having the broth of unclean meat in their pots
7. burning incense on mountains
8. scorning Me on the hills
9. setting a table for Fortune, v. 11
10. filling cups of mixed wine for Destiny

**65:3 “A people who continually provoke Me to My face”** This is a Hebrew metaphor of repeated, open defiance to God. Idolatry had become so common and accepted that it was not even hidden.

▣ **“Offering sacrifice in gardens”** We are not sure if this is the ancient veneration of trees that can be seen in Isa. 1:29 or if this is a particularized worship within a garden setting (cf. 66:17).

▣ **“burning incense on bricks”** It has been suggested that the term “bricks” can simply refer to

1. an altar made with cut stones (cf. Lev. 20:24-25)
2. the pillars of *Ba’al* worship (cf. Lev. 26:1)
3. the roof tiles which relate to the worship of Babylonian astral deities
4. incense altars (see *IVP Bible Background Commentary: OT*, p. 640)

These numerous possibilities show us that we simply do not know what this really means.

**65:4 “Who sit among graves”** This seems to be some kind of worship or communication with the dead, possibly necromancy or ancestral worship (cf. Deut. 18:10-12).

▣ **“spend the night in secret places”** The Hebrew term translated “secret places” (BDB 665) literally means “watch,” “guard,” or “keep” but here it seems to denote a secret.

1. secret things, Isa. 48:6
2. secret places, Isa. 65:4
3. secret minded, Pro. 7:10

We really do not have any idea what this has reference to but it seems to involve the cultic arts in some way.

▣ **“Who eat swine’s flesh,**

**And the broth of unclean meat is *in* their pots”** Usually these two acts are connected by commentators although this is uncertain. They are a violation of the food laws of Leviticus (cf. 11:7). Pigs were common sacrifices of the surrounding nations (i.e., Ugaritic Texts).

The MT has (*kethiv*) “fragment” (פרק, BDB 830) but BDB suggests (*qere*) בִּרְקָה, BDB 600 II, “a rich broth,” along with DSS, LXX, and Aramaic Targum.

**65:5 “Who say, ‘Keep to yourself, do not come near me,**

**For I am holier than you!’”** The first two VERBS are commands.

1. keep to yourself – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 897, KB 1132
2. do not come near me – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 620, KB 670 used in a JUSSIVE sense

Notice that these commands are from the idolaters (cf. vv. 2-4,7,11-12), possibly their “priests.” They were concerned about

1. a transfer of “holiness” (cf. Ezek. 44:19, i.e., somehow a reduction of their power or prestige)
2. a transfer with possible negative affect to common pagan worshipers



**NASB, NKJV “I am holier than you”**

**NRSV “I am too holy for you”**

**TEV “we are too holy for you to touch”**

**NJB “lest my sanctity come near you”**

**JPSOA “I would render you consecrated”**

**REB “my holiness will infect you”**

**Peshitta “I am sanctified”**

The UBS Text Project gives a different vocalization, “I have sanctified you,” but notes the MT’s, “I am sacred for you” has a “B” rating.

**“These are smoke in My nostrils,**

**A fire that burns all the day”** This idiom shows God’s irritation and anger at this type of attitude and idolatrous activity.

**65:6 “Behold, it is written before Me,**

**I will not keep silent, but I will repay”** The idea of something “written” is an ancient metaphor which refers to the memory of God (cf. The Book of Deeds and the Book of Life, Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12-15). The truth is that judgment will come one day. This is a word that all humans need to hear. Notice what YHWH will do.

1. I will not keep silent
2. I will repay
3. I will repay into their bosom

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TWO BOOKS OF GOD**

A. In one sense the title of this Special Topic could describe

1. nature (i.e., creation, cf. Ps.19:1-6)
2. Scripture (cf. Ps. 19:7-14)

This is why I do not think that ultimately there should be a conflict between science and faith, all truth is God’s truth. Please see my commentary on Genesis 1-11 online free at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)

B. There are two books mentioned in the Bible (cf. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12)

1. The book that contains all the deeds of humans, both good and bad. In a sense it is a metaphor of God’s memory and that one day all humans will give an account to their Creator of their stewardship of the gift of life.
  - a. Psalm 56:8; 139:16



- b. Isaiah 65:6
  - c. Malachi 3:16
  - d. Rev. 20:12-13
2. The book that lists those who have a faith/repentant/obedient relationship with YHWH/Jesus. This is a metaphor of God's memory of those who are redeemed and heaven-bound.
- a. Exodus 32:32-33
  - b. Psalm 69:28
  - c. Isaiah 4:3
  - d. Daniel 12:1
  - e. Philippians 4:3
  - f. Hebrews 12:23
  - g. Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27
  - h. also mentioned in I Enoch 47:3; 81:1-2; 103:2; 108:3

These books represent God's faithfulness to His Word. For those who rebel and refuse, He remembers their sins; for those who repent, believe, obey, serve, and persevere, He forgets their sins (cf. Ps. 103:11-13; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). There is abundant assurance and confidence in God's unchanging, merciful, character, promises, and provisions. God is trustworthy!

▣ **"I will repay into their bosom"** The metaphor for "bosom" means "I will return to the their own sin" (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

**65:7 "Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together"** This is a combination of corporate sin and individual, volitional sin. We are affected not only by the past corporately, and the present corporately, but also by individual choice in the present. We learn from the Ten Commandments in Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9, that we are affected by the sins of the parents to the third and fourth generation. We also learn from Ezekiel 18 the opposite truth that we are responsible only for our sins.

▣ **"Because they have burned incense on the mountains**

**And scorned Me on the hills"** This, according to the prophet Hosea, is an aspect of the worship of the fertility god *Ba'al* (cf Hos. 4:13-14).



NASB, NKJV **"their former work"**

NRSV **"full payment"**

TEV **"their past deeds"**

NJB, JPSOA **"in full"**

The NASB follows the MT text. The NRSV, NJB, and JPSOA suggest an emendation ראשנה (BDB 911) meaning "former," to בראשו (BDB 1168) meaning "in full" (Lev. 5:24) or "first" (Jer. 16:18).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 65:8-12**

<sup>8</sup>Thus says the LORD,

“As the new wine is found in the cluster,  
And one says, ‘Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it,’  
So I will act on behalf of My servants  
In order not to destroy all of them.

<sup>9</sup>I will bring forth offspring from Jacob,  
And an heir of My mountains from Judah;  
Even My chosen ones shall inherit it,  
And My servants will dwell there.

<sup>10</sup>Sharon will be a pasture land for flocks,  
And the valley of Achor a resting place for herds,  
For My people who seek Me.

<sup>11</sup>But you who forsake the LORD,  
Who forget My holy mountain,  
Who set a table for Fortune,  
And who fill *cups* with mixed wine for Destiny,

<sup>12</sup>I will destine you for the sword,  
And all of you will bow down to the slaughter.  
Because I called, but you did not answer;  
I spoke, but you did not hear.  
And you did evil in My sight  
And chose that in which I did not delight.”

**65:8 “As the new wine is found in the cluster”** This is a metaphor that says that even in a cluster of grapes which contains some bad fruit there are always some good grapes. This is the beginning of a discussion that runs from v. 8 to v. 10 which states that a remnant of Jews (see Special Topic at 46:3) will be faithful to YHWH. However, vv. 11-13 show the complete rejection and judgment of those of Judah who continue to reject God. This is the beginning of the painful but true emphasis that judgment will begin with the house of God. There is a form of our religion in which God takes no pleasure. God looks at the heart (cf. Isa. 29:13).

For “new wine” see Special Topic below.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM**

**I. Biblical Terms**

**A. Old Testament**

1. *Yayin* – This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* – This is “new wine” (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.

3. *Asis* – This is obviously alcoholic beverages (“sweet wine,” BDB 779, e.g. Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* – This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.” It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Pro. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

#### B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* – the Greek equivalent of *yayin*
2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) – the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) – wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

### II. Biblical Usage

#### A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Jdgs. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Pro. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah – Gen. 9:21; Lot – Gen. 19:33,35; Nabal – I Sam. 25:36; Uriah – II Sam. 11:13; Amnon – II Sam. 13:28; Elah – I Kgs. 16:9; Benhadad – I Kgs. 20:12; Rulers – Amos 6:6; and Ladies – Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Num. 6; and rulers, Pro. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

#### B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say, “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed.” (BB 58b).

#### C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Mathew. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 12:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

### III. Theological Insight

#### A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is a gift of God.

2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14).

B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.
2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God's gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.
- B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called "new wine" or "sweet wine."
- C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered "aged wine" and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).
- E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good, but had to be strained well before use.
- F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called "old wine" and had to be diluted with water.
- G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.

V. Closing Statements

- A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation do not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.
- B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible's position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/denominational bias.
- C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.
- D. If we push total abstinence as God's will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?

**65:10-11 "For My people who seek Me.**

**But you who forsake the LORD"** This shows a new concept in the OT. God had always dealt in a corporate aspect with the nation. The entire nation was blessed or the entire nation was cursed (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28-29). Now we are coming to the individualized focus of Ezek. 18:32; 30:10-20; and Jer. 31:29-30, where there is a distinction within the people of God as to those who believe and those who do not believe (cf. Deut. 29:24-28). Later in chapter 66 there will be a distinction between all mankind, of those who reject and those who receive YHWH.

**65:11 “you who forsake the LORD”** The VERB (*Qal* PARTICIPLE, BDB 736 I, KB 806) means “to abandon” or “to leave.” It is regularly used of forsaking God (cf. Deut. 28:20; 31:16; Jdgs. 10:10; Jer. 1:16; Jonah 2:9). They abandoned YHWH for idols (cf. II Kgs. 9-22; II Chr. 36:13-21). God will forsake them (cf. Deut. 31:17; Isa. 41:17; 49:14; 54:7).

▣ **“Who set a table for Fortune,**

**And who fill cups with mixed wine for Destiny”** The term “Fortune” (BDB 151 II, KB 176 II) and the Hebrew “Destiny” (BDB 584, KB 602) are names for pagan gods (cf. Josh. 11:17), possibly relating to the worship of planetary deities (cf. Jer. 7:18; 44:17), which was the worship of “the queen of heaven.” It is certain that these terms refer to idolatrous worship of some type!

