

EXPLORING ISAIAH
2005 Class Notes
Tulsa Christian Fellowship

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Preface

The following pages are the class notes for an eight-week course that I taught at Tulsa Christian Fellowship in January/February 2005. The title, *Exploring Isaiah*, describes the purpose of the course, *i.e.*, to “explore” Isaiah, without attempting to cross every “T” and dot every “I.” Hopefully, at the conclusion of the study, the student will know the content of the book and the background of each section, *i.e.*, the general topic of the passage. This is more than a “survey.” The goal of the study is to help the student gain a degree of specific knowledge of the various sections of *Isaiah*.

Some rather strange doctrines, interpretations, and prophetic pronouncements have been drawn from Isaiah by those who have failed to understand the topic of a given section. The most obvious delineation within the book is at the conclusion of Chapter 39. The first thirty-nine chapters have as their focus Jehovah’s judgment on Judah and the pending invasion of Judah by the Assyrians, which finally occurred during the reign of Hezekiah, followed by Hezekiah’s sickness and healing (Chapters 36-39). The last twenty-seven chapters are written prophetically to the Jews exiled in Babylon – an event that began a century after Isaiah’s death.

We have avoided presenting a particular eschatological scenario. Some portions of Isaiah clearly refer to situations beyond the pages of history. Where the text describes something that is beyond “history,” we usually have used the term, “Messianic Kingdom,” assuming that each person will fit that section into his own eschatological view.

A challenge faced by any student of Isaiah is determining which portions are literal descriptions and which are poetry, metaphor, and figure. We have attempted to make those distinctions where there is a key that points toward one conclusion or the other. No claim to perfection is made in these distinctions; our conclusions are open to being challenged. In most such sections, honesty compels us to display shyness about presenting a firm conclusion.

In some sections of Isaiah, the message seems to be in the metaphor, rather than in the interpretation of metaphor. Much like the music of an orchestra, the sound, rather than awareness of the technique employed by the composer impacts the hearer. Defining every term in a metaphor can destroy its impact. The Western mind-set usually has difficulty avoiding the need to define. Proper use of metaphor frequently contradicts that attempt. In the following pages, we probably have erred in over-analyzing some of Isaiah’s metaphors.

The material researched in preparation for the course is listed in the bibliography. Most of the research in the Hebrew and Septuagint is original (with a few exceptions).

On a personal note: my first in-depth encounter with *Isaiah* was in a 1953 summer school course taught by Professor George Mark Elliott, following my freshman year at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary. As I immersed myself in Isaiah that summer, I often was staggered and awed by Jehovah (the term encompasses all three beings of the Godhead). The echoes of that course continue to resound in my spirit. *Isaiah* does not allow me to be cavalier about the being of God, nor to be comfortable with the “dear Jesus who is my buddy” concept of Our Lord. Reverence and biblical fear of God are the product of *Isaiah*. As you study this grand book, may you see God as He truly is – transcendent, holy, and beyond comprehension by our finite human minds - moving immutably toward the accomplishment of His purposes in human history.

James Garrett
2005

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH

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I. THE BOOK OF MINGLED REBUKES AND PROMISES Chapters 1-5

A. Chapter 1: The Great Arraignment

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2. A picture of miseries 1:5-9
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4. The Divine exhortation 1:16-17
5. The Divine invitation 1:18
6. The Divine alternative 1:19-20
7. The harlot city becomes the city of righteousness, a faithful town 1:21-27
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B. Chapters 2-5: The Judgment and Exaltation of Zion

1. Zion of the latter days 2:2-4
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4. The parable of the vineyard and corresponding woes 5:1-30

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B. Chapter 8:1 – 9:7 Announcements of judgments to be followed by redemption.

1. The sign: Maher-shalal-hash-baz 8:1-4
2. The destruction of Judah, mingled with hope 8:5-22
3. The birth and reign of the Prince of Peace 9:1-7

C. Chapter 9:8 – 10:4 Jehovah's chastisement, with a focus on Samaria

D. Chapter 10:5-12:6 The Assyrians will be punished; God's people will be saved

1. The pride and destruction of Assyria 10:5-19
2. A remnant of Israel shall return 10:20-23
3. A word of encouragement to God's people 10:24-27

4. Judah humbled, but the Saviour, King, Messiah, shall come out of the stock of Jesse 10:28-11:16
 - a. The Assyrian invasion will be frustrated 10:28-32
 - b. The proud Assyrians will be cut down 10:33-34
 - c. The Deliver will come from the stock of Jesse 11:1-16
 - (1) His lowly origin V 1
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- A. Chapter 13:1-14:23 The burden of Babylon**
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- B. Chapter 14:24-27 Assyria broken in Judah**
- C. Chapter 14:28-32 The burden of Philistia**
- D. Chapter 15:1-16:14 The burden of Moab**
 1. The devastation of Moab 15:1-9
 2. Mercy offered to Moab 16:1-5
 3. The pride of Moab 16:6-12
 4. The time of visitation 16:13-14
- E. Chapter 17 The burden of Damascus, including prophecies concerning Israel and Judah**
 1. The burden of Damascus 17:1-3
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- F. Chapter 18 Prophecies concerning Ethiopia**
- G. Chapter 19 The burden of Egypt and the glorious return of Jehovah**
 1. A reckoning against Egypt 19:1-17
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- I. Chapter 21:1-10 The burden of the desert of the Sea**
- J. Chapter 21:11-12 The burden of Dumah**
- K. Chapter 21:13-17 The burden of Arabia**

- L. Chapter 22 The burden of the Valley of the Vision**
 - 1. Prophecy against Jerusalem 22:1-14
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 - 1. The fall of Tyre 23:1-14
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- V. THE FIRST BOOK OF GENERAL JUDGMENT Chapters 24-27**
 - A. Chapter 24 Universal Judgment**
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- VI. THE BOOK OF ZION (BOOK OF WOES) Chapters 28-33**
 - A. Chapter 28 Judgment upon Ephriam and Judah**
 - B. Chapter 29 Siege and deliverance of Ariel (the line of God)**
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- VII. THE SECOND BOOK OF GENERAL JUDGMENT Chapters 34 - 35**
 - A. Chapter 34 The judgment of all nations**
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- VIII. THE BOOK OF HEZEKIAH Chapters 36-39**
 - A. Chapters 36-37 Sennacherib's invasion**
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IX. THE BOOK OF COMFORT Chapters 40-66

- A. Chapters 40-48 God's self-description in preparation for Israel's deliverance from Babylon.**
- B. Chapters 49-57 Salvation will come through the Servant of Jehovah**
- C. Chapters 58-66 Promises and warnings**

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH

Part One THE MAN, ISAIAH

NAME: The name, Isaiah, means *Jehovah saves* or *Jehovah is salvation* or *salvation of Jehovah*.

PERSONAL HISTORY: Data on Isaiah's personal history is scanty. His father was a man named, Amoz (not Amos the prophet). Jewish Rabbinic tradition states that Amoz was a brother of king Amaziah. This would make Isaiah a first cousin to king Uzziah, and a grandson of King Joash. If this tradition is correct, Isaiah would have been a member of the royalty.

The possibility that he was of royal blood does fit the status of Isaiah as seen in the book. He had easy access to the king (7:3); he had an intimate relationship with the priest (8:2); he lived in Jerusalem and became the court preacher. Isaiah's messages were to kings, princes, and to people. He was treated with respect by godly kings and derided and disregarded by ungodly kings. He obviously was a man who had the best training that was available in his era. He was superbly endowed with the things that made him fit for the highest tasks.

It is highly probable that Isaiah had contact with three other prophets who were his contemporaries:

- Micah of Moresh, a younger contemporary of Isaiah, prophesied in Judah during the reign of Jotham and possibly longer.
- Amos and Hosea, who prophesied in Israel.

The date of Isaiah's birth and death are uncertain, although they can be set within a particular period. His ministry began at least as early as the date of Uzziah's death (c 735 BC – see Isaiah 6:1) and extended beyond the death of Hezekiah (697 BC). II Chronicles 32:32 states that the rest of the acts of Hezekiah were written in the vision of Isaiah. This statement implies that Isaiah survived Hezekiah and wrote of his acts up to the time of Hezekiah's death. Thus, Isaiah's public ministry would have covered at least forty-one years (some contend for fifty years, placing his death later during Manasseh's reign).

Jewish Talmudic tradition, which was accepted as authentic by many early Church Fathers, states that because Isaiah resisted Manasseh's idolatrous decrees, Manasseh had Isaiah killed. The tradition states that Manasseh had Isaiah fastened between two planks and then sawn asunder, thus suffering a horrible death. This fits the description of Manasseh in the biblical record (II Kings 21:16, etc.). The following are the dominant sources for this tradition:

1. The Jewish Mishna (Jewish oral law and tradition – generally regarded as being developed from the Fifth Century BC to the Second Century AD) states that Manasseh slew Isaiah.
2. *The Ascension of Isaiah*, a Second Century Jewish apocalypse, declares Isaiah's martyrdom.

3. The Christian apologist, Justin Martyr (c150 AD), in a controversial dialogue with Trypho the Jew, wrote, *whom ye sawed asunder with a wooden saw*, referring to the death of Isaiah.
4. Epiphanius (Fourth Century AD), in his so called *Lives of the Prophets*, declares Isaiah's martyrdom at the hands of Manasseh.
5. Hebrews 11:37 may refer to Isaiah's martyrdom.

FAMILY SITUATION: He was married and had two sons, Shear-jashub (*a remnant shall return*) and Maher-shalal-has-baz (*hastening to the spoil, hurrying to the prey*). His wife's name is not given in the book, but she is described as a prophetess (8:3). One Jewish tradition, based upon a false interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, stated that he was married twice.

ISAIAH'S CALL TO PROPHETIC MINISTRY: The record of Isaiah's call to ministry is one of the most complete of any of the prophets (Chapter 6).

- The call came in the year that King Uzziah died (6:1)
- The vision of the Thrice Holy God is consistent with the Trinitarian revelation of the New Testament (6:2-4)
- Isaiah willingly responded to the call and commission (6:5-8), even though he knew that the task would be fruitless (6:9-13)

LITERARY WORK: Many of the books of the Bible were authored by those who intentionally and purposely composed a unified document. Some, such as Paul's epistles, probably were written at a single sitting. Others, such as the Gospel of Luke and Acts, were researched and written as a project (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2). Isaiah, on the other hand, is more akin to a journal or a collection of articles written at different times under various circumstances. The Book of Isaiah consists of a collection of prophetic words delivered by the prophet and narratives sections describing events of the prophet's life.

Because Isaiah lived several years after the last recorded prophecy he may be both the author and the compiler of the documents. However, it also is possible that he had a secretary, as did Jeremiah.¹

One of the issues that must be faced when studying Isaiah is the question of chronology. Which prophecies in the collection are in chronological order and which ones, if any, are grouped topically? This becomes especially relevant when the chronological placement of Chapter Six is considered. Chapter Six contains the record of Isaiah's call, but five prophetic chapters precede Chapter Six. Why is this so? Chronologically, does Chapter Six precede Chapter One? This question must be faced when exegeting that portion of the book.

From a literary standpoint, no Hebrew author is superior to Isaiah; for that matter, no one is even a rival. His style marks the climax of Hebrew literary art. Here are some of the characteristics

¹ Baruch was Jeremiah's amanuensis who wrote down Jeremiah's prophecies and compiled these (as well as probably composing the narrative of Jeremiah's experiences) into the Book of Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 36:4ff; etc.)

that make Isaiah the masterpiece of Hebrew literature (many of these qualities are not reproducible in the English rendering – they are evident in Hebrew).

1. His masterful epigrams and metaphors.
 - a. flood (8:8; 10:22; 28:17; 30:28)
 - b. storm (28:17; 30:30)
 - c. sound (30:30)
 - d. new moons (1:13)
 - e. cords (5:18)
 - f. wine (5:22)
 - g. bed and covering (28:20)
 - h. bridle (30:28)
2. Interrogation and dialogue (6:8; 10:8-9)
3. Antithesis and alliteration (1:18; 3:24; 17:10, 12)
4. Hyperbole and parable (2:7; 5:1-7; 28:23-29)
5. Puns and play upon words [paronomasia] (5:7; 7:9)
6. Richness of vocabulary and synonyms
 - a. Ezekiel uses 1,535 words
 - b. Jeremiah uses 1,653 words
 - c. The various psalmists altogether use 2,170 words
 - d. Isaiah uses 2,186 words
7. Isaiah was an orator
8. Isaiah was a poet
 - a. His messages frequently are recorded in a rhythmic and poetic form (12:1-6; 25:1-5; 26:1-12; 38:10-20; 42:1-4; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; 60-62; 66:5-24).
 - b. In several instances, he composed his message in elegiac rhythm [the form used for elegies and lyric poems, consisting of dactylic hexameter couplets, the second line having only an accented syllable in the third and sixth feet]
 - The taunting poem on the King of Babylon 14:4-23
 - The taunting poem on Sennacherib 37:22-29

Isaiah wrote other books which have not been preserved. Scripture informs us ((II Chronicles 26:22; 32:32) that He wrote a life of Uzziah and a book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. He is quoted in the New Testament more than any other prophet.

Part Two

THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF ISAIAH

One cannot understand Isaiah without a thorough knowledge of the period described in II Kings 15-20, and II Chronicles 26-32. Supplementary historical and geographical information from extra biblical sources also must be consulted to flesh out the Scriptural data. Isaiah's prophecies are God's response to the cultural climate and the historical events of Isaiah's period.

Isaiah's ministry took place about midway between the Exodus and the birth of Christ.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

1447 B.C	The Exodus
1100-1050 BC	Samuel
c869-853 BC	Elijah & Elisha
845 BC	Obadiah
835-817 BC	Joel
c790-780 BC	Jonah
760 BC	Amos*
c755-722 BC	Hosea*
<u>740-c698 BC</u>	<u>Isaiah*</u>
735-698 BC	Micah*
640 BC	Nahum
625 BC	Zephaniah
608 BC	Habakkuk
628-585 BC	Jeremiah
593-571 BC	Ezekiel
602-534 BC	Daniel
520 BC	Haggai
520 BC	Zechariah
430 BC	Malachi

* Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, have been dubbed, *The Grand Quartet of Hebrew Prophecy*.

The kings who reigned in Judah, during Isaiah's lifetime.

787 – 735 BC Uzziah (Azariah), reigned 52 years. In the early years of his reign, he was co-regent with his father, Amaziah. Uzziah's gravestone has been discovered and is in the Russian Archeology Museum on the Mt. of Olives.

749 – 734 BC Jotham reigned 16 years, most of these were as co-regent with his father, who because of leprosy was not able to fulfill his kingly duties. A seal has been found in excavations at Ezion-geber, inscribed, "Belonging to Jotham."

741-726 BC Ahaz reigned 16 years, half of these as co-regent with his father, Jotham. The II Kings 16:6-8 account of Ahaz' paying tribute to Tiglath-pileasar (and the Isaiah 7 prophecy) is confirmed by an inscription left by Tiglath-pileasar, describing his activity in

Judah and Ahaz' tribute. Also, a seal has been found that is inscribed, "Official of Ahaz."

726-697 BC Hezekiah reigned 29 years. Many significant archaeological discoveries, both in Jerusalem and in surrounding nations, confirm the biblical account of Hezekiah's reign.

697-642 BC Manasseh reigned 55 years. An inscription of Essar-haddon, the Assyrian king (681-688 BC), speaks of the reign of Manasseh and the tribute he was compelled to pay to the Assyrian monarch.

A SUMMARY HISTORY OF JUDAH DURING ISAIAH'S LIFETIME

Isaiah began his ministry in the final days of Uzziah, who began as a wonderful servant of God. During his reign, the borders of Judah extended further than at any time since the reign of Solomon. Uzziah had a huge army, the best military equipment, and was victorious over Judah's enemies. Judah had a prospering commercial seaport on the Red Sea. Sadly, Uzziah became proud when God blessed him so richly. As a result of this stubborn pride, Uzziah was stricken with leprosy. Because of his father's disease, Jotham became co-regent with Uzziah. This co-regency lasted almost fifteen years. Jotham was sole ruler of Judah for only two years, following his father's death. Jotham was a very God-fearing man and was faithful to Jehovah to the end of his life. To their discredit, both Uzziah and Jotham tolerated worship upon high places.

During Jotham's reign, a new power, the Assyrian Empire, appeared on the horizon. Israel, the Northern Kingdom, had significant encounters with the Assyrians about a century before Jotham's era.

- The Battle of Karkar (854 BC) in which Ahab (King of Israel) and Benhadad of Syria fought Shalmaneser III, of Assyria
- Jehu (King of Israel) paid tribute to the Assyrian, Shalmaneser (842 BC)

Jotham was succeeded by Ahaz, a very wicked and idolatrous man (II Kings 16:1-4;0-16; II Chronicles 28:3). Because of his wickedness, God allowed many enemies of Judah to invade the land. Tiglath-Pileser III (his personal name was "Pul" II Kings 15:19) reigned over Assyria 745-727 BC. In 738 BC he launched a massive military campaign and conquered Arpad, Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, and Damascus.

Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria, allied together to defend themselves against the Assyrians. They asked Ahaz to join the alliance and he refused. As a result, Pekah and Rezin resolved to dethrone Ahaz and put one of their confederates, a son of Tabeel (KJV Tabeal) on the throne. Pekah attacked Judah and slew 128,000 valiant warriors in just one day of battle. Notable among the slain were Maaseiah (Ahaz' son), Azrikam (the governor of the palace), and Elkanah (the prime minister). The Israeli army carried away 200,000 captives (women, sons, daughters) to their capital, Samaria. The prophet, Oded, persuaded the Israelis to release these captives and return them to Jericho (II Chronicles 28:8-15).

Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser III to come to the aid of Judah. Tiglath-pileser III responded to Ahaz' plea by conquering both Syria and Israel (the Syro-Ephraimite War – 734 BC). Tiglath-pileser sacked Gaza, Galilee, Gilead, and Damascus (II Kings 15:29). He slew Rezin, the king of Syria, and removed to Assyria the northern and eastern inhabitants of Israel. After the invasion by Tiglath-pileser, Pekah, the King of Israel, was assassinated by Hoshea, who ruled Israel for nine years, as a vassal of Assyria.

Tiglath-pileser III was not satisfied with conquering Syria and Israel. He turned his gaze toward Judah. Ahaz, realizing that Tiglath-pileser III, was poised to attack Judah and Jerusalem, committed himself to become a vassal of the Assyrian monarch. Ahaz paid Tiglath-pileser III heavy tribute from his own wealth and the wealth of the temple (II Kings 16:7-9; II Chronicles 28:19-21).

In order to make certain that the Assyrian would not attack Judah, Ahaz traveled to Damascus, the Syrian capital, where Tiglath-pileser III was residing after his victory over Syria. A pagan altar that Ahaz saw in Damascus, captured his fancy. He drew the plans of the altar and sent them back to Urijah, the priest, with instructions to build an exact duplicate. When Ahaz returned to Jerusalem, he relegated the altar of burnt offering (which had been built according to plans given by God) to an inferior place and instructed the priests to offer Jehovistic sacrifices upon the pagan altar. By doing so, he corrupted the worship of Jehovah.

Hezekiah succeeded his father Ahaz. He inherited a disorganized nation that was subject to Assyria. The Assyrian king imposed a heavy tribute tax upon Judah. Hezekiah immediately enacted reforms. He broke down the idols that Ahaz had set up. He reopened and cleansed the Temple, restored the service to Jehovah, and “trusted in God.” Because of his righteousness, Jehovah caused him to prosper and enabled Judah to gain independence from Assyria.

During the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign, Hoshea, king of Israel, made a secret alliance with the king of Egypt, hoping to be freed from the Assyrian yoke. Quite the opposite happened. In 721 BC, the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser IV came with full force against Israel. Shalmaneser IV died while besieging Israel's capitol city of Samaria and was succeeded by Sargon II, who completed the conquest. Sargon II removed the people of Israel to Assyria, where they continued in bondage for many years – finally disappearing from the scene.

Hezekiah, was a very pious man. He tried, unsuccessfully, to turn Judah from its downward course into idolatry. Isaiah was Hezekiah's close friend and confidant. Sennacherib, who succeeded Sargon II as King of Assyria, launched a campaign against Judah. His powerful army was at the very gates of Jerusalem, when God, in response to prayer and intercession, slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night. After this event, Sennacherib fled back to Ninevah, where he was assassinated by his sons. He was succeeded by his son, Esarhaddon.

Hezekiah's righteous reign was followed by the reign of his wicked son, Manasseh. Manasseh was the most wicked of all of Judah's kings and ruled longer than any other Judean king (55 years). He restored the idols that his father had destroyed. He restored Baal worship and burned his own sons as sacrifices. Jerusalem was “filled with blood” during his reign. There is no record of Isaiah's ministry during the reign of Manasseh. According to tradition, he had Isaiah

sawn in two with a wooden saw (Hebrews 11: 37 possibly refers to a Isaiah's martyrdom). Jehovah responded by allowing the Assyrians once again to dominate Judah. They took Manasseh as a prisoner to Babylon where he was greatly abused. In his suffering, Manasseh genuinely repented of his sins and sought Jehovah for deliverance. Jehovah heard Manasseh's supplication and allowed him to be restored to Jerusalem, where he undertook a massive effort to remove idolatry and the restoration of the proper worship of Jehovah.

Part Three

CRITICAL PROBLEMS CONCERNING ISAIAH

Anyone undertaking a serious study of Isaiah immediately encounters in most commentaries the terms, *Proto-Isaiah*, *Deutero-Isaiah*, and *Trito-Isaiah* (some commentaries advocating these terms and some contending against them). This is the language of those who challenge the traditional view of the authorship of Isaiah. Even some devout evangelical scholars have adopted this language. Therefore, before we begin an examination of the book, responsibility demands that we give a passing glance to the views held by these scholars.

For 2500 years, friend and foe considered the Eighth Century BC prophet, Isaiah, to be the author of this book. No one had even considered any other option. The first modern challenge to the unified authorship of Isaiah began in 1780. That was the year that the German edition of Lowth's Commentary was published, containing a note by J.B. Kobe suggesting that Isaiah 50 might have been written by Ezekiel, or someone else who lived at the time of the Exile. In 1789 the commentary of Doederlein was published, in which the Isaianic authorship of Chapters 40-66 was denied. All of this was a reflection of the growing denial of the supernatural among scholars of Europe, chiefly in Germany. Rationalism was the order of the day and "enlightened" students of the Bible began to advocate an humanistic explanation of the supernatural events found in Scripture. Thomas Jefferson, for example, took a razor and cut out of the New Testament all things said about Jesus that were supernatural. He created a "Jefferson Bible," that presented Jesus as a great moral teacher, but not a miracle worker, and certainly, not Divine.

According to these rationalists, predictive prophecy does not exist. Either the writers of scripture were good news analysts, able to read the times and deduce what was just around the corner, or, in the case of those predictions of distant events, they didn't write them. These "far in the future" predictions were written after the event had occurred, or just before it, and then were inserted into the ancient text, so that the event would appear to have been predicted.

Nowhere did this tendency reach a greater height than in the critics' attempt to discredit the integrity of the Book of Isaiah (although the efforts to deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch are equal to the effort to discredit Isaiah). By the mid-1950's these scholars considered themselves to have won the debate to the point that there was no further reason even to discuss or debate the issue. There was common agreement among them that the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah (40-66) were written by someone other than Isaiah, son of Amoz. Some argued that the final eleven chapters were written by even a third or fourth person. The following is a very brief summary of the position of these critics and a brief refutation of their views.

THE CRITICS' POSITION

The so called, “higher critics,” say that Chapters 40-66 were composed toward the close of the Exile (about 545-536 .B.C.) by an unknown writer, who is called for convenience the *Deutero-Isaiah*. In contrast, the true prophet is sometimes designated the *Proto-Isaiah*. As already noted some even advocate for a third and fourth source. Many consider Chapters 36-39 to be an historical appendix, written a few years after Isaiah’s death.

In addition to Chapters 40 – 66, critics also deny Isaiah’s authorship of other portions of the book. The following also are assigned a post-exilic date:

- Chapters 13:1 to 14:32, which tell of the fall of Babylon;
- Chapter 21:1-10, which foretells the overthrow of Babylon by the Medes;
- Chapters. 24-27, which predicts the restoration of Israel.

The sole underlying reason for this point of view is the rejection of the supernatural. Predictive prophecy cannot exist without the existence of the supernatural element.

Some of the more radical critics even deny the following portions of the book:

- Chapter 2:2-4, is denied because it depicts the final restoration of Israel in company with other prosperous nations, rejoicing in the law of God;
- Chapters 11:10-12:6 is denied authenticity, because of its clear prediction of the restoration of David's dynasty and Israel's being restored to her land;
- Chapters 14:24-27; 17:12-14; 19:16-25; Chapters 23 and 32-35 are all assigned late post-exilic dates.

The assertion is made that the so-called first book of Isaiah (Chapters 1-39) received its present form by redactional (editorial) activity even later than the post-exilic period. The redactor rearranged the writing of the real Isaiah from the true chronological order and inserted these other fragments.

CRITICAL ARGUMENTS

The same general arguments which are used to prove Chapters 40-66 non-Isaianic are applied to the other disputed sections. The arguments are three:

A. The first argument is based on the theme of Chapters 40- 66, which is the exile and the return. These chapters are addressed to the exiles in Babylon. If Isaiah had written these chapters, they would have been written 120 years before the Exile. The critics assert that though there are cases of prophets projecting themselves into the future, there is no other instance of such an extended prophecy written that far in advance of its fulfillment. The critics also state that the mention of Cyrus by name so long before his time (Isaiah. 44:28; 45:1) is contrary to the usual method of prophecy.

B. The literary style of these chapters differs greatly from that of the earlier portion of the book. Several words and expressions used frequently in these chapters are never (or rarely) found elsewhere in Isaiah.

C. The theological ideas are different from those of Isaiah. Isaiah's doctrine of the preservation of the faithful remnant (an important topic in the earlier chapters) is not found in Chapters 40-66. The figure of the Messianic king is absent. The final chapters emphasize the God's infinite essence to a degree that is not done in the earlier chapters. The relation of Jehovah to the nations is much more fully developed in these chapters than in earlier sections.

A SUMMARY RESPONSE TO CRITICAL ARGUMENTS

A. Chapters 40-66 do present the writer as communicating directly to those in the Exile, but he does so by the Spirit of Revelation. The difference here is the belief or disbelief concerning the supernatural element in Scripture. Many critics admit that there are other instances in the prophets in which the writer is projected into the future. At least with those critics, it is difficult to understand why so great a prophet as Isaiah might not have maintained this ideal standpoint throughout so long a section.

- If, for the sake of argument, we should agree to the removal of the supernatural element (a removal disavowed by II Peter 1:19-21), the Exile was not just a distant possibility to Isaiah. It was the probable culmination of a process which had begun before Isaiah's birth. All of the people of Isaiah's time were familiar with the idea. Furthermore the probability of the Exile had two notable confirmations in Isaiah's time: (a) the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and (b) the invasion of the Southern Kingdom by Sennacherib. When Isaiah had seen Samaria captured and her people deported, Jerusalem besieged and her king "shut up like a bird in a cage," and Sennacherib's hosts driven back only by divine intervention, and when in his old age he saw the profligacy and idolatry of the reign of Manasseh, which must inevitably hasten the coming doom, we should not be surprised by his considering the Exile to already have begun. Consequently, he devoted his closing years to a description of the glorious future which awaited the people after the return. Isaiah's prophecy of return refers not merely to the two southern tribes who still held out against the enemy, but also to the ten northern tribes who were already in exile. As was usual with the prophets, he did not realize that a century and more would intervene (Isaiah did not see the reforms of Josiah which delayed the Exile). These words of consolation in Chapters 40-66 were appropriate both for the believers in the beginning of Manasseh's reign (because they saw the Exile at hand), but also would be appropriate for those who later actually were in exile.
- To make the Exile something only characteristic of Chapters 40-66 is to ignore Isaiah's foretelling of the Exile in earlier portions of the book (Isaiah. 5:5-6 [a veiled reference]; 10:20-24; 32:13-18).
- It is true that names and dates are unusual in prophecy. Yet the mention of Cyrus by name 150 years in advance is not without precedent.

1. Josiah was foretold by name in the reign of Jeroboam (1 Kings 13:1-2) over three hundred years before his time.
 2. Bethlehem is mentioned by name as the birthplace of the Messiah by Isaiah's contemporary Micah (5:2). The name of the city of the Messiah's birth was so clear that the Jews expected the Christ to be born there (Matt. 2:4-6) and some rejected Jesus because He came from Galilee rather than Bethlehem (John. 7:40-44).
- Exact prophecies are found in several places, other than Isaiah:
 1. The 70 years of exile by Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10; also Dan. 9:2).
 2. Daniel's mention of Christ (Dan. 9:24-26)
 3. Zechariah's prophesy of the piercing of the Shepherd (12:10)
 4. Zechariah's prophesy of the betrayal for thirty pieces of silver (11:13)
 5. Ezekiel's and Zechariah's prophecies against Tyre (Ezek. 26-27; Zech. 9:1-8),
 - In unusual cases, as a special proof of divine revelation, the prophets sometimes revealed future names and dates. Such conditions prevailed when Isaiah wrote Chapters 40-66. With the Exile impending, the faithful needed some special proof for the prophet's assurance of return. He gave them this by naming their deliverer, "Cyrus." The expectation of Cyrus would be the comfort of intervening years, and when he should actually arise, Israel would know that their redemption drew nigh.

B. The differences of style between chapters 40-66 and the earlier parts of the book are a very poor reason to argue for a difference in authorship.

- Isaiah prophesied over a period of at least forty years. The passage of many years and the development of the man, would cause us to expect a changing and maturing style.
- A more certain explanation is the difference in subject between the earlier chapters and the final portion. The grandeur of the earlier chapters gives place to pathos because the aged prophet seeks to console those who foresee the destruction of their land.
- As various ones have pointed out, the only way that we can know Isaiah's literary style is from reading the book. To presume that he wrote one part of the book and thus we are certain of his literary style, then to deny his authorship for the rest of the book is circular reasoning.
- The critics are compelled to admit that Deutero-Isaiah exhibits many signs of similarity to Proto-Isaiah. To account for this some critics have conjectured that Deutero-Isaiah was a disciple of Isaiah. Others speculate that he was filled with the spirit of Isaiah or wrote in conscious imitation of that prophet. It was this similarity to Isaiah, the critics tells us, which caused the editor to add these chapters to the true work of Isaiah. If the similarity is so great, the differences are not sufficient to require another author. Instead of emphasizing the differences and then attempting to explain the resemblances, it is simpler and more logical to emphasize the resemblances and explain the differences. These glorious chapters were not written in the Exile in the spirit of Isaiah, but by Isaiah

in the spirit of the Exile. Their similarity to Isaiah's acknowledged work is evidence that he wrote them. The differences are the result of his writing on different topics and from different perspectives.

- For Christians, the clinching argument for both the unity of Isaiah and Isaiah's authorship of the final chapters is found in the New Testament. The New Testament frequently quotes from all sections of Isaiah, including Chapters 40-66. It is clear that the writers of the New Testament consider the entire book to have been authored by Isaiah. This testimony should be decisive for every Christian believer.

1. Compare Matt. 3:3 with Isaiah 40:3;
2. Matt. 4:14 with Isaiah. 9:1, 2;
3. Matt. 8:17 with Isaiah 3:4;
4. Matt. 12: 17, 18 with Isaiah 42:1;
5. Matt. 13:14, 15 with- Isaiah 6:9;
6. Matt. 15:7 and Mark 7:6 with Isaiah 29:13
7. Luke 3:4 with Isaiah. 40:3-5
8. Lu 4:16-19 with Isaiah 61:1, 2a;
9. John 1:23 with Isaiah 40:3;
10. John 12: 38 with Isaiah 53:1
11. John 12:39 with Isaiah 6:9-10
12. John 12:41 with Isaiah 51:1; 6:9-10
13. Acts 8:28 with Isaiah 53:7-8
14. Acts 8:30 with Isaiah 53:7-8
15. Acts 8:32 with Isaiah 53:7-8

Note that the background of this event illustrates and fulfills Isaiah 56:3-7

16. Acts 28:25 with Isaiah 6:9-10
17. Romans 9:27 with Isaiah 10:22-23; 11:5
18. Romans 9:29 with Isaiah 1:9

Note that Romans 9 and 10 contain many allusions to and echoes of the language of Isaiah

19. Romans 10:16 with Isaiah 53:1
20. Romans 10:20 with Isaiah 65:1
21. Romans 15:12 with Isaiah 11:10

C. The consistent tradition of Isaianic authorship is quite significant. Many statements from Jewish and early Christian literature could be cited. An example is the following quote from Ecclesiasticus, written c 180 BC.

“He (Isaiah) comforted them that mourned in Zion. He showed the things that should be to the end of the time, and the hidden things or ever they came.”

This passage clearly refers to Isaiah Chapters 40-66, known as the “Book of Comfort,” begins, *Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God*, and continues in that vein throughout the entire 27 chapters. Ecclesiasticus knew nothing of a “Second Isaiah.”

- D. To summarize the argument, the Isaianic authorship of this book was assumed by everyone until destructive critics, under the influence of the rationalistic rejection of the supernatural, sought to find some human explanation for the predictive prophecy that abounds in the book. If one accepts the supernatural, all of the weightless critical arguments fly out of the window.**

Part Four

THE QUMRAN MANUSCRIPT

The discovery of an ancient manuscript of Isaiah, preserved for centuries in a cave near the Dead Sea, has been one of the most telling blows to the critics' argument for multiple authorship of the book. Both Jews and Christians always have considered Isaiah to be the greatest Old Testament book of prophecy. Until the spring of 1948, the oldest Hebrew manuscript of Isaiah was one produced in the Ninth Century AD. However, in 1948, that changed dramatically. Here is an abbreviated version of that discovery.

During the summer of 1946-47, three Bedouin shepherds happened upon a cave secluded among the rocky crags overlooking the northwest shore of the Dead Sea in Palestine. The entrance to the cave was so small that a grown man would have had great difficulty entering it. One of the shepherds, out of curiosity, threw a rock into one of the caves and heard the rock shatter pottery. He and his cousins thought that perhaps they had found an ancient stash of gold. They were quite busy taking care of their sheep and so they decided to explore the cave two days later. Shortly after sunup on the third day, while his cousins were still asleep, the youngest shepherd wrenched his way into the cave and saw about ten tall jars lining the walls of the cave. He reached into a bowl-covered jar and pulled out three leather scrolls which were destined to create a new era of biblical studies in the Western world. After a time, these and other scrolls that they found were sold to St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Monastery in the Old City of Jerusalem.