**65:12**

**NASB “I will destine you for the sword”**

**NKJV “I will number you for the sword”**

**NRSV, NJB “I will destine you to the sword”**

Notice the play on the VERB (*Qal* PERFECT, BDB 584, KB 599), which is used as a title for a false god in v. 11, “Destiny” (BDB 584).

▣ **“Because I called, but you did not answer”** This is a summary of vv. 1-7. God continually loved them and called them but they refused and rejected His call (cf. 41:28; 50:2; 66:4; Hos. 11:2).

The last lines of v. 12 are repeated in 66:4.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 65:13-16**

**<sup>13</sup>Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD,**

**“Behold, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry.**

**Behold, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty.**

**Behold, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame.**

**<sup>14</sup>Behold, My servants will shout joyfully with a glad heart,**

**But you will cry out with a heavy heart,**

**And you will wail with a broken spirit.**

**<sup>15</sup>You will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones,**

**And the Lord GOD will slay you.**

**But My servants will be called by another name.**

**<sup>16</sup>Because he who is blessed in the earth**

**Will be blessed by the God of truth;**

**And he who swears in the earth**

**Will swear by the God of truth;**

**Because the former troubles are forgotten,**

**And because they are hidden from My sight!**

**65:13-16** This is the continuing emphasis on the contrast between the two types of seed (i.e., descendants) of Abraham—believing and unbelieving. In the NT this turns to all humans (cf. Rom. 2:28-29).

**65:14** Notice the contrast between

1. the faithful – shout with a glad heart
2. the unfaithful – cry out with a heavy, painful heart

There is a division among humans (cf. Matt. 7:13-14,15-23,24-27; Luke 13:22-30), even those who seem “religious”!

**65:15 “You will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones”** This is another play on the word “name” (BDB 1027). Here it is the concept that the name of the unbelievers will become accursed, while the believers will have a new name. From the immediate context we do not know the new name by which they will be called. A new name for God is given in v. 16—“the God of Amen,” “the God of Truth,” or “the God of faithfulness” (cf. Rev. 3:14). The believer’s new name will possibly be related to that.

In Genesis YHWH’s promise to Abraham carried a warning and a blessing related to the treatment of Abraham using “name” to represent him as a person (cf. Gen. 12:2; 18:18; 22:18).

**65:16 “Because the former troubles are forgotten,**

**And because they are hidden from My sight”** In the Bible “when God forgets” is a metaphor for total forgiveness. Notice the continuing metaphor that sins are hidden from His sight. This is a repeated theme of the OT. When God forgives, God forgets (cf. Ps. 103:11-13; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; and Micah 7:19)!



NASB, NKJV,

NJB “the God of truth”

NRSV “the God of faithfulness”

TEV “the faithful God”

LXX, JPSOA “the true God”

REB “by God whose name is Amen”

The title for Deity, “God,” אֱלֹהִים (BDB 43), is often used in ancient poems (cf. Deut. 32:15,17; Job 3:4; Ps. 18:32; 50:22; 114:7; 139:19; Pro. 30:5; Isa. 44:8; Hab. 3:3).

The second part of the title is “Amen.” See Special Topic below.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

### I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. The term “Amen” is from a Hebrew word for

1. “truth” (*emeth*, BDB 49)
2. “truthfulness” (*emun*, *emunah*, BDB 53)
3. “faith” or “faithfulness”
4. “trust” (*dmn*, BDB 52)

B. Its etymology is from a person’s stable physical stance. The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Psalm 35:6; 40:2; 73:18; Jeremiah 23:12) or stumbling (cf. Ps. 73:2). From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4).

C. Special usages

1. a pillar, II Kgs. 18:16 (I Tim. 3:15)
2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12

4. stability, Isa. 33:6
  5. true, I Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Prov. 12:22
  6. firm, II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
  7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,160
- D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith.
1. *bathach* (BDB 105), trust
  2. *yra* (BDB 431), fear, respect, worship (cf. Gen. 22:12)
- E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage which was used to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48).
- F. The theological key to this term is not mankind's faithfulness, but YHWH's (cf. Exod. 34:6; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity's only hope is the merciful faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises. Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is a history and a record of God restoring His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind. Salvation restores mankind's ability to have intimate fellowship with God. This is why we were created.

## II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The use of the word "amen" as a concluding liturgical affirmation of a statement's trustworthiness of a statement is common in the NT (cf. I Cor. 14:16; II Cor. 1:20; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12).
- B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; II Tim. 4:18).
- C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled in John) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43).
- D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).
- E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness or trust is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as "trust," "faith," "believe."

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 65:17-25

- <sup>17</sup>**“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;  
And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.**
- <sup>18</sup>**But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;  
For behold, I create Jerusalem *for* rejoicing  
And her people *for* gladness.**
- <sup>19</sup>**I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people;  
And there will no longer be heard in her  
The voice of weeping and the sound of crying.**
- <sup>20</sup>**No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few days*,  
Or an old man who does not live out his days;  
For the youth will die at the age of one hundred  
And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred  
Will be *thought* accursed.**
- <sup>21</sup>**They will build houses and inhabit *them*;  
They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.**

<sup>22</sup>They will not build and another inhabit,  
They will not plant and another eat;  
For as the lifetime of a tree, *so will be* the days of My people,  
And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands.

<sup>23</sup>They will not labor in vain,  
Or bear *children* for calamity;  
For they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD,  
And their descendants with them.

<sup>24</sup>It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. <sup>25</sup>The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," says the LORD.

**65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth"** The context of vv. 17-25 is extremely important because it is the key, not only of these last two chapters—that God is going to make all things new (cf. 42:9; 48:6; 66:22; II Pet. 3:13), but it is a discussion of the New Age or the Age of the Messiah (cf. Rom. 8:18-25). It also implies that the current order will be destroyed (cf. Isa. 51:6 and II Pet. 3:10). There is also a relation between vv. 16 and 17 that the New Order will not contain sins because they will be forgiven, as is mentioned in the latter part of v. 16.

The terminology of "a new heaven and a new earth" is common in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature (cf. II Esdras 6:11-24; I Enoch 91:16). This becomes the imagery for Revelation 21-22! The earth will return to its pre-Genesis 3 glory and purpose.

**65:18** The first line of poetry has two parallel IMPERATIVES.

1. be glad – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 965, KB 1314, cf. 61:10 (twice); 62:5; 64:5; 65:18,19; 66:10,14
2. rejoice – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 162, KB 189, cf. 61:10; 65:18,19; 66:10

AB, p. 198, sees these as new titles for Jerusalem and the returnees.

▣ **"forever"** This term (BDB 723 I) denotes perpetual fellowship with the Creator and His human vessels (cf. I Chr. 28:9; Micah 7:18).

**65:19 "And there will no longer be heard in her**

**The voice of weeping and the sound of crying"** This is the continual theme of Isaiah that the New Age will not have the pain of this former sin-cursed earth (cf. Isa. 25:8; 30:1; 35:10; 55:11). This seems to be alluded to in Rev. 21:4.

**65:20 "No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few days,***

**Or an old man who does not live out his days"** This hyperbolic statement can have one of two origins.

1. an allusion to the long lives of Genesis 1-5, thereby denoting a return to the Garden of Eden time
2. an OT way of describing the "new age," which we know from the NT involves not just protracted physical life but a new eternal life (*zoa*)

For a good discussion of Isaiah's discussion of extended lives and the NT discussion of eternal life, see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 307-309.



**65:22** These are metaphors to describe the fact that the people will live in the land and enjoy its fruits. It is a direct allusion to the exile and the promise of a return to Palestine. See Special Topic at 40:9.

The Septuagint sees the word “tree” (BDB 781) as referring to the “tree of life” in the Garden of Eden, as do the Aramaic Targums.

**65:24** This is a beautiful promise of instantaneous answered prayer and is even more extensive than Matt. 6:8.

**65:25 “The wolf and the lamb will graze together”** Here again is the idyllic picture of God and mankind together in a garden setting with the animals (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; Genesis 1,2; Rev. 21:22). This goes along with my particular theology that we are not going to heaven, but heaven is coming back to a recreated and cleansed earth. It will be as it was!

▣ **“and dust will be the serpent’s food”** This is a rather unusual idiom because dust was commonly understood as the food of serpents in that day. However, it may be a reference to

1. Gen. 3:14, which shows that Satan’s temptations will be completely finished as far as their effect on believing and renewed mankind
2. Isa. 11:8, a strophe that also describes the new age

# ISAIAH 66

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Heaven Is God's Throne	True Worship and False	Concluding Oracles	The LORD Judges the Nations	Prophecy On the Temple
66:1-2 (1-2)	66:1-2 (1-2)	66:1-2 (1-2)	66:1-2 (1-2)	66:1-2 (1-2)
Hypocrisy Rebuked				
66:3-6 (3-6)	66:3-4 (3-4)	66:3-5 (3-5)	66:3-4 (3-4)	66:3-4 (3-4)
	The LORD Vindicates Zion			Judgment On Jerusalem
	66:5 (5)		66:5-6 (5-6)	66:5 (5)
	66:6 (6)	66:6 (6)		66:6 (6)
66:7-9 (7-9)	66:7-9 (7-9)	66:7-9 (7-9)	66:7-9 (7-9)	66:7-9 (7-9)
Joy In Jerusalem's Future				
66:10-17 (10-17)	66:10-11 (10-11)	66:10-11 (10-11)	66:10-11 (10-11)	66:10 (10)
				66:11 (11)
	66:12-13 (12-13)	66:12-16 (12-16)	66:12-14	66:12a (12a)
	The Reign and Indignation of God			66:12b-13 (12b-13)
	66:14-16 (14-16)			66:14 (14)
			66:15-16	66:15 (15)
				66:16-17 (16-17)
	66:17 (17)	66:17	66:17-19a	An Eschatological Discourse
66:18-24 (22-24)	66:18-21	66:18-21		66:18-22
			66:19b-21	
	66:22-23 (22-23)	66:22-23 (22-23)	66:22-24	
				66:23-24 (23-24)
	66:24 (24)	66:24		

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)**

#### ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### **WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

##### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 66:1-2**

<sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD,

**“Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.**

**Where then is a house you could build for Me?**

**And where is a place that I may rest?**

<sup>2</sup>For My hand made all these things,

**Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD.**

**“But to this one I will look,**

**To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.**

**66:1 “Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.**

**Where then is a house you could build for Me?**

**And where is a place that I may rest?”** This is an obvious allusion to the dedicatory prayer of Solomon in I Kgs. 8:27 and is again alluded to in Acts 8:47-48.