In the spring of 1948, at around 4:30 in the afternoon, the cook at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem answered the telephone. The caller said that he was Father Butrus Sowmy, calling from the Syrian Orthodox Monastery. He asked for the director of the school, seeking some information about ancient manuscripts. The director, Dr. Millar Burrows, was absent and so the cook asked Dr. John C. Trever, a Fellow at the school, to take the call. Dr. Trevor was involved in a study of the flora of the Bible, preparing for a class in "Biblical Backgrounds in Palestine." Father Sowmy told Dr. Trever that he was the librarian of the monastery and that while cataloguing rare books and documents that he had come across five scrolls in ancient Hebrew. He had no information on these scrolls and he was calling to see if the American School of Oriental Research could supply some data to help him in his cataloguing. Dr. Trever asked, "Do you mean *archaic* (as contrasted with ancient) Hebrew?" Father Sowmy said that he thought that this was what he had. Dr. Trever was puzzled. How could monks have archaic Hebrew documents in their library? Dr. Trever asked Father Sowmy if he could come to the school the next day at 2:30 in the afternoon and Father Sowmy said that he would do so.

The next afternoon Father Sowmy arrived with five scrolls. The largest scroll revealed writing in Hebrew, but quite different from those with which Dr. Trevor was accustomed. Comparison with a photograph of the Nash Papyrus (dated 100 – 200 BC), revealed a similar script.

Dr. Trevor wanted to photograph a portion of the scroll, but he had left his camera at the museum. So, he hand-copied a passage, which he and Dr. Burrows later identified as Isaiah 65:1, in archaic Hebrew script. The passage was word for word, exactly the same as is found in the accepted Hebrew text of the Old Testament. After a sleepless night, Dr. Trevor went to the Syrian Convent and was allowed to continue his examination of the manuscript. He and Father Sowmy unrolled the scroll and Dr. Trevor copied a verse from the first column, which proved to be Isaiah 1: 1, word for word exactly the same as in the known Hebrew text. Dr. Trevor carefully photographed the scroll, but only after using all of his persuasive powers on the authorities of the Syrian Convent to secure permission. An air mail letter containing some photographs of the manuscript was sent to Dr. W. F. Albright at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Dr. Albright was the recognized authority in such textual and archaeological matters.

Further comparison of the script of the Isaiah scroll with photographs of the Nash Papyrus and other manuscripts dating as far back as 500 BC, led to the tentative conclusion that the scroll would have been produced at around 100 BC. An air mail letter arrived shortly from Dr. Albright saying that he had no doubt that the writing in the Isaiah scroll was more archaic than the Nash Papyrus and that he would prefer a date about 100 B. C. He added that there was not the slightest doubt about the authenticity of the scroll.

According to Dr. Millar Burrows, “The most significant thing about the Isaiah Manuscript is the degree to which it agrees with our traditional Hebrew text.” After extensive examination of the scroll, Dr. Burrows stated that there is nothing which can be called a major addition or omission, and that there is no important dislocation or disarrangement of the text. This is of huge significance in substantiating the integrity of Isaiah, as we have it in our Bibles.

The well-worn Isaiah manuscript is a copy of older manuscripts which in a chain lead back to the original writing of Isaiah. In accordance with the Jewish reverence for the Scriptures, worn manuscripts were put aside and newer copies were made for current use. This is one reason why older manuscripts of Hebrew scriptures have not survived. Although the scroll was produced centuries after Isaiah died, and three centuries after the Exile, it still stands as testimony to the traditional view of the authorship of the entire book, i.e., the author was Isaiah, son of Amoz, prophet of God. There is no hint of a Deutero-Isaiah or a Trito-Isaiah, nor of the work of a redactor.

Of further significance is the sizeable content of the scroll. This scroll does not contain just the fragments of a few verses, but a mass of text that occupies some sixty-six chapters in our Bible. The fact that it agrees substantially with the later Hebrew texts which we have been using for centuries and that all sixty-six chapters are on the scroll as a single document, argues strongly for the unity and accuracy of our present Biblical text of Isaiah (several fragments of other scrolls containing portions of Isaiah also were found in various caves of the area, but none were as complete as the Cave I scroll first examined and photographed by John Trevor).

EXEGETICAL NOTES ON ISAIAH

Verse 1 THE INTRODUCTORY TITLE

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

ha'aritz (חֲזִוִּיָּה) is the word rendered, vision. It means, a vision seen in an ecstatic state or a vision that is a divine communication.

Thus, the word can be understood two ways:

- A vision can be something that is seen. Peter experienced this type of a vision when the sheet was lowered from heaven (Acts 10:9-16).
- A vision also can refer to the prophetic words received from God, as in Obadiah (Obadiah 1:1)

Note the manner in which each of the Old Testament prophetic books begins, using various terms to indicate that God had given them a message to deliver.² Some of these are presented as visual revelation, and some as word revelation, but all are from God.

Jeremiah 1:1 *The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin,² to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.*

Ezekiel 1:1 *Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.*

Hosea 1:1 *The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.*

Joel 1:1 *The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.*

Amos 1:1 *The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.*

² Lamentations and Daniel are omitted from this list because Lamentations is an extension of Jeremiah and Daniel essentially is a narrative that contains prophecy.

Obadiah 1:1 *The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom-- We have heard a report from the LORD, And an envoy has been sent among the nations saying, "Arise and let us go against her for battle "*

Jonah 1:1 *The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying,*

Micah 1:1 *The word of the LORD which came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.*

Nahum 1:1 *The oracle of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.*

Habakkuk 1:1 *The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.*

Zephaniah 1:1 *The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah,*

Haggai 1:1 *In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest saying,*

Zechariah 1:1 *In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo saying,*

Malachi 1:1 *The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.*

These books use five significant Hebrew terms to introduce their prophetic messages:

1. **חִזְוִן** (*ha'aritz*), *vision*, as noted above, is used to introduce both Isaiah and Obadiah.
2. **דְּבַר-יְהוָה** (*dbhar-yahweh*), literally, *Yahweh's Word*, is the most commonly used term. It is used to introduce Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah. In conjunction with the terms noted below, it also is used in Ezekiel and Malachi. The statement being made by this term is that the origin of the prophetic word is Yahweh, not the prophet. Interestingly, the term rendered, *came*, literally states, *the Word... became*.
3. **מַשָּׂא** (*massah*) is the Hebrew term that Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi use to describe the message that God gave them. The NAS and NIV render this word as, *oracle*, when referring to prophetic utterance. The term primarily means, *burden*, or *something that is carried* and is so rendered in the

KJV. The sense thus conveyed is the sense of carrying something that is to be delivered.

4. **מַרְאֵה** (*ma'r'ah*) is the Hebrew term used in the first verse of Ezekiel, but **חֲזוֹן** (*ha'aritz*) is used throughout the book to describe the visions (this is the same term used in Isaiah 1:1)
5. **חָזָה** (*hatsah*), literally, *to see*, but also in the sense of, *perceive*, is used to introduce Amos. Later, when Amos delivers the message, he calls his word, *the word of Yahweh* [number 2, above] (Amos 7:16; 8:12).

These introductory words are in keeping with Peter's statement,

2 Peter 1:20-21 *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

The point Peter made is that the prophets were not news analysts. They were not writing from knowledge of the affairs of nations and their background in the field. They wrote as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit.

I. THE BOOK OF MINGLED REBUKES AND PROMISES Chapters 1-5

A. THE GREAT ARRAIGNMENT 1:2-31

Verses 2-4 The Soliloquy of a Broken-hearted Father

Four times in Scripture, the term, *son*, is used to describe the relationship between Jehovah and Israel. Jehovah frequently is called, *Father*, in His relationship with Israel (see Exodus 4:22 [Israel is God's first-born son]; Jeremiah 31:9; Hosea 11:1; Romans 9:4).

These three opening verses of Isaiah summarize the history of Israel. Beginning with the Exodus, and continuing throughout the historical books of the Old Testament, Israel's story is one of vacillating loyalty to God. They were sovereignly chosen by God to be His people. He blessed them abundantly and promised them a glorious future. They responded to God's graces by turning to idolatry and every imaginable sin. In essence, their story is one of

- Their being blessed by God
- their rejection of God
- their chastisement by God
- their repentance
- their restoration by God
- their repeating of this cycle again and again.

Moses speech, recorded in Deuteronomy 28, comprises one of the longest chapters in the Bible (68 verses – between three and four pages long in most versions of the Bible).

- The first fourteen verses of Deuteronomy 28 speak of the great blessings that Jehovah would bestow upon Israel if she would be faithful to Him.
- The last fifty-four verses speak of the curses and tragedy that Jehovah would bring upon Israel if she turned to idolatry and disobeyed Jehovah's commandments.
- Note that Satan is not the source of the curses and tragedies promised in this chapter. God is both the causative agent and the hands-on actor. This belies the frequent teaching that God who loves us can't or won't act harshly – that He permits Satan to do us harm, but that God Himself never punishes directly.
- Deuteronomy 31:28-32:43 contains Moses prediction that Israel would be unfaithful to Jehovah.
- After Pentecost, the Gospel first was preached to the Jews. After their rejection, it was preached to the Gentiles (the door was and is always open to any Jew). The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was God's greatest and most lasting fulfillment of the destruction promised in Deuteronomy 28. Jesus predicted the downfall of Jerusalem, forty years before it happened.

that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. "Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! (Matthew 23:35-38)

And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He answered and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down." (Matthew 24:1-2)

Verse 3 Israel was below the level of animals in sensitivity to the one who is the provider and care-giver.

Verse 4 It is a serious thing to be laden down with iniquity. There is a limit to God's patience. There is a point at which God says, *you have reached your limit.*

Genesis 15:16 *"Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."* The Amorite's cup of iniquity became full and God rooted them out, giving the land to Israel (Amos 2:9ff).

The repeated refrain in Amos, spoken to eight nations, is, *I will not revoke its punishment* (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6).

The Flood and Sodom & Gomorrah stand as stark examples of the limits of God's grace and patience.

V 5-9 A Picture of Miseries

The condition of Judah and Jerusalem described in these verses did not fit the condition of the land when Isaiah wrote them. These words were written either in the reign of Uzziah or the reign of his son, Jotham. Their reigns were times of prosperity and strength (see II Chronicles 26:8 – 27:9). Verses 5-9 are prophetic. The prophets frequently spoke of the future in present tense, as if that which was predicted were a present reality.

Verse 9 is the first mention of the *remnant*, which is a frequent theme in the prophets. God always will have his 7000 faithful who have not bowed the knee to Baal (I Kings 19:18) The concept of a minority, or a remnant, is consistent with Matthew 7:13-14

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

V 10-15 The Condemnation of Ceremonialism

Yahweh addresses the people of Judah metaphorically, using the names of the vilest cities of the plains in the address – Sodom and Gomorrah.

Physical blessing was a part of the Mosaic Covenant. If one were true to the Covenant, he would have appropriate showers, abundant crops, and prosperity (Job demonstrates that for reasons that man cannot understand, there may be exceptions to this general rule). On the other hand, if one were untrue to the Covenant, he could anticipate God-imposed hardship.

Yet, even the Old Testament demanded that the heart be pure – more than mere ceremony was required.

1 Samuel 15:22 *And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.*

Amos 5:21-24 *"I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

Hosea 6:6 *For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

Micah 6:8 *He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?*

Jeremiah 7:22-24 *For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.' Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward.*

Psalm 51:16-17 *For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.*

These verses (10-15) speak of God's distaste for what the people were doing, yet they were doing just what He had commanded – attending worship services, making sacrifices, etc. Their lives, however, did not display godly righteousness, honesty in business, compassion and mercy on the poor, etc.

Ceremony is found in both the Old Covenant and the New (communion and baptism). Neither covenant, however, allowed ceremony to substitute for a right heart and right behaviour. The difference is between *CEREMONY* and *CEREMONIALISM*.

Ceremony is a means whereby one can express devotion, worship, and receive edification. *Ceremonialism*, on the other hand, is a form of salvation by works in which the participant trusts his faithfulness to a ceremony to be what makes him acceptable to God, regardless of one's heart, faith, or behaviour. Neither Isaiah, nor Amos (the parallel passage in Amos 5:21-24) condemn ceremony; they condemn superficial worship.

Paul emphasized this truth in I Corinthians 11:17-32. The Corinthian church faithfully went through the Lord's Supper event every Sunday, but even though they went through the ceremony, they weren't really partaking of the Lord's Supper because their hearts and attitudes were not right (I Corinthians 11: 20-21, 24-29).

The proper understanding of the condemnation of ceremonialism is important.

- Some, not grasping the context of Isaiah 1:10-15 and Amos 5:21-24, have said that God is opposed to ceremony, and so we should not plan our Sunday services, but just show up on Sunday and see what the Holy Spirit leads us to do.
- Liberal theologians, on the other hand, have argued that Isaiah condemns sacrifice (if this is true, he also is against prayer, which is criticized in Isaiah 1).

Both of these positions miss the point of the prophecy.

Verses 16-17 The Divine Exhortation: Get Right with God

The sinning worshippers are told to clean up their act. They are to cease letting ceremony be a substitute for godly lives.

The exhortation to go home and take a bath does not refer to ceremonial uncleanness – failure to participate in a ceremonial washing. Jeremiah makes that clear in his chastisement of sinning Judah.

Jeremiah 2:22 *"Although you wash yourself with lye And use much soap, The stain of your iniquity is before Me," declares the Lord God.*

Not only the men, but the women of the nation were guilty (3:16). No one had a monopoly on sin.

Note the moral and civil sins implied in this exhortation.

Verse 18 The Divine Invitation

It would be difficult to think of a more gracious passage of Scripture than this verse. The God of the Universe is willing to sit down and reason with sinners, urging them to repent. God's heart is to achieve reconciliation, but reconciliation must be preceded by repentance on the part of the sinner. This verse displays the same heart of God as is seen in Romans 5:8:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

One of the qualities of the Messianic Kingdom will be the absence of any need for anyone to repent. The inhabitants of the Messianic Kingdom will be those who have experienced forgiveness. Young's Literal Translation renders Isaiah 33:24,

Nor doth an inhabitant say, 'I was sick,' The people that is dwelling in it, is forgiven of iniquity!³

How can forgiveness be extended without making light of the seriousness and effects of sin? How can a Just God be a Justifier? No detailed answer is given to this question until Isaiah 53. In the earlier portion of the book, the problem is put forward. In the latter chapters of Isaiah, this problem is worked out.

³ The Hebrew term rendered, *forgiven*, is a Qal passive participle, which is better expressed as an accomplished fact, rather than something that will be done. YLT brings out this meaning, whereas the KJV, NAS, and NIV, obscure this meaning.

Verses 19-20 The Divine Alternative

These two verses repeat a familiar refrain found throughout Scripture. In these verses, God gives a choice and the implication is that man is free to choose his course. This seems to be one of the inherent conditions that makes us human, reflecting the choice given in the Garden of Eden, concerning the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:16-17).

Jehovah makes a similar plea many times in Isaiah. Isaiah 55:3 is the exact same thought, but in different language.

"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.

Evidence of the fallen state of humanity is the insane manner in which humans keep choosing those patterns of behaviour that destroy them in this life and damn them in the next. This is a manifestation of our refusal to acknowledge any authority above our own will.

In some cases, the sad results of our bad choices are the natural consequences of our conduct. In other instances, the consequences are Divinely imposed.

In these verses, God made an irrevocable promise to Judah "Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken." Such finality is sobering.

The Harlot City becomes the City of Righteousness, a Faithful Town Verses 21-27

The City of Jerusalem, God's Bride, chosen of God, became a harlot. Harlotry is used many times in the prophets to refer to idolatry. Yahweh and Israel were in covenant with one another. Israel (later Israel and Judah) began to worship other gods and thus were guilty of spiritual adultery. This is worked out quite fully in Hosea.

In this passage, sin of various types (not just idolatry) is classed as adultery – something loved more than Yahweh. The description of bribery and seeking after rewards, as the motivation for sin, brings to mind Paul's warning to Timothy,

For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.
(1 Timothy 6:10)

Note that this section is especially condemnatory of those who are supposed to be in a position of exercising judgment and protection for the weak and helpless in society. We often quote Romans 13, urging Christians to be law abiding citizens, etc. Isaiah, on the other hand, presents the burden of responsibility that rulers and judges bear, as well as the judgment that they will face for failing to use their authority rightly and fairly.

God's people had turned and rebelled, thus verse 24 describes them as God's enemies.

In verses 25-27 Yahweh promises to take action that will result in Jerusalem's being once again a city of righteousness. Through harsh action by the Hand of God, the Harlot City will be cleansed and purged of the evil doers.

The Destruction of Sinners Verses 28-31

The *rebellious* of verse 28 are those who had both inwardly and outwardly broken away from Jehovah.

Sinners were those who were living in open sin, probably never having had any devotion to or relationship with Jehovah.

Those who forsake Jehovah were those estranged from God in either of these ways.

Verses 29-30 clearly refer to idolatry. The oaks (terebinths) and gardens were unlawful places of worship and objects of worship. Moses had warned in Deuteronomy 16:21-22

You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the LORD your God, which you shall make for yourself. Neither shall you set up for yourself a sacred pillar which the LORD your God hates.

In a number of Isaiah's speeches, he refers to the unlawful practice of worshipping in groves of trees or in gardens, and of the lustful acts that accompany this worship.

...who inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every luxuriant tree, who slaughter the children in the ravines, under the clefts of the crags? (Isaiah 57:5)

A people who continually provoke Me to My face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks; (Isaiah 65:3)

"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, shall come to an end altogether," declares the LORD. (Isaiah 66:17)

Isaiah compares the idolaters to the oaks and gardens in which they conduct their illicit worship. Lacking sufficient water, trees and gardens wither and are easily set on fire. All that is needed is a spark to ignite them and they immediately burst into flame. Such will be the fate of those who in these practices have become estranged from Jehovah.

Verse 31 The prosperous idolater who could give gold and silver for idolatrous images, becomes "the refuse of flax, and the idol is the spark which sets this mass of fiber in flames, so that both are irretrievable consumed."⁴

⁴ Franz Delitzsch, *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*, Volume 7, Isaiah (Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers, February 1989 edition) page 109.

B. THE JUDGMENT AND EXALTATION OF ZION Chapters 2-5

In this section, Isaiah delivers a dark picture of judgment. However, before presenting that picture, he delivers a prophecy concerning the role of Jerusalem and Judah in the Messianic Kingdom.

2:2-4 Zion of the latter days

This passage is found in Micah (Micah 4:1-4) with very few slight variations and the addition of one verse.

<p>Isaiah 2:2-4 <i>Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. ³ And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war. (NAS)</i></p>	<p>Micah 4:1-4 <i>And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. ² Many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ³ And He will judge between many peoples And render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they train for war. ⁴ Each of them will sit under his vine And under his fig tree, With no one to make them afraid, For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. (NAS)</i></p>
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As previously noted, Micah was a younger contemporary of Isaiah. Did Micah repeat a prophecy that Jehovah had given to Isaiah, or did Isaiah repeat a prophecy that Jehovah had given Micah or did both of them quote some other prophet? Isaiah probably did not quote Micah, because the location of the prophecy in Isaiah seems to place it in the reign of Uzziah or Jotham, whereas Micah's word was given during the reign of Hezekiah (see Jeremiah 26:18; Micah 3:12, to which Micah 4:1-4 is attached).⁵

It is not essential that we resolve this question. Yahweh could have given the same prophetic word to more than one prophet.

⁵ This is just the opposite of the exhortation in Joel 3:9-10, which deals with a different time in God's economy

The only time that Isaiah uses the term, *last days* [בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים] (literally *in the after-days, or the sequel of days*) is in 2:2. Several individuals and prophetic utterances in the Old Testament use the term. Each time the term is encountered in Scripture, the reader must determine how the term should be understood in the passage under consideration. Here are the Old Testament passages that contain the term:

- Genesis 49:1, Jacob (Israel) used the term to describe the era in which the blessing that he gave to each of his sons and their descendants would be fulfilled.
- Numbers 24:14 Balaam's prophecy about the future dominance of Israel over her enemies.
- Deuteronomy 4:30 Moses predicted that Israel would be unfaithful to Yahweh and that He would respond by allowing the nation to be carried into captivity, but promised that if they repent while in captivity (the latter days), they will be restored.
- Deuteronomy 31:29 Moses predicted Israel's unfaithfulness in the latter days.
- Jeremiah 23:20; 30:24 Jeremiah predicted God's judgment which will not be stopped until it has been completely fulfilled and Israel, looking back (in the latter days) will understand what has happened to them.
- Jeremiah 48:47 A prediction of the captivity of Moab (now history)
- Jeremiah 49:39 The captivity of Elam is predicted (now history)
- Ezekiel 38:16 This is a prophecy concerning God's calling Gog, from the north, to come and invade Israel. This possibly is a prophecy of the Battle of Armageddon.
- Daniel 2:28 This is in reference to the future of the nations, predicting the founding of the Church during the Roman empire⁶
- Daniel 10:14 The term is used in reference to the history of nations following the lifetime of Daniel, culminating with the resurrection.
- Hosea 3:5 This verse refers to the restoration of Israel after the Babylonian captivity, but also to a future spiritual revival in Israel.

The New Testament uses the term, *latter days*, or *last days* in reference to the era that began with the ascension of Christ and the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit but ends with the event described in II Peter 3. For example, this is the understanding of the term that Peter gave to Joel in Acts 2:16-21, which describes the beginning and the end of the

⁶ The Hebrew terminology is slightly different from the other instances cited in this list.

era – the era begins with the gift of the Holy Spirit and ends in cosmological upheaval. Another clear example of that use is seen in Hebrews 1:2.⁷

In exegeting Isaiah 2, we must wrestle with the question as to how Isaiah and Micah used the term, *last days*.

Related to the question of the meaning of *last days*, is a second question that must be faced, i.e., the question of literal versus figurative language. Is the description of Zion in Chapter 2 a literal description of a geographical location, or is it a figurative description of the Church or some other expression of the Messianic Kingdom? How an exegete answers either one of these questions will govern how he answers the other.

There are three prevailing views:

1. The reference is to a time in which Jerusalem physically will be the center of the world, and the nation of Judah will be the exalted nation.
2. The reference is to Jerusalem as the place from whence the Gospel will go forth on Pentecost and thereafter.
3. The reference is a prophetic picture of the Church.

In wrestling with these questions, we find ourselves somewhat like the Ethiopian Eunuch who puzzled over Isaiah 53, "*How can I, [understand] unless someone instructs me?*" (Acts 8:30-34). Many exegetes will answer these questions according to their previously held eschatological views.

Isaiah clearly uses figurative language in many passages, but he also uses literal language in passages that deal with eschatological and predictive material. In each passage, we must look for keys to help us decide whether the section is literal or figurative.

The introduction to this section points to a literal interpretation, *The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem*. The natural understanding of Isaiah's words is that these verses contain a prophecy about the future of Jerusalem, a geographical site, and Judah, either a race or a geographical site.

Here are some considerations that weigh against these verses being spiritual or figurative expression of the Church, or of Jerusalem during the Gospel age, or some reference to the increased esteem to be given to the Temple Mount..

- The language, *concerning Judah and Jerusalem*, seems too specific to allow the vision to refer to anything other than Judah and Jerusalem.

⁷ In some instances, the term might possibly be used to refer to the period immediately prior to the end of the age (II Peter 3:3), but such understanding is debatable.

- The view that verses 2-4 contain a prophetic figure of the birth of the Church in Jerusalem and the subsequent spiritual exaltation of Jerusalem as the Gospel fount, just doesn't fit the historical record.
 1. Jerusalem's dominance of the First Century Church quickly diminished when Antioch became the center from which the Gospel spread among the nations.
 2. Jerusalem was destroyed forty years after the Pentecostal impartation of the Holy Spirit. Looking at the historical record, it appears that God held off Jerusalem's fate until the city had fulfilled its role as the birthplace of the Church, then His protecting hand was removed.
- After the destruction of Jerusalem, in the Gospel age, nations were not flowing in and out of the city, receiving the Word of God, etc.
- The Mount of the Temple already was esteemed with a dignity above all other places on the earth. It was the Holy Mountain. It did not need anything more to be elevated in esteem or importance. This fact belies the concept that some elevation of the importance of this real estate is the point being made in the vision.

Another evidence that the description is literal is Zechariah's corresponding description of the topographical changes in and around Jerusalem, during the Messianic reign.

Zechariah 14:4, 9-11 *That day his feet shall rest upon the Mount of Olives, which is opposite Jerusalem to the east. The Mount of Olives shall be cleft in two from east to west by a very deep valley, and half of the mountain shall move to the north and half of it to the south... The LORD shall become king over the whole earth; on that day the LORD shall be the only one, and his name the only one. And from Geba to Rimmon in the Negeb, all the land shall turn into a plain; but Jerusalem shall remain exalted in its place. From the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate; and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses, they shall occupy her. Never again shall she be doomed; Jerusalem shall abide in security.*

This also is in keeping with Ezekiel 40:2, in which the Temple Mount seems gigantic to the prophet.

Thus in verse 2, Isaiah seems to prophecy that *in the last days*, Mount Zion will be physically raised and will be fixed as the highest mountain in the region with the other mountains radiating from it.

Verses 3-4 present a picture of one great spiritual empire in which Jews and Gentiles will be united under Yahweh. Mt. Zion will be the rallying point for worship and divine instruction. Not only will the people come for instruction (*that He may teach us concerning His ways*), but they will be determined to live in accordance with that instruction (*that we may walk in His paths*).

One beautiful characteristic of that day will be the willingness of all nations and races to seek God's judgment and to live with His decision. Peace will not be enforced by governments or military might, but by an eagerness to know God's Will accompanied by an eagerness to carry out that Will (verse 4).

The picture of peace is a far cry from the of the habit of kings and rulers described in II Samuel 11:1.

At the turn of the year, when kings go out on campaign, David sent out Joab along with his officers and the army of Israel, and they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. David, however, remained in Jerusalem.

In ancient times, when the weather allowed them to do so, kings went forth to conquer their neighbors. The obsession with conquering and ruling has been the nature of kings, empires, and rulers, has been a consistent trait of humanity – both civilized and uncivilized.

In the Messianic Kingdom earth's citizens no longer will be burdened by the taxation necessary to maintain offensive and defensive military might. Fallen human nature no longer will reign and rule. War will be unknown.

2:5-4:1 Judgments against the sinners⁸

Isaiah used the previous vision as an occasion to encourage the righteous remnant and as well as a springboard for calling the unrighteous to *walk in the light of the Lord*. In the Messianic Kingdom, Gentiles will say, *Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob*. Like Paul (Romans 11:14), Isaiah seeks to stir his countrymen by echoing the Gentiles in verse 3, *O house of Jacob, come, let us [now] walk in the light of the LORD*

The citizens, by and large, were not walking in the light; they more or less had forsaken Yahweh and He had withdrawn His blessing. He was about to withdraw even further from His people. In verse 6 Isaiah changes his form of address into the form of a prayerful sigh. Addressing God, Isaiah describes the woeful condition of his people.

- They were filled with influences from the east (probably Aram-Syria and Chaldea-Babylon). Pagan mysticism first appeared in Babylon. Magic arts were very prevalent in both Syria and Babylon.
- On the other hand, they became soothsayers or *diviners of the clouds* (literally, *cloud gatherers*) after the manner of the western nation of Philistia. The Philistines had a sacred oracle at Ekron which Israelites consulted from time to time (see II Kings Chapter One). The Philistines also had witchcraft guilds that were active in Isaiah's era.

⁸ Verse 1 of Chapter Four should be the last verse of Chapter Three. Isaiah originally was not divided into chapters and this is one of those unfortunate instances in which those who did add chapters and verses misplaced the division.

- They struck bargains with the children of foreigners. Literally, the Hebrew says *with the children of foreigners they clap hands*. Various versions interpret the meaning of *clap hands* in different ways

KJV *please themselves in the children of strangers*

NAB *they covenant with strangers.*

NAS *they strike bargains with the children of foreigners*

NIV *they clasp hands with pagans.*

NJB *overrun with foreigners.*

NKJ *they are pleased with the children of foreigners.*

However one chooses to interpret the expression, the idea, as summarized by Franz Delitzsch, is “With the heathen by birth, the prophet would say, ‘the people of Jehovah made common cause.’”⁹

Isaiah further describes the condition of Judah: the land was crammed full of objects of luxury, the nation was full of self-confidence, and they had become estranged from God (verses 7-8)

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 prohibited a king multiplying of horses, the hoarding of gold and silver, and behaving like an oriental monarch.

When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman.

Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, “You shall never again return that way.”

Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.

Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left; in order that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

From the time of Solomon onward, the kings of both Judah and Israel had violated this law of the kings. Standing armies and storehouses holding national treasures were both evidence of and contributors to the carnality which was in opposition to the theocracy that God had initiated.

⁹ Keil & Delitzsch, *op cit* 119.

In the latter half of Chapter 2, Isaiah pictures the pride of humanity humbled in God's presence, in the Day of Jehovah.

Throughout Isaiah, and other prophetic books, The Day of Jehovah refers to God's acting in history – bringing chastisement to the apostate and sinner, but ultimate blessing to the righteous. The operative word is *ultimate*, because in a Day of Jehovah, the righteous frequently suffer as a part of the group being chastised. An example is the Babylonian captivity.

The Great Day of Jehovah (*great a notable day of the LORD* in Joel 2:31 and Acts 2:20; *great and terrible day of the LORD* in Malachi 4:5) refers to the event described in II Peter 3 and the final judgment associated with that Day. Each of the lesser Days of Jehovah (historical chastisements), pre-figure the Great Day of Jehovah.¹⁰

Eighteen verses in the Old Testament contain the term, (Amos 5:8 and Zephaniah 1:14 contain the term twice in the verse).

Isaiah 2:12 *For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning Against everyone who is proud and lofty And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased.*

Isaiah 13:6 *Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.*

Isaiah 13:9 *Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.*

Jeremiah 46:10 *For that day belongs to the Lord GOD of hosts, A day of vengeance, so as to avenge Himself on His foes; And the sword will devour and be satiated And drink its fill of their blood; For there will be a slaughter for the Lord GOD of hosts, In the land of the north by the river Euphrates.*

Ezekiel 13:5 *"You have not gone up into the breaches, nor did you build the wall around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of the LORD.*

Ezekiel 30:3 *"For the day is near, Even the day of the LORD is near; It will be a day of clouds, A time of doom for the nations.*

Joel 1:15 *Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.*

Joel 2:1 *Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near,*

Joel 2:11 *The LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?*

Joel 2:31 *"The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.*

¹⁰ In most English versions of the Old Testament, *Yahweh* (the Hebrew Tetragrammaton, which is the personal name for God) is rendered as LORD (all capital letters). When the word, Lord (referring to God), is encountered in the Old Testament (beginning with a capital, "L," but followed by lower case "ord"), the Hebrew word is *adonai* which literally means "lord."

Joel 3:14 *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.*

Amos 5:18 *Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light;*

Amos 5:20 *Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?*

Obadiah 1:15 *"For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.*

Zephaniah 1:7 *Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near, For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests.*

Zephaniah 1:14 *Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly.*

Zechariah 14:1 *Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you.*

Malachi 4:5 *"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.*

Five verses in the New Testament contain the term, or its equivalent.

Acts 2:20 *'The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. (quoting Joel 2:31)*

1 Corinthians 5:5 *I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

2 Corinthians 1:14 *just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 5:2 *For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.*

2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.*

In Amos 5 the prophet addresses Israelites who were always talking about the coming Day of Jehovah (Yahweh), as if it would be a wonderful time for all of Jacob's descendents, just because they were Jacob's descendents. Amos warns his audience (Amos 5:18ff) that it will be otherwise because of their sin.

In a reverse sort of way, this is in keeping with Peter's statement in the home of Cornelius.

Acts 10:34-35 *Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.*

Paul presents the same truth in Romans Chapters 2 – 3 in which he argues for a common judgment for all, regardless of race.

Romans 2:5-8 *But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.*

As already noted, the faithful few usually suffer with the unfaithful (famine, plague of locusts in Joel, Babylonian captivity, etc.) in an historical Day of Jehovah. Joel and Zephaniah especially work this out. In the Great Day of the Lord (depending on one's eschatological view, of course), the faithful will not suffer the consequences of God's chastisement and judgment.

Also as noted earlier, the term, "the latter days," often embraces the entire era between the resurrection of Christ until the great and notable day of Jehovah. Of course, the prophets and Jews did not understand this. When the New Testament quotes Old Testament passages that contain this terminology it always is with that meaning. For example, note Peter's use of Joel on the Day of Pentecost.

The era began with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:17-18 *"And it shall be in the last days," God says, "That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on My slaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.*

The era will end with the Great and Glorious Day of the Lord (KJV "Great and Notable day of the Lord")

Acts 2:19-20 *"And I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come."*

During the described era,

Acts 2:21 *"And it shall be that everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved."*

II Peter 3 describes the ultimate moment of the Day of Jehovah

2 Peter 3:7, 10 *But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men... But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.*

God then will reconstruct the universe.

2 Peter 3:12-13 *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

Peter echoes Isaiah's exhortation that since these things will occur, we should walk in God's ways now.

2 Peter 3:11, 14 *Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness... Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,*

Frequently in Isaiah there are hints concerning how the sinfulness of man has had an effect on nature. It seems that the fate of sinful humanity and the universe in which sinful man dwells are linked together. Verses 12-13 contain such an example.

Isaiah 2:12-14 *For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty and against everyone who is lifted up, that he may be abased. And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, against all the oaks of Bashan, against all the lofty mountains, against all the hills that are lifted up...*

This is in keeping with Paul's picture of the creation's groaning, waiting for God's final redemption.

Romans 8:19-22 *For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.*

Coupling all of these pictures together (and others in Scripture, as well), it seems that in the Great Day of Jehovah, God will cause all of creation to melt with fervent heat, then from these elements will be constructed (not created, because the existing elements will be used) new heavens and a new earth. The picture of Exalted Zion, in the opening verses of Isaiah 2, will be a part of that new earth, in which righteousness dwells (as per II Peter 3:13).

To what degree the new heavens and the new earth will resemble the present (globes, orbits, etc.) we can only speculate.

The point that Isaiah is making in this section, is that God will come in such fashion that all proud people who have trusted in themselves and the works of their hands will be filled with terror and will be humbled/abased. Note the many of expressions of this is Chapter 2.

Isaiah 2:9-12 *So the common man has been humbled And the man of importance has been abased, But do not forgive them. Enter the rock and hide in the dust From the terror of the LORD and from the splendor of His majesty. The proud look of man will be abased and the loftiness of man will be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty and against everyone who is lifted up, that he may be abased.*

Isaiah 2:17 *The pride of man will be humbled and the loftiness of men will be abased; and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day...*

Isaiah 2:19-21 *Men will go into caves of the rocks and into holes of the ground before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty, when He arises to make the earth tremble. In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, in order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty, when He arises to make the earth tremble.*

The idols which men have made and in which they trust will receive special attention throughout Isaiah. In this section, they are significant in the indictment.

Isaiah 2:8, 18, 20 *Their land has also been filled with idols; They worship the work of their hands, That which their fingers have made... But the idols will completely vanish... In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats Their idols of silver and their idols of gold, Which they made for themselves to worship.*

We cannot avoid thinking of Jeremiah's indictment a generation later.