What is difficult to know is to what historical period this relates. Some see it relating to the return from the exile and the rebuilding of the Temple, which is possible from the context. However, others say that God does not live in manmade buildings and that this refers to

1. the temple of the human body which God has made
2. the family of God, the faith seed of Abraham (Jews and Gentiles of faith, cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
3. the cosmic temple of Genesis 1, see John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*

**66:2 “For My hand made all these things”** For “hand” see Special Topic at 40:2. We learn from the NT that God's agent in creation was no one other than the pre-Incarnate Jesus Christ (cf. John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

▣ “But to this one I will look,

**To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word”** God looks first at the motives and character of the human heart. YHWH knows the thoughts and intents of the heart (cf. v. 18).

1. I Sam. 2:3; 16:7
2. I Kgs. 8:39
3. I Chr. 28:9
4. II Chr. 6:30
5. Ps. 7:9; 17:3; 26:2; 44:21; 139:1,23
6. Pro. 15:11; 16:2; 21:2; 24:12
7. Jer. 11:20; 17:9-10; 20:12
8. Luke 16:15
9. Acts 1:24; 15:8
10. Rom. 8:27

Jesus also knows the inner thoughts and motives of humans, see John 2:24-25; 6:61,64; 13:11!

This same description is used of David’s contrition over the sin with Bathsheba (cf. Ps. 51:17); note 57:15; Ps. 34:18; Matt. 5:3-4; Luke 18:13-14.

This also has two titles for God’s people that are very beautiful and descriptive.

1. a humble and repentant people
2. those who tremble at His word (cf. v. 5)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 66:3-6**

<sup>3</sup>***“But he who kills an ox is like one who slays a man;  
He who sacrifices a lamb is like the one who breaks a dog’s neck;  
He who offers a grain offering is like one who offers swine’s blood;  
He who burns incense is like the one who blesses an idol.  
As they have chosen their own ways,  
And their soul delights in their abominations,  
So I will choose their punishments  
And will bring on them what they dread.  
Because I called, but no one answered;  
I spoke, but they did not listen.  
And they did evil in My sight  
And chose that in which I did not delight.”***

<sup>5</sup>**Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at His word:  
“Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name’s sake,  
Have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy.’  
But they will be put to shame.**

<sup>6</sup>**A voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple,  
The voice of the LORD who is rendering recompense to His enemies.**

**66:3-4** This shows that ritual alone is not satisfactory (cf 29:13; Jeremiah 7), but combined with ritual must be a humble and repentant heart. That which we do over and over again tends to become common, but in the area of faith, our motive is the key (cf. v. 2).

**66:3 “And their soul delights in their abominations”** This refers to various pagan worship rites (cf. 65:4,7,11). They loved and chose (BDB 103, KB 119, used three times in vv. 3-4) sin (cf. 1:4; 57:17; 65:2; 66:18; Ps. 81:11-12)!

<b>66:4</b>	
<b>NASB</b>	<b>“punishments”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“delusions”</b>
<b>NRSV, JPSOA</b>	<b>“mock”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“disaster”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“making fools of them”</b>
<b>REB</b>	<b>“a willful course”</b>

The word (BDB 760, KB 1768) is found only here and 3:4. KB suggests

1. acts of mischief (done by a child from the root, עוֹלֵל (BDB 760) for 3:4
2. ill treatment here

The NET Bible gets a meaning from עָלַל (BDB 760), “deal severely.”

▣ **“And will bring on them what they dread”** Oh my! What a terrible curse from God (cf. Pro. 1:27; 10:24)!

▣ **“Because I called, but no one answered”** Here again is the repetition of the theme (cf. 41:28; 50:2; 65:12).

**66:5** There is a distress and tension even within the people of God (cf. Rom. 9:6-8). The persecution of the prophets by fellow Jews is a good example of this (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; 10:22). Many horrible things have been done by “religious” people in God’s name!

Notice how the true people of God should respond to persecution — joy (BDB 970, cf. 51:11; 55:12; 61:7; note 66:10 which has several other words synonymous with joy.

1. be glad – BDB 162
2. rejoice – BDB 965 (twice)
3. also *Qal* IMPERATIVE of “joy” (BDB 970)

There are three commands in v. 5.

1. Hear the word of the LORD – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 1033, KB 1570
2. Let the LORD be glorified – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 457, KB 455, used in a JUSSIVE sense (the LXX translates it as PASSIVE)
3. That we may see your joy – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 906, KB 157, used in a COHORTATIVE sense

**66:6** There has been much discussion among commentators about how this verse relates to the context. Some say it is an unknown historical event, while others say it is related directly to v. 5, which shows the judgment of prideful, unbelieving Jews.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 66:7-9**

<sup>7</sup>**“Before she travailed, she brought forth;**

**Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy.**

<sup>8</sup>**Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?**

**Can a land be born in one day?**

**Can a nation be brought forth all at once?**

**As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.**

<sup>9</sup>**Shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery?” says the LORD.**

**“Or shall I who gives delivery shut *the womb*?” says your God.**

**66:7-13** This context refers to Zion bringing forth a nation in one day which includes Gentiles. Some see this as the return from exile, but in this event no Gentiles were included. Therefore, it must be eschatological (i.e., NT).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 66:10-17**

- <sup>10</sup>“Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her;  
Be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her,  
<sup>11</sup>That you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts,  
That you may suck and be delighted with her bountiful bosom.”  
<sup>12</sup>For thus says the LORD, “Behold, I extend peace to her like a river,  
And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream;  
And you will be nursed, you will be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees.  
<sup>13</sup>As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you;  
And you will be comforted in Jerusalem.”  
<sup>14</sup>Then you will see *this*, and your heart will be glad,  
And your bones will flourish like the new grass;  
And the hand of the LORD will be made known to His servants,  
But He will be indignant toward His enemies.  
<sup>15</sup>For behold, the LORD will come in fire  
And His chariots like the whirlwind,  
To render His anger with fury,  
And His rebuke with flames of fire.  
<sup>16</sup>For the LORD will execute judgment by fire  
And by His sword on all flesh,  
And those slain by the LORD will be many.  
<sup>17</sup>“Those who sanctify and purify themselves *to go* to the gardens,  
Following one in the center,  
Who eat swine’s flesh, detestable things and mice,  
Will come to an end altogether,” declares the LORD.

**66:10** As a result of what YHWH has done in restoring His people to their Promised Land (i.e., Gen. 12:1; 15:16), the commands are

1. be joyful – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 970, KB 1333
2. rejoice – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 162, KB 189
3. be exceedingly glad – the *Qal* IMPERATIVE and the NOUN, BDB 965, KB 965

**66:12** The parental imagery of God’s love for His people is so powerful in this verse. YHWH is described in feminine metaphors (cf. 49:15; 66:9-13; see Special Topic at 41:2).

The fact that God would use “a nursing woman” to describe Himself says volumes.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE**

- I. The Old Testament
  - A. Culturally women were considered property
    1. included in list of property (Exodus 20:17)
    2. treatment of slave women (Exodus 21:7-11)

3. women's vows annulable by socially responsible male (Numbers 30)
4. women as spoils of war (Deuteronomy 20:10-14; 21:10-14)

B. Practically there was a mutuality

1. male and female made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27)
2. honor father and mother (Exodus 20:12 [Deut. 5:16])
3. reverence mother and father (Leviticus 19:3; 20:9)
4. men and women could be Nazirites (Numbers 6:1-2)
5. daughters have right of inheritance (Numbers 27:1-11)
6. part of covenant people (Deuteronomy 29:10-12)
7. observe teaching of father and mother (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20)
8. sons and daughters of Heman (Levite family) led music in Temple (I Chronicles 25:5-6)
9. sons and daughters will prophesy in new age (Joel 2:28-29)

C. Women were in leadership roles

1. Moses' sister, Miriam, called a prophetess (Exodus 15:20-21 also note Micah 6:4)
2. women gifted by God to weave material for the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:25-26)
3. a married woman, Deborah, also a prophetess (cf. Jdgs. 4:4), led all the tribes (Judges 4:4-5; 5:7)
4. Huldah was a prophetess whom King Josiah invoked to read and interpret the newly-found "Book of the Law" (II Kings 22:14; II Chr. 34:22-27)
5. Queen Esther, a godly woman, saved Jews in Persia

II. The New Testament

A. Culturally, women in both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world were second class citizens with few rights or privileges (the exception was Macedonia).

B. Women in leadership roles

1. Elizabeth and Mary, godly women available to God (Luke 1-2)
2. Anna, a prophetess serving at the Temple (Luke 2:36)
3. Lydia, believer and leader of a house church (Acts 16:14,40)
4. Philip's four virgin daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9)
5. Phoebe, deaconess of church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)
6. Prisca (Priscilla), Paul's fellow-worker and teacher of Apollos (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3)
7. Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Nereus' sister, several women co-workers of Paul (Rom. 16:6-16)
8. Junia (KJV), possibly a woman apostle (Rom. 16:7)
9. Euodia and Syntyche, co-workers with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3)

III. How does a modern believer balance the divergent biblical examples?

A. How does one determine historical or cultural truths, which apply only to the original context, from eternal truths valid for all churches, all believers of all ages?