Jeremiah 1:16; 2:13 *I will pronounce My judgments on them concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands... For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.*

The ships of Tarshish in verse 16 refer to the extensive maritime commerce that Judah enjoyed during the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham. Judah had a seaport at Elath (located at the northern apex of the Gulf of Aqaba), which had become a center of shipbuilding and commerce in the time of Solomon (see I Kings 9:26-28; 10:22; 22:48ff; II Chronicles 20:35-37). This seaport was recovered for Judah during Uzziah's reign and lost again during the reign of Ahaz (II Kings 16:6). Jewish ships sailed from Elath through the Red Sea and around the coast of Africa to the harbor of Tartessus, the ancient Phoenician maritime emporium located in Spain (this is the city

to which Jonah sailed, in order to avoid preaching in Ninevah – Jonah 1:1-3). In time, the ships built specifically for the Tartessus trade became a symbol of any large ship, and so the term, “Tarshish,” became a general designation for any large seagoing vessel. These ships were a point of pride and a symbol of Judean success, during the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham.

Chapter 2 closes with the point that the prophet would make throughout the strophe of Chapter 2,

Isaiah 2:22 *Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed?*

This provides a transition from the more general proclamation of judgment to the more specific description of the consequences of God’s judgment pictured in Chapter Three.

3:1 The expression, *the LORD* (Heb: Yahweh) *God of Hosts* (3:1), is the manner in which Isaiah customarily introduces the judicial acts of God (1:24; 10:16,33; 19:4).

God is going to remove everything necessary for life and everything that propped up the pride of Judah. Bread and water are the two indispensable needs for life – food and water.

This was literally fulfilled in both Chaldean and Roman invasions. The terrible famines predicted in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 were experienced in Jerusalem. Hunger became so intense during at least one siege that women devoured their children (Lamentations 2:20, as addressed by Jeremiah, and historically reported by Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book VI, Chapters 3 & 4).

All of those in leadership, including the masters of the black art of muttering magical formulae (the picture is a mixture of Jewish and heathen props) would be removed.

3:4-5 pictures a time when the nation would be ruled by those who were characterized by youthful lawless and bloodstained caprice. The people would resemble their rulers.

3:6-7 Things would become so desperate that a man who could still dress himself decently (if only in a cloak) should be made dictator. Those so chosen would not want the responsibility.

3:8-12 describe the deep tragedy as retribution for their rejection of Yahweh. The people get the rulers they deserve. Verse 12 seems to be a prophecy of Ahaz’s rule, in which the 20 year old rake became king. The court (female rule) is a later topic in Isaiah. Even the prophets lead the people astray.

3:13-15 is a direct rebuke of those in leadership who do not fulfill their role of protecting the weak and helpless. This is an echo of 1:23.

3:16-24 As Isaiah is in the midst of describing the scene of judgment, another word of Yahweh breaks forth and he breaks off his train of thought to deliver this rebuke, aimed directly at the aristocratic women of Jerusalem. Franz Delitzsch’s comment on these verses can hardly be surpassed.

“Their inward pride shows itself outwardly. They walk with extended throat, *i.e.* bending the neck back, trying to make themselves taller than they are, because they think themselves so great... They also went winking the eyes *i.e.* casting voluptuous and amatory glances with affected innocence... which is all the more inappropriate, because blackening the eyelids with powder of antimony was regarded in the East of the Old Testament as indispensable to female beauty... They walked about tripping *i.e.* taking short steps, just putting the heel of one foot against the toe of the other... They could only take short steps, because of the chains by which the costly foot-rings worn above their ankles were connected together. These chains, which were probably ornamented with bells, as is sometimes the case now in the East, they used to tinkle as they walked... setting their feet down in such a manner that these ankle-rings knocked against each other... although well versed in sin and old in years, the women of Jerusalem tried to maintain a youthful, childlike appearance.”¹¹

This enumeration of female ornaments (verses 18-23) is connected to the props of the state – the boundless love of ornament that had become prevalent in the time of Uzziah-Jotham. This entire address is aimed at contrasting the massive, worldly glory in all its varied forms with the true, spiritual, and majestic simple glory, whose reality is manifested from within. This is in keeping with the rebuke of the flamboyant worship services in 1:10ff, which did not reflect the true heart of the people.

4:1 is the closing verse of Chapter Three. This verse summarizes the fate of the women of Jerusalem, when a future historical day of Jehovah comes upon the land.

4:2-6 Messianic Zion

The Branch of the Lord has been understood from ancient times as referring to the name of the coming Messiah. This is the interpretation given in the Targum¹² and reflected in many of the prophetic books.

Isaiah 11:1 *Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

Isaiah 53:2 *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.*

Jeremiah 23:5 *"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.*

¹¹ Keil & Delitzsch *op cit* page 142-143

¹² Aramaic Translations or paraphrases of Hebrew Scriptures.

Jeremiah 33:15 *'In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.*

Zechariah 3:8 *'Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you-- indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.*

Zechariah 6:12 *"Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD.*

4:3 The emphasis is on the holiness of those who will be in the city. Those who are written, or recorded, for life are the only ones who will inhabit the city, in that day. This can be understood either in the sense of foreordination or in the sense of those who have made a choice for the Messiah and thus are recorded.¹³

4:4-6 After Yahweh has purged the nation, in the Messianic Zion, God's presence will be constant as it was in the wilderness, symbolized by the holy cloud and column of fire.¹⁴

5:1-30 The Parable of the Vineyard and Corresponding Woes

5:1-7 Yahweh points out that He has done for Judah more than anyone could ask. However, instead of the fruit that He anticipated, Judah and Israel brought forth evil. This parable grows out of the cycle of prophecies that have preceded it – it summarizes what already has been declared.

5:8-12 The greed and opulence of Judah's upper class is condemned. Certain real estate empires would try to obtain all of the land that they could and as a result, no one beside themselves could live in the land. All of this real estate activity would be in violation of the law that all hereditary land should be inalienable and if any family property were sold, it was to revert back to the family at every year of jubilee (each 50 years).¹⁵

Micah 2:2ff describes the same activity that Isaiah condemns. All of these possessions will become desolate and the fields illegally obtained and kept will produce very little produce.

Verses 11-12 picture the carousing and reveling in which these lawless one's engage in order to distract themselves from facing the truth.

5:13-17 These revelers are not aware of God's activity and the impending doom. God will be glorified by the fate of these who gave Him no thought.

5:18-23 These verses contain a litany of obvious judgments, called, "woes." There is a bit of sarcasm in these verses. They were proud of their unbelief, but this unbelief was like a halter

¹³ See Ps 69:28; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27

¹⁴ Numbers 14:14ff; Exodus 19:9, 16ff. On one occasion, at the dedication of Solomon's Temple, the smoke cloud filled the entire building (I Kings 8:10)

¹⁵ Leviticus 25:10ff; 27:17ff; Numbers 36:4

that harnessed them to sin, and therefore to the punishment for sin, which they went on dragging farther and farther, unaware of the wagon (sin) coming behind them.

5:24-25 Isaiah pictures the utter devastation of these proud Judeans. Even in the dire situation pictured, Yahweh's anger was not satisfied and more was yet to come.

5:26-30 Yahweh will call a distant nation, as one whistles for a dog, to come and ravage Judah. This nation is one whose lust for conquest and domination cannot be satiated.

This prophetic pronouncement was fulfilled in several events, beginning with the locust plague predicted in Joel (the locust horde is likened to a mighty people arranged for battle – Joel 2), and the Assyrian conquests.

The Babylonian captivity of Judah was the most immediate and dramatic fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Here is the chronology of that captivity.

606 BC Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, and took some of the Temple treasures, King Jehoiakim, and many of the royal family, including Daniel, to Babylon (Daniel 1:1-3; II Chronicles 36:6-7). Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiachin the vassal ruler of Judah..

597 BC Nebuchadnezzar took the rest of the Temple treasures, king Jehoiachin, and 10,000 Jewish leaders to Babylon (II Kings 24:14-16), leaving vassal king, Zedekiah, in charge.

586 BC The Babylonians reacted to the rebellious spirit that was being displayed in Jerusalem and so they burned the city and tore down its walls. They blinded the vassal king Zedekiah and took him in chains to Babylon with 832 other captives. Only the poor and unskilled were left in Judah (II Kings 25:-12; Jeremiah 52:28-30). It took the Babylonians a year and a half to fully subdue Jerusalem (the siege began on the 10th day of the 10th month in the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign; and the city was burned on the 7th day of the 5th month in Zedekiah's 11th year).

581 BC The Babylonians came again and carried off 745 more people (Jeremiah 52:30). This was after a considerable group had fled to Egypt (Jeremiah 43), compelling Jeremiah to go with them.

This captivity had been predicted 100 years before it happened (Isaiah 39:6; Micah 4:10). Jeremiah had predicted that it would last 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11,12). Daniel understood Jeremiah's prophecy that the captivity would last 70 years (Daniel 9:1-2).

Following the Babylonian Captivity, and the return of the captives to Judah, Jerusalem and the surrounding area continued to be a place of conflict and darkness.

332 BC Alexander the Great conquered Palestine and showed great consideration to the Jews. Alexander spared Jerusalem and offered opportunities to all Jews who would settle in the Egyptian city that he was founding, Alexandria. After Alexander's death, his empire was divided among four generals. Palestine first went to Syria, but then was under the general who controlled Egypt. The Greek/Egyptian rulers were called *Ptolemies*, and for the most part, they were merciful toward the Jews.

198 BC The Syrian, Antiochus the Great conquered the Egyptians in Palestine and so Jerusalem came under the domination of the Greek/Syrians. These rulers were called, *Seleucids*.

168 BC The Seleucid, Antiochus Epiphanes was violently bitter toward the Jews and did all that he could to exterminate Jehovistic worship. He defiled the Temple, offered a sow on the altar, erected an altar to Jupiter, prohibited Temple worship, forbade circumcision on the penalty of death, sold thousands of Jewish families into slavery, destroyed all copies of Scripture that could be found, slaughtered anyone found to be in possession of Scripture, and used every torture imaginable to force individual Jews to forsake their worship of Jehovah. This led to the heroic Maccabean revolt.

165 BC The Maccabean family succeeded in leading a revolt that resulted in the Jews recapturing Jerusalem. The revolt was begun in 167 BC, under the leadership of Matthias, a priest, and his five warlike sons: Judas, Jonathan, Simon, John, and Eleazar.

63 BC The Roman, Pompey, conquered Palestine and appointed an Idumean, Antipater, as ruler of Judea. He was succeeded by his son, Herod the Great who took the title, King of Judea (ruled 37 – 3 BC). Herod rebuilt the Temple with great splendor. He was a cruel, brutal man.

70 AD A revolt against Rome began in 66 AD. Titus and his huge Roman army (30,000 Romans against 24,000 Jews), took 5 months to batter down the walls of Jerusalem. They burned the city and destroyed the Temple, except for three great towers that Herod had built at the northwest corner. They left these so that all could see the strength of the fortifications which Titus had overcome. The Roman army continued to move through the land, killing more than 100,000 Jews and taking 95,000 captives, including Josephus.

135 AD For 50 years, Jerusalem disappeared from history. In 135, Barcocheba (son of the star) pretending to be the Messiah, led a revolt and attempted to rebuild the Temple. The Romans came with great force, killed 580,000 Jews, desolated Judah, once again, erected a Temple to Jupiter on the place of the Temple, and made it against the law for Jews to enter the city.

326 AD Under Constantine, the city became a leading Christian center.

637 AD The city fell to the Mohammedans and remained an Islamic city until the close of World War I (1917), when it returned to the control of Christendom (British).

Clearly, the utter darkness prophesied by Isaiah and others has prevailed in the land for nearly 2000 years. The formation of the nation of Israel in the late-1940's still has not lifted that darkness.

II. ISAIAH'S CALL TO THE ROLE OF PROPHET Chapter 6

The immediate problem that must be faced in Chapter Six is the one of chronology. Is this the record of Isaiah's inaugural call, and if so, does it precede Chapter One or does Chapter Six belong after Chapter Five? Some argue that this is a call to a special mission rather than Isaiah's inaugural call. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the other two major prophetic authors, record their calls early in their books (Jeremiah 1:4-10 and Ezekiel 1:1-2:11). Is this Isaiah's inaugural prophetic call, or is this a call to a special mission?

Those who argue that Chapter Six should precede Chapter One argue the following points:

- As noted above, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets record their call, thus giving credibility to their proclamations. One would expect Isaiah to record his inaugural call, for the same reason and Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others recorded their call.
- The entire book of Isaiah contains traces of the impression made by this ecstatic vision. The favorite name of God in the mouth of Isaiah is "The Holy One of Israel." This title

is an echo of what Isaiah heard the seraphim declaring in this vision. The expression is found twenty-five times in Isaiah. Outside of Isaiah it is found only three times in Psalms (Psalm 71:22; 78:41; 89:18) and twice in Jeremiah (50:29; 51:5). Isaiah uses the expression twenty-five times and one of these is quoted in II Kings 19:22 (Isaiah. 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11f, 15; 31:1; 37:23 [quoted in II Kings 19:22]; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14) The prominence of this expression in the chapters prior to Chapter Six, supports the view that Isaiah describes his first call in Chapter Six.

- The joy with which Isaiah offered himself to be God's messenger was in response to his forgiveness of sins (verses 6-8). The consciousness of his own personal sinfulness and the sinfulness of the nation would have prevented him from coming forward to denounce his nation prior to his personal cleansing.
- The prophetic office always rested upon an extraordinary call from God. When Isaiah relates such an extraordinary call as this, he must be describing the sealing of his prophetic office and therefore his own first call.

Those who argue that Chapter Six belongs after the first five chapters state the following points of view:

- In every copy of Isaiah, Chapter Six is located after Chapter Five, not at the beginning of the book. There is no real reason to insist that Chapter Six records an inaugural call that requires us to move it, chronologically, to the beginning of the book.
- Dates mentioned in the book are in chronological sequence (6:1; 7:1; 14:28; 20:1; 36:1). This indicates that the book follows a general chronological order, thus Chapter Six follows the material in Chapter Five.
- It is evident (1:1) that Isaiah prophesied *before* the death of Uzziah. The people were extremely guilty and one would assume that they were inclined to ignore Isaiah's word. God therefore gave this vision to Isaiah in the year that Uzziah died, in order to give him more authority in the minds of the people.
- Chapter Six records a new commission, or the beginning of a new ministry. The people were cold toward God and Isaiah was commissioned in Chapter Six to begin to bring a message that would result in a final hardening of the nation in order to insure its destruction.
- In Chapters One through Five the prophet has spoken severe woes upon the people. The opposition to his message was rising. It became necessary for him to produce his credentials and to demonstrate his authority for speaking in tones of such severity. Therefore, in Chapter Six, Isaiah reveals his commission. So viewed, Chapter Six becomes an apologetic – the claim of authority to pronounce woes upon others because he has pronounced woes upon himself.

Unless one can prove that Isaiah Chapter Six is the record of the prophet's inaugural call, and that such a call must be given before prophecies such as those in Chapters One through Five can be given, then there is little compelling reason to relocate the episode recorded in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six is divided into two parts: The Vision (verses 1-8) and The Message (verses 9-13)

The Vision 1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, is a significant fact. Uzziah's reign marked the peak of Judah's glory. Recall from the Introduction, that Jotham and Uzziah were coregents during the last fifteen years of Uzziah's reign. Jotham was the sole ruler for no more than two years after Uzziah's death., then Ahaz became king and Judah began a downward spiral from which it never recovered. Thus, the vision of Chapter Six marks a watershed event for the nation and for the prophet. Jerome observes in connection with this passage that the year in which Uzziah died was a watershed moment in the history of the world, because it would have been the year in which Romulus was born and only a short time thereafter that Rome was founded (viz. 754, according to some chronologies).

I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.

This clearly was a theophany, since no one, while in the flesh, can see God and live.

Exodus 33:18-20 *Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"*

John 1:18 *No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

1 John 4:12 *No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.*

Thus, as stated in John 1:18, quoted above, one of the purposes of the incarnation was to reveal God the Father in a manner that man could survive. Thus, Jesus said to Phillip,

John 14:9 *Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

A *theophany* (Greek: *theos* [God] and *phaino* [to become evident, or to meet the eyes]) is a visual representation of God, presented to the mind of a human. When one receives a theophany, the human response is as if one were beholding God, Himself. Spiritually, it is the same as if one beheld God, Himself. There are many theophanies in the Old Testament, one of the most striking being in Ezekiel 1:26ff.

The theophany in Isaiah 6 is of special interest because Jesus declared that in this theophany, Isaiah saw the glory of the Christ.

John 12:37-42 *But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the lord been revealed?" For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, "He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their*

heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them." These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;

Since this is a theophany, a mental picture that is given to communicate the presence of God, we cannot speculate about why Isaiah did not see three beings – the Trinity. Theophanies do not necessarily coincide with such details. The fact is, Jesus, as quoted above, clearly stated that the Son was present in the glory displayed in this vision. This one of those times in which Jesus clearly claimed to be Divine – to be God.

Isaiah saw Jehovah high and lifted up, and as far as his eye could see, God's splendid robe covered the area. There was no room for anyone to stand.

The seraphim flew with two of their wings, thus, they hovered or soared. The seraphim covered their faces with two other wings in their awe of Divine glory, and their feet were covered by two other wings, in their consciousness of the depth at which every creature stands below the Holiest of all.

This is the only scriptural mention of seraphim. In Ezekiel cherubim are mentioned, as the beings who carried the chariot of the Divine throne (Ezekiel Chapter 10). Here, seraphim are said to surround the seat on which the Lord is enthroned. Because of this, some hold that the seraphim are first in rank, with the cherubim being second, above all other angels.

The seraphim are seen as a heavenly choir, participating in antiphonal singing. One side lifted up their voice, declaring, *Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts*. The other side responded, *filling the whole earth is His glory*. Thus, there was a continual unbroken antiphonal song. Their continual employment was uninterrupted worship of God. The fact that the seraphim declared the holiness of God three times is taken by many to reflect the Trinity. That is speculation, but not something to be rejected. Interestingly, the great Isaiah scroll found in the first of the Dead Sea caves, reads, *Holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts*. Thus far, textual scholars have considered the Masoretic Text (*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts*) to be superior to the Qumran Isaiah scroll in this passage.

Every time the choir began their song, the support of the threshold of the porch on which Isaiah stood, trembled, and the building was filled with smoke. It seems that the smoke came from the altar, but was the immediate consequence of the seraph's song of praise.

Initially overcome by the sight, Isaiah recovers his self-consciousness and cries out,

Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

In the theophany, even the seraphim covered their faces, because of the holiness of Jehovah. Isaiah not only became aware of his own unholiness, but of the nation to which he belonged and how inappropriate it was for him to behold Jehovah.

Immediately, one of the seraphim, with tongs, took a hot coal from the altar and touched the lips of Isaiah, thus removing the iniquity and forgiving Isaiah's sin.

God then put forth the call. Note that Jehovah asked, "Who will go for *Us*?" The use of the plural is consistent with the Hebrew tendency to use plurals for Divinity. For example, the Hebrew word for *God* is *elohim*, which is plural in form (the ending, *im*). This is consistent with God's subjunctive statement before the creation of man, "Let *Us* make man in *Our* image and according to *Our* likeness." (Genesis 1:26) Many see this as reference to the Trinity. Others argue that the *us* in Isaiah 6:8 refers to the heavenly hosts. However, if the language of Scripture is consistent, then this could not refer to the heavenly hosts, or else man would be made in the image of God and the angels, which contradicts Genesis 1:26-27. Thus, it is not far fetched to say that the three-fold pronouncement of holiness, and the plural pronoun of Isaiah 6:8, might reflect the Trinity. This especially fits Jesus pronouncement (John 12:37-42) that He at least was included with God the Father in the glory beheld by Isaiah.

Verses 9-10 Isaiah's immediate response resulted in a commission. The commission was a difficult one. Isaiah was to preach, but the results would be rejection, rather than positive response to the message. The more Isaiah would preach and his word recorded, the less responsive would be the audience.

This portion of Isaiah's commission applied not only to those who were present in Isaiah's lifetime, but to the Jewish nation throughout history.

- Jesus cited this passage as a sequence to the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10)
- John cited this passage when he noted the Jews' unbelieving response to Jesus' miracles (John 12:39-40)
- Luke quoted this passage when explaining the Roman Jewish leaders' rejection of the Gospel (Acts 28:25-27)
- Paul cited the passage twice in Romans, describing the Jewish rejection of Gospel (Romans 10:16; 11:8)

The Parable of the Sower especially is enlightening to us in reference to this passage. The point of the parable is not that people should change the type of soil that they might be, but rather that their response to the Gospel would be a litmus test – a measure of the type of soil that they were. Only one type of soil (heart) would result in salvation.

Matthew 13:3-8 *And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.*

When the disciples asked for an explanation of the parable, Jesus gave it to them.

Matthew 13:18-23 *Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.*

The old saying, “The same sun that hardens the clay melts the wax,” is very appropriate here. God does not necessarily choose for a person to have a hard heart. However, how one responds to the message of God reveals his innate character.

Verses 11-13 Yet, there also is an element of God’s judgment on the nation that will not be turned away. Isaiah asks, *How long*, and the response is that the judgment will not be turned away until total devastation has taken place and all but a small remnant of the people have been destroyed.

There will be a remnant (a stump of the tree), but even this remnant will be *subject to burning*. Yet, out of this remaining seed would come forth a renewed nation. Thus, in a few words the future of Judah/Israel is sketched out. The race is indestructible because of God’s earlier promises to Abraham, etc., but the mass of the people were doomed to destruction through God’s judicial sentence. Only a remnant would be converted and thus perpetuate the glorious future. This is in keeping with Paul’s heart for the Jews in Romans 10-11.

III. THE BOOK OF IMMANUEL Chapters 7-12

A. THE PROPHECY OF THE VIRGIN BORN SON, IMMANUEL CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-2 The historical setting

The historical setting is outlined in the Introduction, pages 5-6. To summarize, the kings of Israel and Syria attacked Judah separately, then as a combined force. They were angry with Ahaz because he would not join in a confederation against the Assyrians, and so they planned to conquer Judah and place one of their confederates on the throne. When Ahaz and the people of Jerusalem learned that the combined forces of Syria and Israel were preparing to attack the city, both the king and the people were filled with fear. Isaiah colorfully describes their fear.

Isaiah 7:2 *When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.*

Verses 3-9 The prophet's first interview with Ahaz

Yahweh's instructions to Isaiah are very specific:

1. Where he is to find Ahaz: at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the road to the laundryman's plot.
2. Isaiah is to take his son, Shear-jashub with him (the name means, *a remnant shall return or the remnant is converted*)
3. The exact words of the message are given to Isaiah.

The pool was on the western side of the city, where the "fullers" (laundrymen) carried on their occupation. Clothes were washed in the upper pool, then spread out on the ground to bleach or dry. The road which runs past this fuller's field is the one which leads from the western gate of the city to Joppa. The city received its water supply from the upper Gihon pool. No doubt Ahaz was in the area making preparations to protect the water supply in the event of the probable attack.

Isaiah's name (Jehovah is salvation) and his son's name (the remnant is converted or shall return) were a prophetic message to Ahaz.

Isaiah was to assure Ahaz that the rulers of Israel and Syria were only smoldering firebrands – they weren't capable of blazing anymore and could only smoke, which might make the eyes smart a little bit. Note that God does not honor either of these two with the title of "king." Instead, Rezin is associated with Aram, which is another word for Syria; Pekah is called "Son of Remaliah, to recall his low birth and the absence of any promise related to his family.

Jehovah pictures the conflict as being between Himself and these two invaders. God had determined the course of history and these rulers could not change it. God declared that because Ephraim (the kingdom of the ten tribes) had entered into an ungodly covenant with idolatrous Syria, the Northern Kingdom would pass out of existence in 65 years.

Then, the startling statement to Ahaz *If you will not believe, you surely shall not last.*

Verses 10-25 The prophet's second interview with Ahaz

Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven.

- Jehovah called himself the God of Ahaz, a son of David.
- The offer to perform any sign in the entire creation in order to produce faith in Ahaz is unparalleled in Scripture.

Ahaz feigned reverence as the excuse for not asking for a sign. In Ahaz we see the exact fulfillment of the hardened heart that Jehovah declared would be demonstrated when Isaiah prophesied.

Isaiah's response highlights the absurdity of Ahaz' refusal to honor God's offer to provide a sign.

Verse 13 *Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?"*

What follows is one of the grandest promises in the Bible.

Verse 14 *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*

This verse has been a battlefield of controversy in modern Bible translation, chiefly surrounding the Revised Standard Version. The controversy involved the word, *virgin*. The Hebrew word rendered *virgin* is **הַעַלְמָה** (*ha-almah*). The National Council of Churches in conjunction with Thomas Nelson & Sons published the Revised Standard Version New Testament in 1946 and the Revised Standard Version Old Testament in 1952. Those who functioned on the translation committees of both of these ventures were theological liberals, or radical scholars, both Jewish and Gentile. Many (if not all) of these denied the virgin birth of Jesus. They rejected the apostolic authorship of the New Testament. The view was put forth that Jesus originally was not considered to be Divine by His early followers, but as the years passed, the myth grew, and by the time the New Testament was written, those who composed the documents had accepted the myth. They made the decision that the personal pronoun, *Thou*, would be retained for God, and *you*, would be used for humans. When it came to Jesus, *you*, would be used except in those passages where the context required the use of *Thou*, referring to Divinity. The RSV committee said that the passages in which *Thou* is required were passages of late origin, having been written after the myth of Divinity had developed.

One of the challenges faced by the RSV teams was the Christological content of the Old Testament. The most striking of these is Isaiah 7:14. The RSV translators contended that the Hebrew word, *almah*, merely meant, *young woman*¹⁶. They argued that neither Isaiah nor the Jews understood the prophecy to refer to a virgin birth. Those who argue against a virgin birth understanding of Isaiah 7:14 contend that if Isaiah had intended to convey a virgin birth, he would have used *bethulah* (**בְּתוּלָה**), which indicates virginity in more definite terms (a maiden living in her parent's house and a long way matrimony¹⁷). However, because the Septuagint renders *bethulah* with the Greek term, *parthenos*, in several places, and then uses *parthenos* to render *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 – thus indicating that in their minds, the two terms are synonymous – the committee tried to argue that in some places, *bethulah* did not mean, *virgin*. Every place they turned they faced a challenge to their radical views, and continually had to go to great lengths to justify themselves.

The Septuagint Version posed the greatest challenge to the theological liberalism of the RSV committee. The Septuagint Version is a Greek translation of the Hebrew text, produced in

¹⁶ This word is used seven times in the Old Testament, including Isaiah 7:14. The other references are Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; Proverbs 30:19; Psalm 68:25; Song of Solomon 1:3; 6:8. In each of these passages the reference is to a young woman. The most natural understanding in each occurrence is that of a virgin/maiden, although it could be argued that in some of these verses the meaning is ambiguous.

¹⁷ Keil & Delitzsch, page 217

Alexandria c.285 BC¹⁸. This was the version of the Old Testament used by the Jews throughout the world in the time of Christ. Most Jews had lost the ability to read Hebrew, but all could read Greek. Almost all of the Old Testament quotations found in the New Testament are quotations of the Septuagint. In rendering Isaiah 7:14, the Septuagint translators had used the Greek word, παρθένος (*parthenos*) to translate the Hebrew, *almah*., *Parthenos* is the Greek word for virgin.¹⁹ Had the Septuagint translators understood *almah* to mean, “young woman,” they would have used the Greek word, νεάνις (*neanis*), which means, *young woman*, without any specificity as to her virginity. The fact that the Septuagint translators used *parthenos* in rendering Isaiah 7:14 is strong evidence that the Jews of the Third Century BC considered the Hebrew, *almah*, in Isaiah 7:14 to refer to a virgin birth, not just to the pregnancy of a young woman.

When the Great Isaiah scroll was found in the Dead Sea Cave, along with several fragments of Isaiah in other caves, the radical scholars hoped to find some Hebrew word other than *almah*, in Isaiah 7:14, but such hopes were dashed. All of the Dead Sea scrolls and portions of Isaiah that contained 7:14 contained the word, *almah*.

The RSV committee then began to tout a Second Century AD Greek text of the Old Testament, as the basis for rendering *almah* by some word other than *parthenos*. The version that they cited was the work of a Second Century proselyte to Judaism named, Aquilla.

Dr. Harry M. Orlinsky, a Jewish member of the committee who rejected all the claims of Christianity, wrote the following in his explanation for the committee’s rejection of the word, *virgin*, in Isaiah 7:14.

“There are several other translations, into Greek, Aramaic, Syria, and Latin, which were made shortly after the turn of the era directly from the Hebrew Bible. Early in the second century A.D. Aquila, a convert to Judaism, made an independent and unique Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. He incorporated the kind of Jewish interpretation which was current his day, and he avoided the Christological elements which had been introduced into the Septuagint text. Thus Aquila rendered the Hebrew word *ha-almah* in Isaiah 7:14 literally, ‘the young woman’ in place of the word ‘virgin’ which the Christians had substituted for it. Unfortunately, only fragments of Aquila have survived.”²⁰

Several things can be said about Dr. Orlinsky’s statement, but the most obvious is his charge that Christians had substituted *virgin* for *young woman*. The Jewish Greek translators who produced the Septuagint version in 285 BC were the ones who had removed all ambiguity from Isaiah 7:14, i.e. that Isaiah prophesied a virgin birth.

¹⁸ Although 285 BC is often the cited date of the Septuagint, the Pentateuch probably was the only portion of the Old Testament completed at that time. The balance of the Old Testament was completed in the following years.

¹⁹ Greek literature is very emphatic about the fact that Athena, the patron goddess of Athens, was a virgin. The temple on the citadel above Athens was called *The Parthenon*, in reference to Athena’s virginity.

²⁰ Orlinsky, Harry M., in *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament*, page 30, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, Copyright 1952, by Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Orlinsky's comments about Aquila especially are revealing. Indeed, Aquila did incorporate the kind of Jewish interpretation current in his day. However, we need to hear the rest of the story. What was the Jewish interpretation of the Second Century and who was Aquila? The Jewish interpretation of Jesus was no different than the Jewish interpretation of Jesus while He was on earth. The Jews of Jesus day accused him of being in league with the devil, being a glutton and winebibber, perverting the nation, a blasphemer, etc.

In discussing the Second Century Jewish interpretations and views of Jesus, Professor R.C. Foster, in his treatise, *The Battle of the Versions*,²¹ cites the work of the noted Jerusalem Jewish scholar, Joseph Klausner. In Klausner's 1925 book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Klausner includes a chapter, "The Hebrew Sources," in which he assembles the various scurrilous attacks upon Jesus which were current among Jews in the Second Century. Klausner cites various terms, repeated over and over in the Talmud, expressing bitter spite against Jesus. Terms such as, "that man," "the fool," "the one hung," "son of the stake," "worshipper of the brick," etc., are used for Jesus. Klausner relates the Jewish legend that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary and a Roman soldier named, "Panther."²² This Jewish legend stated that Mary was divorced from her husband after he discovered her to be an adulteress. While wandering about in shame, she gave birth to Jesus, whose father was a Roman soldier named, Pantheras. Klausner speculates that Pantheras is a corrupt travesty of Parthenos. Klausner explains that the Christians called Jesus, "the Son of the Virgin," (*huios tou parthenou*) and the Jews in bitter mockery invented this story and called Jesus, "Ben ha-Pantera," Son of the Leopard. Klausner concludes that Pantera finally became the name of a Roman soldier when the story grew with time. If Aquila's version reflects the Jewish interpretation of his day, the resulting anti-Christ version of the Old Testament should be no surprise.

Aquila, the author of the Greek version of the Old Testament to which Orlinsky refers was a wealthy pagan, related to the Emperor, Hadrian. He began the study of Hebrew when he was about forty years old, and became a convert to Judaism. He was a student of noted Rabbis, Eliezer, Joshua, and their brilliant successor Akiba. Tradition says that he also knew Gamaliel. After becoming a Jew, Aquila became impressed by the miracles that he saw worked by some of the disciples of the apostles and he became a convert from Judaism to Christianity. One reason that the miracles impressed Aquila was the fact that he was a devotee of pagan astrology and magic. He had no trouble combining his pagan astrology with Judaism, but when he began teaching these things in the Church, and when he refused to give up these pagan practices, he was excommunicated. He returned to Judaism with great bitterness toward Christians. Since Christians were using the Septuagint to proclaim Christ,²³ Aquila determined to produce a Greek version of the Old Testament without anything in it that could be favorable to Christianity. Thus, in his version, Aquila kept control of what the prophets were permitted to say and in every place possible, blotted out the predictions of a virgin-born, Divine, Messiah.

²¹ Foster, R.C., *The Battle of the Versions*, (Cincinnati, The Cincinnati Bible Seminary, 1953) page 16ff

²² Origen, in *Contra Celsum*, Book I, Chapter 60, par. 32, 33, refers to this slanderous tale, and refutes it.

²³ Note how often Paul reasoned from the Old Testament, proving to Jews that Jesus was the Christ

A final note on Aquila: During the last portion of his life, Aquila proved to be a traitor to the Jewish race. Aquila's relative, Emperor Hadrian, determined in 135 AD, to build a pagan city where Jerusalem had stood before the destruction of 70 AD. He had a pagan temple erected on the site of Solomon's Temple, with a statue of himself set up on the site of the Holy of Holies. The man who supervised this enterprise was Aquila, the author of the anti-Christ Greek version of the Old Testament. It is no surprise that in the following generation, because of the manner in which Aquila closed out his career, the Jews sought to obscure the identity of the author of this version, by changing the spelling of his name (*Onkelos*). It also is distressing that the RSV committee, fronted by Dr. Orlinsky, would cite Aquila's work as an authority for how Isaiah 7:14 should be rendered.

Here is how various popular versions render Isaiah 7:14

^{ESV} **Isaiah 7:14** *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

^{KJV} **Isaiah 7:14** *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 7:14** *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*

^{NAS} **Isaiah 7:14** *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*

^{NIV} **Isaiah 7:14** *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

^{NLT} **Isaiah 7:14** *All right then, the Lord himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel-- 'God is with us.'*

^{RSV} **Isaiah 7:14** *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

^{NRS} **Isaiah 7:14** *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.*

Of course, the New Testament consistently presents Isaiah 7:14 as referring to a virgin birth. Not only does Matthew 1:22-23 quote Isaiah's prophecy as being the prediction of a virgin birth, but the narrative account in Luke confirms this. Even here, however, the liberal RSV committee sought to maneuver around the confirmation of the narrative.

The euphemism for sexual intercourse throughout scripture is to *know* someone this is true in Hebrew (Genesis 4:1, *et. al.* and Greek Luke 1:34 *et. al.*) The idea is know by experience, sexual activity. As already noted, this is the Greek terminology in Luke 1:34.

The 1946 edition of the RSV, without any textual authority for doing so, rendered Luke 1:34,

And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?"

By having Mary say, *I have no husband*, it was not necessary to admit a virgin birth.