1. We must take the intent of the original inspired author very seriously. The Bible is the Word of God and the only source for faith and practice.
2. We must deal with the obviously historically-conditioned inspired texts.
  - a. the cultus (i.e., ritual and liturgy) of Israel (cf. Acts 15; Gal. 3)

- b. first century Judaism
- c. Paul's obviously historically-conditioned statements in I Corinthians
  - (1) the legal system of pagan Rome (I Cor. 6)
  - (2) remaining a slave (I Cor. 7:20-24)
  - (3) celibacy (I Cor. 7:1-35)
  - (4) virgins (I Cor. 7:36-38)
  - (5) food sacrificed to an idol (I Cor. 8; 10:23-33)
  - (6) unworthy actions at Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11)
- 3. God fully and clearly revealed Himself to a particular culture, a particular day. We must take seriously the revelation, but not every aspect of its historical accommodation. The Word of God was written in human words, addressed to a particular culture at a particular time.
- B. Biblical interpretation must seek the original author's intent. What was he saying to his day? This is foundational and crucial for proper interpretation. But then we must apply this to our own day. Now, here is the problem with women in leadership (the real interpretive problem may be defining the term. Were there more ministries than pastors who were seen as leadership? Were deaconesses or prophetesses seen as leaders?) It is quite clear that Paul, in I Cor. 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:9-15, is asserting that women should not take the lead in public worship! But how do I apply that today? I do not want Paul's culture or my culture to silence God's Word and will. Possibly Paul's day was too limiting, but also my day may be too open. I feel so uncomfortable saying that Paul's words and teachings are conditional, first century, local situational truths. Who am I that I should let my mind or my culture negate an inspired author?!

However, what do I do when there are biblical examples of women leaders (even in Paul's writings, cf. Romans 16)? A good example of this is Paul's discussion of public worship in I Corinthians 11-14. In 11:5 he seems to allow women's preaching and praying in public worship with their heads covered, yet in 14:34-35 he demands they remain silent! There were deaconesses (cf. Rom. 16:1) and prophetesses (cf. Acts 21:9). It is this diversity that allows me freedom to identify Paul's comments (as relates to restrictions on women) as limited to first century Corinth and Ephesus. In both churches there were problems with women exercising their newly-found freedom (cf. Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*), which could have caused difficulty for the church in reaching their society for Christ. Their freedom had to be limited so that the gospel could be more effective.

My day is just the opposite of Paul's. In my day the gospel might be limited if articulate, trained women are not allowed to share the gospel, not allowed to lead! What is the ultimate goal of public worship? Is it not evangelism and discipleship? Can God be honored and pleased with women leaders? The Bible as a whole seems to say "yes"!

I want to yield to Paul; my theology is primarily Pauline. I do not want to be overly influenced or manipulated by modern feminism! However, I feel the church has been slow to respond to obvious biblical truths, like the inappropriateness of slavery, racism, bigotry, and sexism. It has also been slow to respond appropriately to the abuse of women in the modern world. God in Christ set free the slave and the woman. I dare not let a culture-bound text reshackle them.



One more point: as an interpreter I know that Corinth was a very disrupted church. The charismatic gifts were prized and flaunted. Women may have been caught up in this. I also believe that Ephesus was being affected by false teachers who were taking advantage of women and using them as surrogate speakers in the house churches of Ephesus.

C. Suggestions for further reading:

1. *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart (pp. 61-77)
2. *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* by Gordon Fee
3. *Hard Sayings of the Bible* by Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Branch (pp. 613-616; 665-667)

**66:13** The word “comforts” (BDB 636, KB 688) is used three times in this verse.

- 1-2. *Piel* IMPERFECT (twice)
3. *Pual* IMPERFECT

This reminds one of 40:1 (*Piel* IMPERATIVE, twice); also note 12:1; 53:3 (twice), 12,19; 52:9; 61:2 (57:18, BDB 637). This is the theme of Isaiah 40-66. YHWH has acted to forgive, forget, and restore those who trust Him and tremble at His word (vv. 2,5)!

**66:15-16** Notice the different metaphors used to describe YHWH’s judgment.

1. fire (BDB 77; see Special Topic at 47:14)
2. whirlwind (BDB 693 I, cf. 5:28; Jer. 4:13)
3. His anger (BDB 60 I) with fury (BDB 404, cf. 42:25; 51:20; 63:3,6)
4. His rebuke with flames of fire, cf. 29:6; 30:30
5. judgment by fire
6. His sword on all flesh, cf. 65:12

**66:16** “those slain by the LORD will be many” This shows that judgment will begin with the household of God. We need to remember that there are many within the Jewish community and, God help us, within the Church, who do not really know Christ Jesus, the Messiah.

**66:17** “to the gardens” This seems to be a reference to a type of pagan worship (cf. 65:3).

▣ “Following one in the center” The word translated “center” (BDB 1063) is also used of the “tree of life” in Gen. 3:3. The Septuagint sees 65:22 as also referring to the tree of life. Here this may refer to the *Asherah* poles or carved stake of Canaanite fertility worship. See Special Topic at 57:5-6.

▣ “Who eat. . .”

1. swine’s flesh, cf. 69:4
2. detestable things (BDB 1054, cf. Lev. 11:10,11,12,13,20,23,41,42)
3. mice (BDB 747, cf. Lev. 11:29)

I think the food laws of Leviticus 11 are not hygienic but cultic. They were meant to keep Israel from any social or religious contact with Canaanites.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 66:18-24**

<sup>18</sup>“For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory. <sup>19</sup>I will set a sign among them and will send

survivors from them to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations. <sup>20</sup>Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,” says the LORD, “just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. <sup>21</sup>I will also take some of them for priests *and* for Levites,” says the LORD.

<sup>22</sup>“For just as the new heavens and the new earth  
Which I make will endure before Me,” declares the LORD,  
“So your offspring and your name will endure.

<sup>23</sup>And it shall be from new moon to new moon  
And from sabbath to sabbath,  
All mankind will come to bow down before Me,” says the LORD.

<sup>24</sup>“Then they will go forth and look  
On the corpses of the men  
Who have transgressed against Me.  
For their worm will not die  
And their fire will not be quenched;  
And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.”

**66:18-21 “the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues”** The word “time” has been provided by Eben Ezra in his translation of the Masoretic Text. There is some confusion as to the exact setting of this verse. The VERB “know” is not in the Hebrew text.

This is a reference somehow to the gathering of the nations. They seem to come for hostile purposes against the people of God (i.e., “survivors”). But, in God’s defeat of them (cf. v. 24b) some come to believe in Him. Then God sends them as a sign, v. 19 (cf. 11:10,12), to their own nations as evangelists. And, wonder of wonders – the heathen respond to the message and come back to God at Jerusalem to worship and He even makes some of them into priests and Levites (cf. v. 21).

This section, vv. 19-24, is absolutely shocking in its universal thrust. This has caused great consternation and uncertainty among the rabbis, but in context, it is obviously the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise of Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3. See Special Topic at 40:15.

**66:18 “For I know their words and their thoughts”** God knows the hearts of all men. See full note at 1:2.

**66:20** This is one of several texts that speak of the Gentile nations bringing gifts and offerings to Jerusalem/temple (cf. 2:2-3; 56:7; Ps. 22:27; 86:9; Jer. 3:17; Micah 4:1-2).

**66:22** See full note at 65:17.

The VERB “endure” (BDB 763, KB 840) is used twice.

1. the new heavens and earth will endure – *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. the seed of the faithful will endure – *Qal* PERFECT

This word, though used often in this section of Isaiah (cf. 44:11; 46:7; 47:12,13; 48:13; 50:8; 59:14; 61:5), is translated “endure” only in 66:22.

**66:23 “All mankind will come to bow down before Me,” says the LORD** The VERB (BDB 1005, KB 295) is a rare *Hishtapael* (found only here). This is the obvious implication of monotheism (see Special Topic at 40:14).

**66:24** This is the description of the unfaithful of both Jews and Gentiles. I do not think one can build a theology of end-time punishment based on this verse. This is the possible source of Jesus' use of the word *Gehenna*, which means "the valley of the sons of Hinnon," which was the garbage dump of Jerusalem. Jesus used this term to describe eternal separation from God (see Special Topic at 57:9). Notice the elements of the worm that does not die and the fire that is not quenched. These are the metaphors chosen by Jesus Himself to describe the fate of those who refuse to believe in Him (cf. Matt. 25:46).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the central theme of Isaiah 65-66?
2. List the pagan worship rites of chapter 65.
3. To whom does 65:1 and 2 refer and why?
4. What is so unique about Isaiah 65 which is particularly seen in vv. 10 and 11?
5. Why does God create a new heaven and a new earth?
6. What is the significance of Isa. 66:19-23?

# APPENDIX ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW POETRY

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This type of literature makes up 1/3 of the Old Testament. It is especially common in the “Prophets” (all but Haggai and Malachi contain poetry) and “Writings” sections of the Hebrew canon.
- B. It is very different from English poetry. English poetry is developed from Greek and Latin poetry, which is primarily sound-based. Hebrew poetry has much in common with Canaanite poetry. There are no accented lines or rhyme in Near East poetry (but there is a beat).
- C. The archaeological discovery north of Israel at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) has helped scholars understand OT poetry. This poetry from the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. has obvious literary connections with biblical poetry.

### II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- A. It is very compact.
- B. It tries to express truth, feelings or experiences in imagery.
- C. It is primarily written not oral. It is highly structured. This structure is expressed in:
  - 1. balanced lines (parallelism)
  - 2. word plays
  - 3. sound plays

### III. THE STRUCTURE (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction To The Old Testament*, pp.965-975)

- A. Bishop Robert Lowth in his book, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753) was the first to characterize biblical poetry as balanced lines of thought. Most modern English translations are formatted to show the lines of poetry.
  - 1. synonymous – the lines express the same thought in different words:
    - a. Psalm 3:1; 49:1; 83:14; 103:13
    - b. Proverbs 19:5; 20:1
    - c. Isaiah 1:3,10
    - d. Amos 5:24; 8:10
  - 2. antithetical – the lines express opposite thoughts by means of contrast or stating the positive and the negative:
    - a. Psalm 1:6; 90:6
    - b. Proverbs 1:29; 10:1,12; 15:1; 19:4
  - 3. synthetic – the next two or three lines develop the thought - Ps. 1:1-2; 19:7-9; 29:1-2
  - 4. chiasmic – a pattern of poetry expressing the message in a descending and ascending order. The main point is found in the middle of the pattern.