Because this rendering was a paraphrase reflecting the liberal point of view, rather than a translation, and because it could not be justified on the basis of the biblical use of the expression, "to know," the RSV establishment changed their rendering of this verse when a revision of the RSV was published in 1989. The result is a clear understanding of the meaning of the text.

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

In spite of their making this change in the wording of Luke 1:34, the radicals still will not concede that Isaiah 7:14 should be understood as predicting a virgin birth. Their contention is that the Four Gospels were not written by the men whose names they bear. They argue that the Gospels were compiled by a group of editors long after the Jesus myth had developed, including the myth of His virgin birth.

Beyond the linguistic argument is the argument from context. This birth was to be a sign, something along the lines of what Jehovah had offered to Ahaz, *as deep as Sheol, or as high as heaven*. The normal pregnancy of a young woman would not be much of a sign of anything except that she had engaged in sexual intercourse. Some argue that the timing of the birth, in conjunction with the rest of the prophecy is the sign. However, how could that be a sign – that some unnamed young woman would get pregnant and before her son was old enough to know right from wrong, the nation would undergo devastation. The contextual argument for a virgin birth totally disallows the validity of the arguments of those who want to remove the miraculous (i.e., the virgin birth) from Isaiah 7:14.

Some argue that Isaiah was prophesying that his own wife would become pregnant, or already was pregnant, and that a son would be born in fulfillment of the prophecy. If this were true, Isaiah could hardly have found a more ambiguous way to make this declaration. It would seem that if he were referring to his wife, that he would have used the expression, אִשְׁתִּי *ishti* "my wife." Also, there is no mention of Isaiah's wife's giving birth to a son named, *Immanuel*. Furthermore, how could that have been a sign that would have impressed upon Ahaz' mind the power of Jehovah.

Some Jews argue that Isaiah was predicting the pregnancy of Ahaz' wife, and the birth of his son, Hezekiah. Again, this falls far short of the intent of the prophecy.

A "dual-fulfillment" theory has been advanced by some. This view is not necessarily liberal, or modernist. It is a middle of the road position. Many great, sincere orthodox scholars believe this. The reason for this theory is that Isaiah said to Ahaz, *therefore, Jehovah, Himself, shall*

give you a sign, behold a virgin shall conceive ... Dual-fulfillment theorists ask, “How could a child born more than 700 years later be a sign to Ahaz?”

The dual-fulfillment theory could carry some weight, if there were an event of the moment that could be shown to be consistent with and equal to the prophecy. Thus far, no one has been able to put forth any such event.

CONDITIONS THAT MUST BE SATISFIED FOR AN EVENT TO QUALIFY AS BEING THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROPHECY

1. The fulfillment must not fall short of the grandeur of the offer made in verse 11.
2. It must be clear that the birth is supernatural.
3. The child must be born of David’s family; for the birth must guarantee the perpetuity of David’s house (Chapters 9:1-7, etc.)
4. This child must be such that the doctrine of God’s presence with Israel (so long represented by the Shekinah) shall be realized in His Person (Immanuel).
5. The dignity of the child must not fall short of that assigned to Him in the prophet’s own expansion of the name Immanuel in 9:6

These demands have never been met by any interpretation other than the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:22-23; Luke 1:31-35).

For those who accept the premise that the Holy Spirit is the author of both the Old and the New Testaments, then there is no question about the meaning of Isaiah 7:14. When the New Testament interprets the Old Testament, the author is interpreting his own work (the OT).

On the basis of this conclusion, we understand the prophecy and its fulfillment to be a sign to the House of David (verse 13), of which Ahaz was the unworthy representative at that time. Both Mary and Joseph were of the House of David (Joseph: Matthew 1:6-16; Mary: Luke 3:23ff [the language of Luke 3:23ff generally is understood to refer to Joseph’s father-in-law, Eli, who would have been Mary’s father]) and for that reason had to travel to the City of David, Bethlehem, to pay their taxes (Luke 2:1-7 which explains how the Galilean, Joseph, is described in Matthew as being in Bethlehem [Matthew 2]).

The nation of Judah (Jewery) was destroyed and dispersed throughout the nations of the world. The nation was destroyed. However, the race was not destroyed, in keeping with the promises to Abraham and to David. Today, much confusion surrounds this topic, but the birth of the Messiah, in his physical being was/is a descendent of David. The Messiah, Jesus, already has fulfilled many of the prophecies concerning David and his house. For example, Paul, in addressing the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, clearly identified Jesus Christ as the essential fulfillment of the prophecies concerning David and the perpetuity of his throne (Acts 13:14-41).

Verses 15-25 state that before the predicted birth of the child, Judah would be devastated. First would come the Assyrians, who would thoroughly “shave” Judah, but not smash it. Assyria was not the power that destroyed Jerusalem. Other nations would come against the land and eventually bring about severe devastation. The land which had been verdant farmland will

become wilderness where hunters will come to hunt wild beasts. The productivity of both agriculture and animal husbandry will be diminished to the point that hunger and starvation are a reality.

The curds and honey in verses 15 and 22 refer to the thickened milk and honey which is the food of the desert. This thickened milk still is the food of nomadic tribes, produced by shaking in skins milk and cream.

The prediction in verse 15 (and the closing verses of the chapter) states that before the time when the child would reach the age to understand right from wrong, the land which had been full of luxuriant fields and vineyards would be a large wooded pastureland, supplying milk and honey, but not much more. This prophecy was fulfilled many times before the majority of Jesus.

Peter states that throughout the Old Testament period, prophets delivered Messianic prophecies which they did not understand. The prophets and others pondered these, wondering what they meant and how they would be fulfilled.

1 Peter 1:10-12 *As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look.*

B. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF JUDGMENTS TO BE FOLLOWED BY REDEMPTION CHAPTERS 8:1 – 9:7

8:1-4 The sign: Maher-shalal-hash-baz

The Syro-Ephraimitish war between Assyria and the Syria/Israel coalition was in full swing when Isaiah was given this mandate by Jehovah. Isaiah was instructed to take a slab, large enough to be a monument and to write on it an inscription in the common style, so that all could read it.

The inscription was to read, לְמַהֵר שָׁלַל חֶשֶׁב בָּז (lamaher-shalal-hash-baz), which meant, “speed spoil, booty hastens.” *Spoil; booty* - but who was to be vanquished? Jehovah knew and Isaiah knew, but the knowledge was carefully veiled in an enigma. The writing was not to disclose anything to the people, but to serve as a public record that the course of events was one that Jehovah had foreseen before hand. In future years, the people of Judah would know that the events had been predetermined by God. To that end, Isaiah was to take two witnesses with him when he wrote and posted the slab, so that when the time arrived in which the prophecy was fulfilled, no one could claim that it was written after the fact. One of the witnesses was Uriah (no doubt the priest who later served Ahaz in making the pagan altar [II Kings 16:10ff]) and Zechariah ben Yeberechياهو (probably the Asaphite mentioned in II Chronicles 29:13).

Shortly thereafter, Isaiah had sexual relations with his wife and she conceived. A son was born and he was named, מָהֵר שָׁלַל חַשְׁבָּז (maher-shalal-hash-baz). Notice that this name is the same as the inscription, except it lacks the first syllable of the inscription, the *Lamed*. According to Franz Delitzsch, the *Lamed* in the inscription is the particle of dedication (i.e. *dedicated to hastening*). Thus, maher-shalal-hasbaz first was an oracular announcement of the immediate future, which a year or so later became a proper name.

Thus, Isaiah now had two sons whose names had prophetic significance. The first son's name, Shear-jashub, referred to the decree of God concerning the future of Jacob's descendents (the restoration of only a small remnant). To this now has been added the second name, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, which was the symbol of the approaching chastisement that God would bring upon the ten northern tribes, through Assyria.

A brief comment on the fulfillment of this prophecy is in the Introduction ("A Summary History of Judah, During Isaiah's Lifetime").

8:5-22 The destruction of Judah, mingled with hope

After the destruction of Syria and Israel, the Assyrians will march against Judah. However, they will be able only to bring a flood that only reaches to the neck (verse 8); the flood will not destroy Judah as it will destroy Syria and Israel.

Verses 8-10 The land was Immanuel's and the reason that the flood could only reach the neck was the fact that God was with them (*Immanuel*). All of the schemes devised by Judah's enemies will fail because "God is with us." (verse 10)

Verses 11-15 A marvelous exhortation that Yahweh gave to his servant, Isaiah. Isaiah was not to be governed by either the fears or the values of the general population. He was to have fear and dread for no one, except God. If he did that, then God would be his place of safety.

Both Israel and Judah would find God to be a stumbling block, a stone to strike them. The New Testament indicates that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of verses 14-15, as reinforced in Isaiah 28:16.

Isaiah 28:16 *Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed."*

Luke 2:34 *And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed--"*

Romans 9:33 *just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."*

1 Peter 2:8 and, *"A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*

Verses 19-22 In desperation, people turn to mediums and spiritualists, looking for some answer. This is reminiscent of the charges brought in 2:6. They should have sought answers in the Scriptures. Because of the failure to know and obey the written Law of God, darkness will overtake the land.

9:1-7 The birth and reign of the Prince of Peace

The New Testament clearly identifies this as a Messianic prophecy (Matthew 4:13-16; and inferred in Luke 1:79 and Ephesians 5:8), revealing that the ministry of the Messiah would begin in Galilee. This wonderful prophetic word is in sharp contrast to the dark picture of the previous word. This word is a word of hope, a development of the promise of 7:14.

Verses 4-5 is a Messianic prophecy couched in Old Testament phraseology, referring to language used concerning Gideon's destruction of Midian (Judges 7)

Verses 6-7 contain beautiful poetic language that struggles to describe the magnificence of the Christ. Clearly, the Divinity of the Christ Child is declared in these terms. The Immanuel would be more than merely a baby born to a virgin. Each of the five titles given to the Child speak of an aspect of His being. Each of these accolades is worthy of contemplation.

The zeal of Jehovah was the guarantee that this was going to happen. The word translated, *zeal*, literally is rendered, *glowing fire*. This fire is two-sided. The fire of love has an obverse side, that of wrath. Thus, the verse sometimes is rendered, *zeal of Jehovah*, and sometimes, *jealousy of Jehovah* – seeking to paraphrase the meaning of the *glowing fire of Jehovah*.

C. JEHOVAH'S CHASTISEMENT, WITH A FOCUS ON SAMARIA CHAPTERS 9:8-10:4

It is unfortunate that those who set up the chapters in Isaiah made a break between 9:21 and 10:1, because the break occurs in the middle of a poem. Little comment is needed on this section, except to note that even though Jehovah brings tragedy to Israel, the people do not repent. The result is total destruction. The theme of the poem is that once God's anger is stirred up, it is difficult to satiate it. He finally rejected the northern nation and nothing could save it from horror, tragedy, and final destruction. The closing verse of the poem speaks with absolute finality.

Isaiah 10:4 *Nothing remains but to crouch among the captives or fall among the slain. In spite of all this His anger does not turn away, and His hand is still stretched out.*

We are reminded of Hebrews 10:30-31, which described a similar situation (i.e., those for whom God has done much, yet they have become unfaithful to Him – see preceding verses).

Hebrews 10:30 *For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people."³¹ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

**D. THE ASSYRIANS WILL BE PUNISHED; GOD'S PEOPLE WILL BE SAVED
CHAPTERS 10:5 – 12:6**

10:5-19 The pride and destruction of Assyria

This is an interesting section, in that Jehovah states that Assyria has been the rod of His anger to bring chastisement against Israel. However, instead of viewing itself as Jehovah's agent, and that the Assyrian victories had taken place because Jehovah had willed it, Assyria considered itself as being invincible and supreme. Jehovah said that this was like a axe boasting itself over the one that wielded it. Because of this pride and arrogance, after Jehovah had used Assyria to chastise Jerusalem and Mt. Zion (the holy mountain in Jerusalem) He was going to bring down Assyria.

Jehovah is described as "the light of Israel," who becomes a "fire and his Holy One a flame." (verse 17)

10:20-23 A Remnant of Israel will return

The judgment of extermination, embracing the whole land, would destroy all but a very few, who would, in time, return to their right position with Jehovah.

10:24-27 A word of encouragement to God's people

God's judgment exercised through Assyria is coming – it is inevitable – the suffering will be severe, but for Judah the end will not be the same as that determined for the ten tribes of the north.

10:28-11:16 Judah humbled, but the Saviour, King, Messiah, shall come out of the stock of Jesse

- **The Assyrian invasion will be frustrated 10:28-32**
Even though nation after nation will flee in fear of the Assyrians, when they get to the outskirts of Jerusalem they will be frustrated. Nob was close to Jerusalem, a place from whence the Temple could be seen. At Nob, the Assyrian will shake his fist at Mt. Zion.
- **The proud Assyrians will be cut down 10:33-34**
These verses describe Jehovah's destruction of Assyria. The theme of Nahum is the doom of the Assyrian capital, and Judah's freedom from further Assyrian attacks. Zephaniah predicts the destruction of the nation of Assyria (Zephaniah 2:13-15)
- **The Deliver will come from the stock of Jesse 11:1-16**

d. His lowly origin V 1

The predicted deliverer will be a descendent of David, even though the clan is almost destroyed.

e. His relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit V 2

His personal endowments would reflect His relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit that came upon Him at His baptism (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32)

f. His glorious administration V 3-16

This picture is fulfilled, to some degree, in the Church. In Acts 15:14ff, Amos is quoted by James, indicating that the prophets foretold the rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David (i.e., David's kingdom), and that this referred to the Church, in which Jew and Gentile were constituents.

However, there seems to be more in these words than poetic or figurative language concerning the Church. Again, we are thrust into a vision of the Messianic Kingdom in which peace (pictured in verses 6-9 by harmony among all creatures).

Christ will be the standard.

The historical enemies of Judah and Israel no longer will be a threat, even the remnant of both northern and southern tribes will be in harmony.

• **The song of the Redeemed 12:1-6**

Little comment is needed on this wonderful song of those who praise and thank Jehovah for deliverance and salvation.

Interestingly, the King James Version uses the name, *Jehovah*, in its rendition only five times. Isaiah 12:2 is one of those times (others are Exodus 6:3; Psalm 68:4; 83:18; Isaiah 26:4).

The closing phrase of the song, *For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel*, is echoed in other places in Scripture, all seemingly pointing to the New Jerusalem, pictured in Revelation.

Ezekiel 37:27 *"My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people."*

Ezekiel 48:35 *"The city shall be 18,000 cubits round about; and the name of the city from that day shall be, 'The LORD is there.'"*

Joel 3:16b-17 *But the LORD is a refuge for His people And a stronghold to the sons of Israel. ¹⁷ Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, And strangers will pass through it no more.*

Zephaniah 3:17 *The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.*

Revelation 21:1-4 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*

III. THE BOOK OF FOREIGN PROPHECIES Chapters 13-23

This section of Isaiah is a collection of prophetic visions concerning various nations that Jehovah revealed to the prophet, probably at different times in his life. Most contain no information about the time that they were given. Some do contain information about the date of the revelation. God's Sovereignty and man's free will both are displayed in these visions.

The picture presented in this collection is a drama of nations over which Jehovah is master. Which nations rise and which ones fall is in His hands. All of the drama is contrived to move toward His goal. From the standpoint of the humans who are the players in this grand drama, God's scheme often is not clear. Often, He makes a move and the players do not even know that He is behind the move. Yet, He is the author of the drama and its director. These oracles display the truth declared by Daniel,

Daniel 2:21 *And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to men of understanding.*

Chapter 13:1-14:23 The burden of Babylon

It seems strange that Isaiah included the vision concerning Babylon first, since Babylon was not impacting Judah during Isaiah's lifetime, whereas some of the other nations mentioned in the collection were involved with Judah in Isaiah's lifetime.

1. The destruction of Babylon 13:1-23

The striking thing about this chapter is the fact that when the oracle was seen by Isaiah, the world power was not Babylon, but Assyria. This oracle would have been given about 100 years before the Babylonians came against Jerusalem and began taking Judeans as captives to Babylon.

Equally striking is the prediction that Jehovah would stir up the Medes against Babylon (13:2-5, 17-18) and how cruel and devastating would be the Mede/Persian invasion. This was more than 150 years before the Mede/Persian conquest of Babylon. Although the Mede/Persian armies of Cyrus did not know that they were God's agents, in this vision Jehovah calls them, *My consecrated ones... My mighty warriors... My proudly exulting ones* (13:3).

One of the frequent traits of figurative language in Scripture is to use elements in nature to hyperbolically present a visual picture of a human experience (examples: Isaiah 24:5-7 [wine mourns]; Psalm 114:3-6 [mountains and hills skipping and dancing]). This occurs in 13:10-13, describing the dramatic world shift of power that will take place with the destruction of Babylon and later, in 14:8, describing the blessings of the Jews after the captivity .

The description of the fate of Babylon (13:19-22; 14:23) has proven to be historically accurate; it is not an hyperbole. The city remained important through the Persian period. Alexander the Great planned to rebuild the city, but he suddenly died before he could undertake the task. The city quickly declined further so that by the time of Christ it was in total ruins. Its bricks were used to build Baghdad and in repairing its canals. For centuries it has been a desolate heap of mounds, a place for the beasts of the desert and still is uninhabited except for a village at the Southwest corner. Saddam Hussein had elaborate plans to use Iraqi oil money to rebuild Babylon. Those plans now are abandoned. This is a remarkable fulfillment of the prophecy.

Another interesting note is apocalyptic literature's use of Babylon as the symbol of anti-Christ power (Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2; 18:10; 18:21) and Peter uses Babylon as a title for Rome (I Peter 5:13).