- B. A. Briggs in his book, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (1899) developed the next stage of analysis of Hebrew poetry:
1. emblematic – one clause literal and the second metaphorical, Ps. 42:1; 103:3.
  2. climatic or stair-like – the clauses reveal truth in an ascending fashion, Ps. 19:7-14; 29:1-2; 103:20-22.
  3. introverted – a series of clauses, usually at least four are related by the internal structure of line 1 to 4 and 2 to 3 – Ps. 30:8-10a
- C. G. B. Gray in his book, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915) developed the concept of balanced clauses further by:
1. complete balance – where every word in line one is repeated or balanced by a word in line two – Psalm 83:14 and Isaiah 1:3
  2. incomplete balance where the clauses are not the same length - Ps. 59:16; 75:6
- D. Today there is a growing recognition of literary structural pattern in Hebrew called a chiasm, which denotes an odd number of parallel lines forming an hour glass shape whereby the central line is emphasized.
- E. Type of sound patterns found in poetry in general, but not often in eastern poetry
1. play on alphabet (acrostic. cf. Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff; Lam. 1-4)
  2. play on consonants (alliteration, cf. Ps. 6:8; 27:7; 122:6; Isa. 1:18-26)
  3. play on vowels (assonance, cf. Gen. 49:17; Exod. 14:14; Ezek. 27:27)
  4. play on repetition of similar sounding words with different meanings (paronomasia)
  5. play on words which, when pronounced, sound like the thing they name (onomatopoeia)
  6. special opening and close (inclusive)
- F. There are several types of poetry in the Old Testament. Some are topic related and some are form related.
1. dedication song - Num. 21:17-18
  2. work songs – (alluded to but not recorded in Jdgs. 9:27); Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33
  3. ballads – Num. 21:27-30; Isa. 23:16
  4. drinking songs – negative, Isa. 5:11-13; Amos 6:4-7 and positive, Isa. 22:13
  5. love poems – Song of Songs, wedding riddle - Jdgs. 14:10-18, wedding song - Ps. 45
  6. laments/dirge – (alluded to but not recorded in II Sam. 1:17 and II Chr. 35:25)  
II Sam. 3:33; Ps. 27, 28; Jer. 9:17-22; Lam.; Ezek. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; Nah. 3:15-19
  7. war songs – Gen. 4:23-24; Exod. 15:1-18,20; Num. 10:35-36; 21:14-15; Josh. 10:13; Jdgs. 5:1-31; 11:34; I Sam. 18:6; II Sam. 1:18; Isa. 47:1-15; 37:21
  8. special benedictions or blessing of leader – Gen. 49; Num. 6:24-26; Deut. 32; II Sam. 23:1-7
  9. magical texts – Balaam, Num. 24:3-9
  10. sacred poems – Psalms
  11. acrostic poems – Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff and Lamentations 1-4
  12. curses – Num. 21:22-30
  13. taunt poems – Isa. 14:1-22; 47:1-15; Ezek. 28:1-23
  14. a book of war poems (Jashar) – Num. 21:14-15; Josh. 10:12-13; II Sam. 1:18

#### IV. GUIDELINE TO INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

- A. Look for the central truth of the stanza or strophe (this is like a paragraph in prose.) The RSV was the first modern translation to identify poetry by stanzas. Compare modern translations for helpful insights.
- B. Identify the figurative language and express it in prose. Remember this type of literature is very compact, much is left for the reader to fill in.
- C. Be sure to relate the longer issue oriented poems to their literary context (often the whole book) and historical setting.
- D. Judges 4 and 5 are very helpful in seeing how poetry expresses history. Judges 4 is prose and Judges 5 is poetry of the same event (also compare Exodus 14 & 15).
- E. Attempt to identify the type of parallelism involved, whether synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic. This is very important.

## APPENDIX TWO

### INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

#### I. INTRODUCTION

##### A. Opening Statements

1. The believing community does not agree on how to interpret prophecy. Other truths have been established as to an orthodox position throughout the centuries, but not this one.
2. There are several well defined stages of OT prophecy
  - a. premonarchial (before King Saul)
    - 1) individuals called prophets
      - (a) Abraham – Gen. 20:7
      - (b) Moses – Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 18:15; 34:10
      - (c) Aaron – Exod. 7:1 (spokesman for Moses)
      - (d) Miriam – Exod. 15:20
      - (e) Medad and Eldad – Num. 11:24-30
      - (f) Deborah – Jdgs. 4:4
      - (g) unnamed – Jdgs. 6:7-10
      - (h) Samuel – I Sam. 3:20
    - 2) references to prophets as a group - Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22
    - 3) prophetic groups or guilds – I Sam. 10:5-13; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35,41; 22:6,10-13; II Kgs. 2:3,7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1, etc.
    - 4) Messiah called prophet – Deut. 18:15-18
  - b. non-writing monarchial prophets (they address the king)
    - 1) Gad – I Sam. 7:2; 12:25; II Sam. 24:11; I Chron. 29:29
    - 2) Nathan – II Sam. 7:2; 12:25; I Kgs. 1:22
    - 3) Ahijah – I Kgs. 11:29
    - 4) Jehu – I Kgs. 16:1,7,12
    - 5) unnamed – I Kgs. 18:4,13; 20:13,22
    - 6) Elijah – I Kgs. 18; II Kgs. 2
    - 7) Milcaiah – I Kgs. 22
    - 8) Elisha – II Kgs. 2:8,13
  - c. classical writing prophets (they address the nation as well as the king):  
Isaiah—Malachi (except Daniel)

##### B. Biblical Terms

1. *ro'eh* = seer, I Sam. 9:9. This reference shows the transition to the term *Nabi*, which means “prophet” and comes from the root, “to call.” *Ro'eh* is from the general Hebrew term “to see.” This person understood God’s ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God’s will in a matter.
2. *hozeh* = seer, II Sam. 24:11. It is basically a synonym of *ro'eh*. It is from a rarer Hebrew term “to see in a vision.” The PARTICIPLE form is used most often to refer to prophets.
3. *nabi'* = prophet, cognate of Akkadian VERB *nabu* = “to call” and Arabic *naba'a* = “to announce.” This is the most common OT term to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but “to call” at present seems the best

- option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH's description of Moses' relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (cf. Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4).
4. All three terms are used of the prophet's office in I Chr. 29:29; Samuel – *Ro'eh*; Nathan – *Nabi*'; and Gad – *Hozeh*.
  5. The phrase '*ish ha – 'elohim*, "man of God," is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of "prophet."
  6. The word "prophet" is Greek in origin. It comes from (1) *pro* = "before" or "for"; (2) *phemi* = "to speak."

## II. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

- A. The term "prophecy" had a wider semantic field in Hebrew than in English. The Jews labeled the history books of Joshua through Kings (except Ruth) "the former prophets." Both Abraham (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:5) and Moses (Deut. 18:18) are designated as prophets (also Miriam, Exod. 15:20). Therefore, beware of an assumed English definition!
- B. "Propheticism may legitimately be defined as that understanding of history which accepts meaning only in terms of divine concern, divine purpose, divine participation" (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 896).
- C. "The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a covenant mediator who delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present" ("Prophets and Prophecy," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 13, p. 1152).

## III. PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Prophecy is a way for God to speak to His people, providing guidance in their current setting and hope in His control of their lives and world events. Their message was basically corporate. It is meant to rebuke, encourage, engender faith and repentance, and inform God's people about Himself and His plans. They hold God's people to fidelity to God's Covenants. Often it is used to clearly reveal God's choice of a spokesman (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20-22). This, taken ultimately, would refer to the Messiah.
- B. Often, the prophet took a historical or theological crisis of his day and projected it into an eschatological setting. This end-time view of history (teleological) is unique to Israel and her sense of divine election and covenant promises.
- C. The office of prophet seems to balance (Jer. 18:18) and supplant the office of High Priest as a way of knowing God's will. The Urim and Thummim transcend into a verbal message from God's spokesman. The office of prophet seems to also have passed away in Israel after Malachi (or the writing of Chronicles). It does not appear until 400 years later with John the Baptist. It is uncertain how the New Testament gift of "prophecy" relates to the OT. New Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 14:29,32,37; 15:32; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; Eph. 4:11) are not revealers of new revelation, but forth-tellers and fore-tellers of God's will in recurrent situations.
- D. Prophecy is not exclusively or primarily predictive in nature. Prediction is one way to confirm his office and his message, but it must be noted ". . . less than 2% of OT prophecy is



Messianic. Less than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant Age. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come” (Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 166).

- E. Prophets represent God to the people, while Priests represent the people to God. This is a general statement. There are exceptions like Habakkuk, who addresses questions to God.
- F. One reason it is difficult to understand the prophets is because we do not know how their books were structured. They are not chronological. They seem to be thematic, but not always the way one would expect. Often there is no obvious historical setting, time-frame, or clear division between oracles. It is difficult (1) to read the books through in one sitting; (2) to outline them by topic; and (3) to ascertain the central truth or authorial intent in each oracle.

#### IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

- A. In the Old Testament there seems to be a development of the concept of “prophet” and “prophecy.” In early Israel there developed a fellowship of prophets, led by a strong charismatic leader such as Elijah or Elisha. Sometimes the phrase “the sons of the prophets” was used to designate this group (II Kgs. 2). The prophets at times were characterized by forms of ecstasy (I Sam. 10:10-13; 19:18-24).
- B. However, this period passed rapidly into the time of individual prophets. There were those prophets (both true and false) who identified with the King, and lived at the palace (Gad, Nathan). Also, there were those who were independent, sometimes totally unconnected with the status quo of Israelite society (Amos, Micah). They are both male and female (II Kgs. 22:14).
- C. The prophet was often a revealer of the future, conditioned on a person’s or a people’s immediate response. Often the prophet’s task was to unfold God’s universal plan for His creation which is not affected by human response. This universal eschatological plan is unique among the prophets of Israel in the Ancient Near East. Prediction and Covenant fidelity are twin foci of the prophetic messages (cf. Fee and Stuart, p. 150). This implies that the prophets were primarily corporate in focus. They usually, but not exclusively, address the nation of Israel.
- D. Most prophetic material was presented orally. It was later combined by means of theme or chronology, or other patterns of Near Eastern literature, which are lost to us. Because it was oral, it is not as structured as written prose. This makes the books difficult to read straight through and difficult to understand without a specific historical setting.
- E. The prophets use several patterns to convey their messages
  1. Court scene – God takes His people to court; often it is a divorce case where YHWH rejects his wife (Israel) for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 4; Micah 6).
  2. Funeral dirge – the special meter of this type of message and its characteristic “woe” sets it apart as a special form (Isaiah 5; Habakkuk 2).
  3. Covenant blessing pronouncement – the conditional nature of the Covenant is emphasized and the consequences, both positively and negatively, are spelled out for the future (Deuteronomy 27-29).

## V. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR VERIFICATION OF A TRUE PROPHET

- A. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (predictions/signs are linked to monotheistic purity)
- B. Deuteronomy 18:9-22 (false prophets/true prophets)
- C. Both men and women are called and designated as prophets or prophetesses
  - 1. Miriam – Exodus 15
  - 2. Deborah – Judges 4:4-6
  - 3. Huldah – II Kings 22:14-20; II Chronicles 34:22-28
- D. In the surrounding cultures prophets were verified by means of divination. In Israel they were verified by
  - 1. a theological test – the use of the name of YHWH
  - 2. a historical test – accurate predictions

## VI. HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- A. Find the intent of the original prophet (editor) by noting the historical setting and the literary context of each oracle. Usually it will involve Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant in some way.
- B. Read and interpret the whole oracle, not just a part; outline it as to content. See how it relates to surrounding oracles. Try to outline the whole book (by literary units and to paragraph level).
- C. Assume a literal interpretation of the passage until something in the text itself points you to figurative usage; then attempt to put the figurative language into prose.
- D. Analyze symbolic action in light of historical setting and parallel passages. Be sure to remember that this is Ancient Near Eastern literature, not western or modern literature.
- E. Treat predictions with care
  - 1. Are they exclusively for the author's day?
  - 2. Were they subsequently fulfilled in Israel's history?
  - 3. Are they yet future events?
  - 4. Do they have a contemporary fulfillment and yet a future fulfillment?
  - 5. Allow the authors of the Bible, not modern authors, to guide your answers.
- F. Special concerns
  - 1. Is the prediction qualified by conditional response?
  - 2. Is it certain to whom the prophecy is addressed (and why)?
  - 3. Is there a possibility both biblically and/or historically for multiple fulfillments?
  - 4. The NT authors under inspiration were able to see the Messiah in many places in the OT that are not obvious to us. They seem to use typology or word play. Since we are not inspired, we best leave this approach to them.

## VII. HELPFUL BOOKS

- A. *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* by Carl E. Armerding and W. Ward Gasque
- B. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- C. *My Servants the Prophets* by Edward J. Young
- D. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* by D. Brent Sandy
- E. *Cracking the Old Testament Code*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr.

## APPENDIX THREE

### A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY

A Brief Historical Survey of the Powers of Mesopotamia (using dates based primarily on John Bright's *A History of Israel*, p. 462ff):

A. Assyrian Empire (Gen. 10:11):

1. religion and culture were greatly influenced by the Sumerian/Babylonian Empire.
2. tentative list of rulers and approximate dates:
  - a. 1354-1318 Asshur-Uballit I:
    - (1) conquered the Hittite city of Carchemish.
    - (2) began to remove Hittite influence and allowed Assyria to develop.
  - b. 1297-1266 Adad Nirari I (powerful king).
  - c. 1265-1235 Shalmaneser I (powerful king).
  - d. 1234-1197 Tukulti-Ninurta I
    - first conquest of Babylonian empire to the south.
  - e. 1118-1078 Tiglath-Pileser I
    - Assyria becomes a major power in Mesopotamia.
  - f. 1012- 972 Ashur-Rabi II
  - g. 972- 967 Ashur-Resh-Isui II.
  - h. 966- 934 Tiglath-Pileser II.
  - i. 934- 912 Ashur-Dan II.
  - j. 912- 890 Adad-Nirari II.
  - k. 890- 884 Tukulti-Ninurta II.
  - l. 890- 859 Asshur-Nasir-Apal II.
  - m. 859- 824 Shalmaneser III.
    - Battle of Qarqar in 853
  - n. 824- 811 Shamashi-Adad V.
  - o. 811- 783 Adad-Nirari III.
  - p. 781- 772 Shalmaneser IV.
  - q. 772- 754 Ashur-Dan III.
  - r. 754- 745 Ashur-Nirari V.
  - s. 745- 727 Tiglath-Pileser III:
    - (1) called by his Babylonian throne name, Pul, in II Kgs. 15:19
    - (2) very powerful king
    - (3) started the policy of deporting conquered peoples
    - (4) in 735 B.C. there was the formation of the “Syro-Ephramatic League,” which was an attempt to unify all the available military resources of the trans-Jordan nations from the head waters of the Euphrates to Egypt for the purpose of neutralizing the rising military power of Assyria. King Ahaz of Judah refuses to join and is invaded by Israel and Syria. He wrote to Tiglath-Pileser III for help against the advice of Isaiah (cf Isa. 7-12).
    - (5) in 732 Tiglath-Pileser III invades and conquers Syria and Israel and places a vassal king on the throne of Israel, Hoshea (732-722 B.C.). Thousands of Jews were exiled to Media (cf. II Kgs. 15-16).

- t. 727- 722 Shalmaneser V.
  - Hoshea forms an alliance with Egypt and is invaded by Assyria (cf. II Kgs. 17).
- u. 722- 705 Sargon II:
  - (1) after a three year siege, started by Shalmaneser V, his general and successor Sargon II, conquers the capital of Israel, Samaria. Over 27,000 are deported to Media.
  - (2) the Hittite empire is also conquered.
  - (3) in 714-711 another coalition of trans-Jordan nations and Egypt rebelled against Assyria. This coalition is known as “the Ashdod Rebellion.” Even Hezekiah of Judah originally was involved. Assyria invaded and destroyed several Philistine cities.
- v. 705- 681 Sennacherib:
  - (1) in 705 another coalition of trans-Jordan nations and Egypt rebelled after the death of his father, Sargon II. Hezekiah fully supported this rebellion. Sennacherib invaded in 701. The rebellion was crushed but Jerusalem was spared by an act of God (cf. Isa. 36-39 and II Kgs. 18-19.)
  - (2) Sennacherib also put down rebellions in Elam and Babylon.
- w. 681- 669 Esarhaddon:
  - (1) first Assyrian ruler to attack and conquer Egypt.
  - (2) he had great sympathy for Babylon and rebuilt its capital city.
- x. 669- 663 Assurbanipal:
  - (1) also called Osnappar in Ezra 4:10
  - (2) his brother Shamash-shum-ukin was made king of Babylon. This brought several years of peace between Assyria and Babylon but there was an undercurrent of independence which broke out in 652, led by his brother.
  - (3) fall of Thebes, 663
  - (4) defeat of Elam, 653, 645
- y. 633- 629 Asshur-Etil-Ilani.
- z. 629- 612 Sin-Shar-Ishkun.
- a,a. 612- 609 Asshur-Uballit II:
  - enthroned king in exile in Haran after the fall of Asshur in 614 and Nineveh in 612.

B. Neo-Babylon Empire:

- 1. 703- ? Merodach-Baladan:
  - started several revolts against Assyrian rule.
- 2. 652 Shamash-Shum-Ukin:
  - (a) Esarhaddon’s son and Assurbanipal's brother.
  - (b) he started a revolt against Assyria but was defeated.
- 3. 626- 605 Nabopolassar:
  - a. he was the first monarch of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.
  - b. he attacked Assyria from the south while Cyaxares of Media attacked from the northeast.
  - c. the old Assyrian capital of Asshur fell in 614 and the powerful new capital of Nineveh fell in 612
  - d. the remnant of the Assyrian army retreated to Haran. They even installed a king
  - e. in 608 Pharaoh Necho II ( cf. II Kgs. 23:29) marched north to help the remnant of the Assyrian army for the purpose of forming a buffer zone against the rising power of Babylon. Josiah, the godly king of Judah (cf. II Kgs. 23), opposed the movement

of the Egyptian army through Palestine. There was a minor skirmish at Megiddo. Josiah was wounded and died (II Kgs. 23:29-30). His son, Jehoahaz, was made king. Pharaoh Necho II arrived too late to stop the destruction of the Assyrian forces at Haran. He engaged the Babylonian forces commanded by the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar II and was soundly defeated in 605 at Carchemish on the Euphrates.

On his way back to Egypt he stopped at Jerusalem and sacked the city. He replaced and deported Jehoahaz after only three months. He put another son of Josiah on the throne, Jehoiakim (cf. II Kgs. 23:31-35).

- f. Nebuchadnezzar II chased the Egyptian army south through Palestine but he received word of this father's death and returned to Babylon.

Later the same year he returned to Palestine. He left Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah but exiled several thousand of the leading citizens and several members of the royal family. Daniel and his friends were part of this deportation.

4. 605-562 Nebuchadnezzar II:
  - a. from 597-538 Babylon in complete control of Palestine.
  - b. in 597 another deportation from Jerusalem occurred because of Jehoiakim's alliance with Egypt (II Kgs. 24). He died before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar II. His son Jehoiachin was only king for three months until he was exiled to Babylon. Ten thousand citizens, including Ezekiel, were resettled close to the city of Babylon by the Canal Kebar.
  - c. in 586, after continued flirtation with Egypt, the city of Jerusalem was completely destroyed (II Kgs. 25) and a mass deportation occurred. Zedekiah, who replaced Jehoiachin, was exiled and Gedaliah was appointed governor.
  - d. Gedaliah was killed by Jewish renegade military forces. These forces fled to Egypt and forced Jeremiah to go with them. Nebuchadnezzar invaded a fourth time (605, 596, 586, 582) and deported all remaining Jews that he could find.
5. 562-560 Evil-Merodach, also known as Amel-Marduk
  - he released Jehoiakim from prison but he had to remain in Babylon (cf. II Kgs. 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31).
6. 560-556 Neriglissar.
  - he was Nebuchadnezzar's general who destroyed Jerusalem
7. 556- Labaski-Marduk
  - he was Neriglissar's son but was assassinated after only nine months
8. 556-539 Nabonidus:
  - (a) Nabonidus was not related to the royal house so he married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar II
  - (b) spent most of the time building a temple to the moon god *Sin* in Tema. He was the son of the high priestess of this goddess. This earned him the enmity of the priests of Marduk, chief god of Babylon.
  - (c) spent most of his time trying to put down revolts and stabilize the kingdom
  - (d) he moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar, in the capital in Babylon (cf. Dan. 5)
9. ? -539 Belshazzar (co-reign)
  - the City of Babylon fell very quickly to the Medo-Persian Army under Gobryas of Gutium by diverting the waters of the Euphrates and entering the city unopposed. The priests and people of the city saw the Persians as liberators and restorers of Marduk. Gobryas was made Governor of Babylon by Cyrus II. Either Cyrus II or

Gobryas is the “Darius the Mede” of Dan. 5:31 and 6:1. Darius means “Royal One.”

C. Medio-Persian Empire: Survey of the Rise of Cyrus II (Isa. 44:28; 45:1-7):

1. 625-585 Cyaxares was the king of Media who helped Babylon defeat Assyria.
2. 585-550 Astyages was king of Media. Cyrus was his grandson by Mandane.
3. 550-530 Cyrus II of Ansham was a vassal king who revolted.
  - (a) Nabonidus, the Babylonian king, supported Cyrus.
  - (b) Cyrus II dethroned Astyages.
  - (c) Nabonidus, in order to restore a balance of power, made an alliance with:
    - (1) Egypt.
    - (2) Croesus, King of Lydia (Asia Minor).
4. 547- Cyrus II marched against Sardis (capital of Lydia).
5. November 2, 539, Gobryas of Gutium, with Cyrus' army, took Babylon without resistance. Gobryas was made governor of Babylon.
6. 539- in October, Cyrus II “the great” personally entered as liberator. His policy of kindness to national groups reversed years of deportation as a national policy.
7. 538- Jews and others were allowed to return home and rebuild their native temples.
8. 530- Cyrus' son, Cambyses II, succeeded him.
9. 530-522 reign of Cambyses II.
  - added Egyptian empire in 525 to the Medo-Persian Empire.
  - possibly committed suicide.
10. 522-486 Darius I came to rule.
  - (a) he was not of the royal line but a military general.
  - (b) he organized the Persian Empire using Cyrus' plans for Satraps (cf Ezra 1-6; Haggai; Zechariah).
  - (c) he set up coinage like Lydia.
11. 486-465 reign of Xerxes I:
  - (a) put down Egyptian revolt.
  - (b) intended to invade Greece and fulfill Persian dream but was defeated in the battle of Thermopylae in 480 and Salamis in 479.
  - (c) Esther's husband who is called Ahasuerus in the Bible was assassinated in 465.
12. 465-424 Artaxerxes I reigned (cf. Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah; Malachi):
  - (a) Greeks continued to advance until confronted with the Peloponnesian Civil Wars.
  - (b) Greece divides (Athenian - Peloponnesian).
  - (c) Greek civil wars lasted about 20 years.
  - (d) during this period the Jewish community is strengthened.
13. 423-404 Darius II reigned.
14. 404-358 Artaxerxes II reigned.
15. 358-338 Artaxerxes III reigned.
16. 338-336 Arses reigned.
17. 336-331 Darius III reigned.

D. Survey of Egypt:

1. Hyksos (Shepherd Kings - Semitic rulers)-1720/10-1550 B.C.
2. 18th Dynasty (1570-1310 B.C.)
  - a. 1570-1546 Amosis
  - b. 1546-1525 Amenophis I (Amenhotep I).
  - c. 1525-1494 Thutmose I
  - d. ? Thutmose II

- e.           ?           Hatshepsut
- f.   1490-1435       Thutmosis III
- g.   1435-1414       Amenophis II.
- h.   1414-1406       Thutmosis IV
- i.   1406-1370       Amenophis III
- j.   1370-1353       Amenophis IV (Akhenaten)
- k.           ?           Smenkhare
- l.           ?           Tutankhamun
- m.           ?           Ay
- n.   1340-1310       Haremhab
- 3.   19th Dynasty (1310-1200 B.C.):
  - a.           ?           Rameses I
  - b.   1309-1290       Seti I
  - c.   1290-1224       Ramesses (Rameses II)
  - d.   1224-1216       Marniptah (Merenptah)
  - e.           ?           Amenmesses
  - f.           ?           Seti II
  - g.           ?           Siptah
  - h.           ?           Tewosret
- 4.   20th Dynasty (1180-1065 B.C.):
  - a.   1175-1144       Rameses III
  - b.   1144-1065       Rameses IV - XI
- 5.   21st Dynasty (1065-935 B.C.):
  - a.           ?           Smendes
  - b.           ?           Herihor
- 6.   22nd Dynasty (935-725 B.C. - Libyan):
  - a.   935-914       Shishak (Shosenk I or Sheshong I)
  - b.   914-874       Osorkon I
  - c.           ?           Osorkon II
  - d.           ?           Shoshnek II
- 7.   23rd Dynasty (759-715 B.C. - Libyan)
- 8.   24th Dynasty (725-709 B.C.)
- 9.   25th Dynasty (716/15-663 B.C. - Ethiopian/Nubian):
  - a.   710/09-696/95   Shabako (Shabaku)
  - b.   696/95-685/84   Shebteko (Shebitku)
  - c.   690/89, 685/84-  
                        664   Tirhakah (Taharqa)
  - d.           ?           Tantamun
- 10.   26th Dynasty (663-525 B.C. - Saitic):
  - a.   663-609   Psammetichus I (Psamtik)
  - b.   609-593   Neco II (Necho)
  - c.   593-588   Psammetichus II (Psamtik)
  - d.   588-569   Apries (Hophra)
  - e.   569-525   Amasis
  - f.           ?   Psammetichus III (Psamtik)
- 11.   27th Dynasty (525-401 B.C. - Persian):
  - a.   530-522   Cambyses II (Cyrus II's son)
  - b.   522-486   Darius I
  - c.   486-465   Xerxes I



- d. 465-424 Artaxerxes I
- e. 423-404 Darius II

\*for a differing chronology see *Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 p. 231.

E. Survey of Greece:

1. 359-336 Philip II of Macedon:
  - a. built up Greece.
  - b. assassinated in 336.
2. 336-323 Alexander II "the Great" (Philip's son):
  - a. routed Darius II, the Persian king, at the battle of Issus.
  - b. died in 323 in Babylon of a fever at 33/32 yrs of age.
  - c. Alexander's generals divided his empire at his death:
    - (1) Cassander - Macedonia and Greece
    - (2) Lysimachus - Thrace
    - (3) Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
    - (4) Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine
    - (5) Antigonus - Asia Minor (He did not last long)
3. Seleucids vs. Ptolemies for control of Palestine
  - a. Syria (Seleucid Rulers):
    - (1) 312-280 Seleucus I
    - (2) 280-261 Antiochus I Soter
    - (3) 261-246 Antiochus II Theus
    - (4) 246-226 Seleucus II Callinicus
    - (5) 226-223 Seleucus III Ceraunus
    - (6) 223-187 Antiochus III the Great
    - (7) 187-175 Seleucus IV Philopator
    - (8) 175-163 Antiochus IV Epiphanes
    - (9) 163-162 Antiochus V
    - (10) 162-150 Demetrius I
  - b. Egyptian (Ptolemaic) Rulers:
    - (1) 327-285 Ptolemy I Soter
    - (2) 285-246 Ptolemy II Philadelphus
    - (3) 246-221 Ptolemy III Euergetes
    - (4) 221-203 Ptolemy IV Philopator
    - (5) 203-181 Ptolemy V Epiphanes
    - (6) 181-146 Ptolemy VI Philometor
  - c. Brief Survey:
    - (1) 301- Palestine under Ptolemy rule for years
    - (2) 175-163 Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the 8th Seleucid ruler, wanted to Hellenize Jews by force, if necessary:
      - a) constructed gymnasiums.
      - b) constructed pagan altars of Zeus Olympius in the Temple

# **APPENDIX FOUR**

## **CHARTS**

**OLD TESTAMENT TIMELINE**  
**(on following page)**



## KINGS AND EVENTS OF THE BABYLONIAN, PERSIAN, AND GREEK DYNASTIES

- 612 B.C. Nineveh falls to neo-Babylonian army (Nebuchadnezzar)
- 608 Pharaoh Necho II marched to Carchemesh to halt expansion of neo-Babylonian power  
Josiah, King of Judah, tries to stop him  
Death of Josiah and assumption of throne by his son, Jehoahaz  
Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, replaced Jehoahaz on the authority of Pharaoh Necho II within 3 months  
Palestine and Syria under Egyptian rule  
Josiah's reforms dissipate
- 605 Nabopolassar sends troops to fight remaining Assyrian army and the Egyptians at Carchemesh  
Nebuchadnezzar chased them all the way to the plains of Palestine  
Nebuchadnezzar got word of the death of his father (Nabopolassar) so he returned to Babylon to receive the crown  
On the way back he takes Daniel and other members of the royal family into exile
- 605 - 538 Babylon in control of Palestine, 597; 10,000 exiled to Babylon
- 586 Jerusalem and the temple destroyed and large deportation
- 582 Because Jewish guerilla fighters killed Gedaliah another last large deportation occurred

### SUCCESSORS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

- 562 - 560 Evil-Merodach released Jehoiakim (true Messianic line) from custody
- 560 - 556 Neriglissar
- 556 Labaski-Marduk reigned
- 556 - 539 Nabonidus:  
Spent most of the time building a temple to the moon god, *Sin*. This earned enmity of the priests of Marduk.  
Spent the rest of his time trying to put down revolts and stabilize the kingdom.  
He moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar

Belshazzar:

Spent most of his time trying to restore order.

Babylonia's great threat was Media.

### **Rise of Cyrus**

- 585 - 550      Astyages was king of Media (Cyrus II was his grandson by Mandane)
- 550              Cyrus II, a vassal king, revolted
- Nabonidus, to restore balance of power, made alliances with:
1. Egypt
  2. Crecus, King of Lydia
- 547              Cyrus marched against Sardis (capital Lydia) and captured all of Asia Minor
- 539              Gobiyas took Babylon without resistance (Dan. 5; Belshazzar Nabonidus' co-regent; also Gobiyas possibly Darius the Mede, Dan. 5:31).
- Oct. 11, 539    Cyrus entered as liberator from Nabonidus' moon goddess, *Zin*

### **Cyrus' Successors**

- 530              Cyrus' son succeeded him (Cambyses II)
- 530 - 522        Reign of Cambyses (Elephantine Papyri)
- Added Egypt in 525 to the Medo-Persian Empire
- 522 - 486        Darius I came to rule
- He organized the Persian Empire along Cyrus' plan of satraps
- He set up coinage like Lydia's
- 486 - 465        Xerxes I (Esther)
- Put down Egyptian revolt
- Intended to invade Greece, but was defeated in the Battle of Thermoply in 480
- Xerxes I was assassinated in 465
- 480              Battle of Thermoply
- 465 - 424        Artaxerxes I Longimanus (Ezra 7-10, Nehemiah, and Malachi)
- Greeks continued to advance until confronted with Peloponisian Wars
- Wars lasted about 20 years
- During this period the Jewish community is reconstructed

423 - 404	Darius II
	Authorized the feast of unleavened bread in the Elephantine Temple
404 - 358	Artaxerxes II
358 - 338	Artaxerxes III
338 - 336	Arses
336 - 331	Darius III

## GREECE

359 - 336	Philip II of Macedon built up Greece
	He was assassinated in 336
336 - 323	Alexander the Great (Philip's son)
	Routed Darius II at battle of ISUS
	He died in 323 in Babylon of a fever after conquering the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East
	Alexander's generals divided his empire at his death:
	1. Cassander - Macedonia and Greece
	2. Lysimicus - Thrace
	3. Selects I - Syria and Babylon
	4. Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine
	5. Antigonos - small part of Asia Minor
	<b>Seleucids vs. Ptolemies</b>
301	Palestine was under Ptolemy's rule for 100 years
175 - 163	Antiochus Epiphanes
	Wanted to Hellenize Jews, constructed gymnasium
	Constructed pagan altars; priests were mistreated
Dec. 13, 168	Hog was slain on the altar by Antiochus Epiphanies. Some consider this to be the abomination of desolation.
167	Mattathias and sons rebel. Mattathias killed. Judas took control.
	Judas Maccabeaus wages successful guerilla warfare
Dec. 25, 165	Temple rededicated

# RULERS

## BABYLON

## MEDIA

626 - 605	Nabopolassar dies ("Nabu, Protect the Sun") 625 - 585
	Cyrzares
605 - 562	Nebuchadnezzar II ("Nebo, Protect the Boundary") 585 - 550 Astyages
562 - 560	Evil Merodack 550 Cyrus II
556	Labaski Marduk
556 - 539	Nabonidus Belshazzar
539 -	Gobiyas

## MEDO-PERSIAN

550 - 530	Cyrus II (538 Medo-Persian dominate power called Achaemenian Empire)
530 - 522	Cambyses II (Egypt added and Cyprus)
522	Gaumata or Pseudo, Smerdis (reign 6 months)
522 - 486	Darius I (Hystaspes)
486 - 465	Xerxes I (Esther's husband)
465 - 424	Artaxerxes I (Ezra and Nehemiah in Palestine)
423 -	Xerxes II
424 - 404	Darius II Nothus
404 - 359	Artaxerxes II Mnemon
359 - 338	Artaxerxes III Ochus
338 - 336	Arses
336 - 331	Darius III Codomannus

## GREEK

359 - 336 Philip II of Macedon

336 - 323 Alexander the Great

323 - Generals divide Empire

1. Cassander - Macedonia
2. Lysimachus - Syria
3. Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
4. Ptolemy - Egypt
5. Antigonus - Asia Minor (killed in 301 B.C.)

The Ptolemies controlled Palestine, but in 175 - 163 control passed to the Seleucids

175 - 163 Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the eighth Seleucid ruler

\*Dates and names have been mostly taken from *A History of Israel* by John Bright, pp. 461-471.



# KINGS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

JUDAH'S KINGS (I CHR. 3:1-16; MATT. 1:6-11)					ISRAEL'S KINGS				
NAMES & DATES	BRIGH T	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS	NAMES & DATES	BRIGH T	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS
Rehoboam	922-915	933-917	931/30-913	I Kgs. 11:43-12:27; 14:21-31 II Chr. 9:31-12:16	Jeroboam I	922-901	933-912	931/30-910/09	I Kgs. 11:26-40; 12:12-14:20
Abijah (Abijam)	915-914	916-914	913-911/10	I Kgs. 14:31-15:8 II Chr. 11:20,22					
Asa	913-873	913-873	911/10-870/69	I Kgs. 15:8-30; 16:8,10, 23,29; 22:41,43,46 Jer. 41:9	Nadab	901-900	912-911	910/09-909/08	I Kgs. 14:20; 15:25-31
					Baasha	900-877	911-888	909/08-886/85	I Kgs. 15:16-16:7; II Kgs. 9:9 II Chr. 16:1-6 Jer. 41:9
Jehoshaphat	873-849	873-849	870/69-848	I Kgs. 15:24; 22:1-51 II Kgs. 3:1-12; 8:16-19 I Chr. 3:10 II Chr. 17:1-21:1	Elah	877-876	888-887	886/85-885/84	I Kgs. 16:8-14
(Jehoram Co-regent)	----- ---	----- --	853-848	I Kgs. 22:50 II Kgs. 1:17; 8:16; 12:18	Zimri (Army General)	876	887	885/84	I Kgs. 16:9-20 II Kgs. 9:31
Jehoram (Joram)	849-842	849-842	848-841	I Chr. 21:1-20 Matthew 1:8	Omri (Army General)	876-869	887-877	885/84-874/73	I Kgs. 16:15-28 II Kgs. 8:26 Micah 6:16
Ahaziah	842	842	----- ---	II Kgs. 8:24-9:29 II Chr. 22:1-9	Ahab	869-850	876-854	874/73-853	I Kgs. 16:29-22:40
					Ahaziah	850-849	854-853	853-852	I Kgs. 22:40,41,49,51-53 II Chr. 18:1-3,19
Athaliah (Queen)	842-837	842-836	841-835	II Kgs. 8:26; 11:1-20 II Chr. 22:2-23:21	Jehoram (Joram)	849-842	853-842	852-841	II Kgs. 1:17; 3:1-27; 8:16-9:29
Joash (Jehoash)	837-800	836-797	835-796	II Kgs. 11:2-3; 12:1-21 II Chr. 22:11-12; 24:1-27	Jehu (Army General)	842-815	842-815	841-814/13	I Kgs. 19:16-17 II Kgs. 9:1-10:36; 15:12 II Chr. 22:7-9 Hosea 1:4

JUDAH'S KINGS (I CHR. 3:1-16; MATT. 1:6-11) [CON'T.]					ISRAEL'S KINGS (CON'T.)				
NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS	NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS
Amaziah	800-783	797-779	796-767	II Kgs. 12:21; 14:1-22 II Chr. 25:1-28					
(Uzziah Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	791/90-767	II Kgs. 14:21; 15:1-7	Jehoahaz	815-801	814-798	814/13-798	II Kgs. 10:35; 13:1-9
Uzziah (Azariah)	783-742	779-740	767-740/39	II Chr. 26:1-23 Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1 Zechariah 14:5	Jehosah	801-786	798-783	798-782/81	II Kgs. 13:9-13,25 II Chr. 25:17-25 Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1
(Jotham Co-regent)	750-742	----- ---	750-740/39	II Kgs.15:7,32-38	(Jer. II Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	793/92-782/81	II Kgs. 13:13; 14:16,23-29 Hosea 1:1
Jotham	742-735	740-736	740/39-732/31	I Chr. 5:17 II Chr. 26:23-27:9 Isa. 1:1; 7:1 Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1	Jeroboam II	786-746	783-743	782/81-753	Amos 1:1; 7:9-11 II Kgs.15:8-12
(Ahaz Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	744/43-732/31	II Kgs. 15:30-16:20 II Chr. 27:9-28:27	Zechariah	746-745	743	753-752	
Ahaz	735-715	736-728	732/31-716/15	Isa. 1:1; 7:1ff; 14:28; 38:8 Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1	Shallum	745	743	752	II Kgs. 15:10,13-15
(Hezekiah Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	729-716/15	II Kgs. 16:20; 18:1-20,21 II Chr. 28:27-32:33 Prov. 25:1	Menahem	745-738	743-737	752-742/41	II Kgs. 15:14,16-22
Hezekiah	715-687	727-699	716/15-687/86	Isa. 1:1; 36:1-39:8 Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1 Matt. 1:9-10	Pekahiah	738-737	737-736	742/41-740/39	II Kgs. 15:23-26
(Manaseh Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	696/95-687/86	II Kgs. 20:21-21:18; 23:12,26; 24:2	Pekah	737-732	736-730	740/39-732/31	II Kgs. 15:27-31; 16:5 II Chr. 28:6; Isa. 7:1
Manasseh	687/86-642	698-643	687/86-642/41	II Chr. 32:33-33:20 Jer. 15:4ff; II Kgs. 21:18-26	Hoshea	732-724	730-722	732/31-723/22	II Kgs. 17:1-18
Amon	642-640	643-641	642/41-640/39	II Chr. 33:20-25 Jer. 1:2; Zeph. 1:1 I Kgs. 13:2-3	Fall of Samaria to Assyria	724 B.C.	722 B.C.	722 B.C.	

JUDAH'S KINGS (CON'T.)					ISRAEL'S KINGS (CON'T.)				
NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS	NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS
Josiah	610-609	640-609	640/39-609	II Kgs. 21:24; 22:1-23:30 II Chr. 33:25-35:27 Jer. 1:2; Zeph. 1:1 Matt. 1:10-11					
Jehoahaz	609 (3 months)	609	609	II Kgs. 23:30-34 II Chr. 36:1-4					
Jehoiakim	609-598	609-598	609-597	II Kgs. 23:34-24:6,19 II Chr. 36:4-8 Jer. 1:3; 22:18-23; 25:1ff; 26:1ff; 27:1ff; 35:1ff; 36:1ff Dan. 1:1-2					
Jehoiachin	598/97 (3 months)	598	597	II Kgs. 24:6,8-17; 25:27-30 II Chr. 36:8-9 Jer. 52:31; Ezek. 1:2					
Zedekiah	597-586	598-587	597-587	II Kgs. 24:17-25:7 II Chr. 36:10-11 Jer. 1:3; 21:1-7; 24:8-10; 27:1ff; 32:4-5; 34:1-22; 37:1-39:7; 52:1-11					
Fall of Jerusalem to Babylon	586 B.C.	587 B.C.	587 B.C.	Lamentations					

For a good discussion on the problems of dating see E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*.

## APPENDIX FIVE – DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."