2. The restoration of Israel and the song of triumph over Babylon 14:1-23

When the Jews were permitted to return, many chose to remain behind in Babylon, because they had developed prosperous and comfortable lives. In the opening chapter of Ezra, the total number of returnees is listed as 42,360 (Ezra 2:64). However when one calculates the number listed from each Judean family (Ezra 2:1-60), the total is about 11,000 short. Since the Babylonians had defeated Assyria, where the ten northern tribes had been carried into captivity, it is a plausible conjecture that the 11,000 who were not from Judah were a remnant of the ten tribes. In Ezra, "all Israel" is the term used for those who did return (Ezra

2:70; 6:17; 8:35). Thus, it appears that on their journey back to Jerusalem, the Judeans gathered in some from other tribes. This helps to understand why in the NT the Jews were spoken of as the Twelve Tribes (Luke 22:30; Acts 26:7; James 1:1).

Again, the striking thing about this prophecy is that it was given about 150 years before its fulfillment.

The Song of Triumph over Babylon (verses 4-21) pictures the dead kings in Sheol rising up to greet mockingly the Babylonian Monarchy (verses 9-11). Verses 12-14 have been misunderstood as referring to Satan's rebellion and casting down from heaven, as described in Luke 10:18, *And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.*

The following is an explanation of the origin of this error.

Excursus: The Origin of the Name, *Lucifer*

The Hebrew word that some versions render as, *Lucifer*, is, הֵלֵל (*helel*), which means, *shining one*. The Greek word in the Septuagint is *ἑωσφόρος* (*eosphoros*) which means, *bringing in the morning or the morning star* (interestingly, this Greek term is used by Peter as a term for Christ [II Peter 1:19]).

Jerome's Latin translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (The Vulgate, completed 404 or 405 AD) was the official version of the Church until the Reformation. It still is the benchmark by which all Roman Catholic versions must be tested. In rendering the Hebrew, *helel*, in Isaiah 14:12, Jerome used the Latin term, *lucifer*, (without capitalization, i.e., not as a personal name)²⁴. This a very legitimate formal equivalency rendering, because the Hebrew term means, *shining one* and "lucifer" means *light bearer* (*lux* [genitive *lucis*], meaning "light," and *ferre*, meaning, "to bear"). An example of the Latin term is *luciferin*, the substance in fireflies that produces light by combining with oxygen in the presence of luciferase.

The earliest English translations of the Old Testament were not translations of the Hebrew, but were translations of the Vulgate. In these early English versions the translators kept some of the Vulgate's Latin terms, one of which was the term, *lucifer*, in Isaiah 14:12. The English versions, however, made the term a personal name and capitalized it. For example the Geneva Bible (1599 AD) renders Isaiah 14:12,

How art thou fallen from heauen, O Lucifer, sonne of the morning? and cutte downe to the grounde, which didest cast lottes vpon the nations?

²⁴ Jerome used the Latin word, *lucifer*, three times in his translation: Job 11:17; II Peter 1:19; and the verse before us. In none of these did he use the term as a proper name, but as a means of expressing the bearing of light. The Geneva Bible does not use *Lucifer* in either of these two passages.

The King James translators (1611 AD) kept this rendering, almost word for word, with an update on spelling and pronunciation.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

In later generations, as people noted the similarity between the language of Isaiah 14:12 and the description of Satan's fall in Luke 10:18,²⁵ it became common practice to refer to Satan by the name, *Lucifer*.

Clearly, the context in Isaiah 14 demands the conclusion that verse 12 refers to the fall of Babylon and the proud monarchs that ruled that empire. The language is fitting because of the predominate astrological character of the Babylonian culture.²⁶ More recent versions have rendered Isaiah 14:12 as it should be rendered (note that the New King James Version, perpetuating the language of the King James Version, continues the use of *Lucifer*).

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 14:12** "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!"

^{NAS} **Isaiah 14:12** "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!"

^{NIV} **Isaiah 14:12** How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!

^{RSV} **Isaiah 14:12** "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!"

^{NRS} **Isaiah 14:12** How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!

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

²⁵ Also the picture in Revelation 12

²⁶ In a similar manner, the sun-god (*San*) is called the "conquerer of the king's enemies," "breaker of opposition," etc., on early Babylonian monuments (Keil & Delitzsch, page 312 footnote).

Chapter 14:24-27 Assyria broken in Judah

This is a reinforcement of earlier prophecies.

Chapter 14:28-32 The burden of Philistia

This oracle is dated, *in the year that Ahaz died* (verse 28). The serpent (verse 29) probably is Tiglath-pileser, who had taken many Philistine cities and had died one year before Ahaz (verse 28). The more poisonous serpent and his issue were Sargon and Sennacherib, who completed the desolation of Philistia. Messengers (verse 32) asked Jerusalem for help against Assyria.

Chapter 15:1-16:14 The burden of Moab

Moab often had been in conflict with God's people. David had subdued them, and after the division of the kingdom, the northern kingdom took possession of Moab. When Ahab died, the Moabites refused to pay any further tribute. Shortly thereafter, Moab formed an alliance with other nations and invaded Judah. These allies could not get along and they destroyed one another. In the Valley of Berachah, Jehoshaphat celebrated this victory which he had won without a battle (this is celebrated in several of the Psalms). Later, Judah and Israel joined forces and defeated the Moabites, but the fortress of Kir, situated on a steep chalk rock, remained unconquered. The Moabites remained rather silent until Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser for aid in the conflict with Syria and Israel. When Tiglath-pileser began to remove Israelites to bondage in Assyria, Moab took advantage of the situation and began to claim land north of the Arnon. This is how things stood at the time that Isaiah received this prophecy.

- The devastation of Moab 15:1-9

No other prophecy delivered by Isaiah caused him the pain that he felt in having to deliver the word against Moab (verse 5)

- Mercy offered to Moab 16:1-5

Isaiah, weeping with those that weep, calls out to them in vehement tones that submission to the house of David is Moab's only hope. Moab is urged to send to Jerusalem (the daughter of the Mountain of Zion) the tribute that have been sending to Samaria (II Kings 3:4). The way to Jerusalem lay through the desert.

Isaiah pictures proud Moab as crying out to Jerusalem for counsel, for shelter, and protection.

- The pride of Moab 16:6-12

Moab's attitude toward God's people had been one of pompousness. That will end. The picture is dark and Isaiah continues to weep over what is going to happen to the Moabites.

- The time of visitation 16:13-14

Isaiah refers to prophecies given before concerning Moab. Now, those words were on the verge of being fulfilled – within three years. Unfortunately, we cannot know for certain when Isaiah received this oracle, so we do not know when the three years began and ended. Whether it was Shalmanassar, Sargon, or Sennacherib who treated the Moabites so harshly, we cannot know.

As an aside, Jeremiah Chapter 48 reproduces prophecies and words concerning Moab from many sources (Numbers 21:27-30; Numbers 24:17; Amos 2:1-3; and Isaiah's prophecies), along with Jeremiah's interwoven comments.

Chapter 17 The burden of Damascus, including prophecies concerning Israel and Judah

- The burden of Damascus 17:1-3

This is a prophecy of the coming Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom

- Only a remnant left to Israel 17:4-11

Significantly, both in Judah and Israel, a remnant always will be left. The challenge for us today is that no descendants of the northern tribes can be clearly identified.

- The pronouncement of doom upon the enemies of Judah 17:12-14

Even though Jehovah allowed – sometimes caused – both Israel and Judah to be devastated because of sin, the nations who came against them will not be able to continue their proud dominance when Jehovah, with a word of rebuke, sends them scattering.

Chapter 18 Prophecies concerning Ethiopia

Cush (verse 1) begins where upper Egypt ends. Cush lies chiefly south and east of the Nile. The Egyptians and Ethiopians were said to be the “land of whirring wings,” referring to swarms (like swarms of insects) of different people of this huge kingdom. These kingdoms made boats of papyrus and fastened them together so that they could be carried past the cataracts in the great river. Both the Egyptians (northern) and the Ethiopians (southern) traveled great distances in these boats. Messengers in these boats were going far and wide seeking aid in

turning back the threatened invasion by Assyria. Isaiah addresses the prophecy to the messengers in these boats.

Assyria was threatening every nation in the world, including Egypt and Ethiopia. Ethiopia and the proud people of northern Africa were preparing for the coming onslaught from Assyria. The prophetic word to Ethiopia was that Jehovah is in charge. In time, He will deliver the world from the conquering might of Assyria and that all of the frantic preparations were useless on one hand and unnecessary on the other. Note that Jehovah sits quietly watching Assyria, without disturbing the course being followed, then, in His own time, He acts.

Assyrians were close to the summit of their power (the ripening grape) when Jehovah finally acts (cutting off branches) and the corpses are left for summer and winter food for bird and beast.

If the Ethiopians became aware that Jehovah was their deliverer, they would present themselves as an offering to Him. Whether or not Ethiopians were aware of the reason for the downfall of Assyria depended on whether or not the messengers reported this to Ethiopian rulers.

There is serious question as to whether Isaiah delivered this word to the messengers, or if the word were given and recorded without reaching the ears of the Ethiopians.

Chapter 19 The burden of Egypt and the glorious return of Jehovah

Most conservative scholars are of the opinion that Chapter 19 probably was written around 720 BC, given what was happening with Assyria and its designs upon Egypt. At the time, the Ethiopians ruled Egypt (Egypt was but a province of Ethiopia). This Ethiopian rule is known as the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. The reason why special attention is given to Egypt is that no nation on earth ever was associated with the history of Israel as was Egypt. Also, as the law declared, Israel was to never forget that they found shelter in Egypt for many generations. Whenever there is a prophecy concerning Egypt, it always is very earnest in its promises and threats. This burden, or oracle falls into two clearly recognizable parts. Again, no one can know whether or not this word ever reached Egypt, or if it were a part of the collection of Isaiah's oracles, something that was designed to build the faith of Judah.

An interesting characteristic of this section is the fugue-like arrangement. The expression, *in that day* occurs as a theme, with variations on that theme (verses 18, 19, 21, 23, 34).

- A reckoning against Egypt 19:1-17
 1. Jehovah's invisible activity will produce alarm among the idols (actually manifested in the dismay of the priests who recognize the failure of their gods to hold off the Assyrians (verse 1)
 2. Civil war, internal commotion, and discord will prevail in Egypt (verse 2)
 3. Jehovah will bring confusion to the shrewd thinkers in Egypt, and so, being at their wit's end, they will turn to spiritualists and those who practice demonical arts (verse 3)
 4. There is a disagreement among scholars as to which of the despots who came upon Egypt is prophesied, but the rule of Psammetichus, outline below, clearly fulfills the prophecy (verse 4).
 5. The Nile would dry up and the lush growth on its banks would wither (verses 5-7)
 6. The fisheries and the agricultural life would be disrupted (verses 8-10)
 7. The counsel of the wise men would seem utterly foolish because Jehovah would confuse their thinking (verses 11-15)
 8. The courage of their mighty men would wane and even Judah would appear to be a threat to them (verses 16-17)

Here is the fulfillment of the prophecy:

Nubians (northern Egyptians) had ruled Egypt until war with the Assyrians ended that dynasty. The Ethiopians (southern Egyptians), as Assyrian vassals, became the rulers of Egypt. A national revolution broke out in Sais and resulted in the overthrow of Ethiopian rule in 695 BC. This led to Egypt's being split up into twelve small kingdoms which formed a federal dodekarchy²⁷. This was a time of turmoil and competition between the various Egyptian kingdoms.

In 670 BC, Psammetichus, the dodekarch of Sais, strengthened his army with mercenaries from Ionia, Caria, and Greece, and defeated the other dodekarchs at the battle at Momephis. He also cast off Assyrian domination and during his reign was able to retake cities that the Assyrians had established. Thus, he succeeded in uniting the twelve kingdoms under a single monarch. The harshness of Psammetichus and his royal house fulfill the prophecy of the hard ruler, the reckless despot. Psammetichus encouraged Greeks to emigrate to Egypt and he cultivated commercial enterprise with Greece. From this time onward, the true Egyptian character was destroyed by the influx of foreign elements. Because of this foreign distortion of Egypt, a large number of the military caste emigrated to Meroe. Psammetichus' son, Necho, came to the throne (616-597) and began to renew the project first undertaken by Ramses-Miamum, i.e., the construction of the Suez canal. He enslaved 120,000 of his people, committing them to a lifetime of forced labor on this project. This fulfilled the prophecies concerning the disruption of the waters and the resulting problems for commerce, fishermen, etc.

²⁷ Twelve independent kingdoms in league with one another

During the reign of Hophra (Necho's grandson), native troops revolted and put an end to this dynasty.

In 525 BC the Persians occupied the country. The Persian kings were regarded as the 27th Dynasty. The Egyptians were able to regain control in 404 BC, but their last native dynasties ruled under conditions of internal discord and continual external conflicts. The Persians regained control of Egypt in 343 BC. Then, just 11 years later, in 332 BC, Alexander the Great conquered Egypt and annexed it to his Hellenistic empire. When he died in 323 BC, his friend and general Ptolemy became satrap, or governor, of Egypt. Ptolemy and those who followed him, continued to favor the Jews, as had Alexander. In 305 BC Ptolemy took the title, King of Egypt, thus founding the Ptolemaic dynasty of pharaohs. This line of Hellenistic rulers held power for almost 300 years. Cleopatra VII²⁸, the last of them, committed suicide after the Romans defeated her forces at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC. The next year, Egypt was made part of the Roman Empire.

From the time of Isaiah onward, Egypt never again was a true world power. This is in stark fulfillment of the oracle delivered by the prophet.

- The glorious return of Jehovah 19:18-25

The five cities in verse 18 wouldn't be very significant in Egypt, a land that was filled with cities. However, it does signify the beginning influx of Jews, that took place.

1. Egypt became filled with Jewish communities (coenobia) and synagogues.
2. The Jewish population in Alexandria was large enough and of sufficient influence to be asked to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, in the Third Century BC (the Septuagint, of which much comment already has been made).
3. In the Second Century BC, when the Selucids were persecuting Jews in Palestine, Onias IV, the son of the High Priest Onias III, immigrated to Egypt. Under his leadership the Jews received permission from the Ptolemy, Philometer, to build a temple in the Heliopolis (c 160 BC). This temple rivaled the Jerusalem temple in beauty and importance.²⁹ When Onias IV appealed to Philometer for permission to build the temple, he used Isaiah 19:18-20 in his appeal.

²⁸ Most casual students of history do not realize that Cleopatra was Greek

²⁹ Some scholarly articles refer to this temple as the *auxiliary temple*. The exterior of the Heliopolis temple did not resemble the Jerusalem Temple. It was built in the form of a castle and stood from 160 BC until 71 AD, when Vespasian ordered it to be closed.

Located northeast of Memphis, Heliopolis is called, *On*³⁰ and *Aven*³¹, in other Old Testament passages. On is one of the oldest city sites in Egypt. It was the seat of government in the First Dynasty. In later dynasties, the seat of government was moved to Memphis, then to Diospolis, but On retained its importance as the place of worship. Its temple of the sun (*Ra*) its temple of the setting sun (*Atum*) were at the center of Egyptian religion throughout its history. A very large Phoenix Hall, as well as obelisks and other religious objects, existed throughout the city. A number of scholars believe that the name of the city in verse 18, should be rendered, *City of the Sun* (the English translation of Heliopolis).³² Others contend for the rendering, *City of Destruction*, since this would signify the breaking of the obelisks of the sun-temple. Some speculate that the erection of the Jewish Temple and the resulting worship of Jehovah in Heliopolis (On) is the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy in Jeremiah 43:13, *Jehovah will break in pieces the obelisks of the sun-temple in the land of Egypt* (literal translation).

Heliopolis has been deserted since the Persian invasion of 525 BC and today the city is in ruins. The overflow of the Nile has changed the area – the Nile, at its lowest point, is more than 1 ½ feet above the floor level of the temple. Millenia of diluvia deposit has raised the ground level 30 feet above where it was when the great obelisk was constructed (the base of the obelisk is 30 feet below present ground level). Extensive excavation and study of the area was begun by Petrie, in 1912.

Tradition states that Joseph and Mary lived near On, while they sojourned in Egypt, after the birth of Jesus.

In the Christian era, northern Egypt became a very important center of Christianity. Orthodox Christianity always has had a strong presence in Egypt. This is where the so called, Desert Fathers, resided. Coptic Christianity still survives. Egypt also was home to one of the best known heretical Christian sects, the Gnostics. This is where the extensive Gnostic Christian library was discovered in 1946 (Nag Hammadi), including the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, which has been the basis for the novel, *The DiVinci Code*.³³

To a large degree, the influx of Judaism and the flourishing of Christianity in Egypt fulfill the figurative language of this section. Henry Halley states,

³⁰ Genesis 41:45, 50; 46:20; LXX in Exodus 1:11

³¹ Ezekiel 30:17

³² The Masora text has named the city, *Ir ha-Heres*. *Heres* can only signify, "destruction." However, some codices have *Ir ha-cheres*, which would mean "City of the sun." The Septuagint rendered the name as πόλις ἁσεδέκ, which would mean, "City of righteousness" (in Hebrew, this would be *Ir hazzedek*), probably in honor of the Jewish temple and worship of Jehovah that existed in the city. The Targum explains that the verse refers to the "Heliopolis, whose future fate will be destruction."

³³ The Gospel of Thomas begins, *Secret words spoken by the Savior to Jude and Thomas and recorded by Matthias*.

“At the time of Christ’s appearance the Hebrew nation was composed of three main sections, with connecting highways (verse 23): Palestinian, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian: making Israel to be a sort of three-fold nation (verse 24). These regions were among the first to accept Christianity. Thus this chapter is a very accurate pre-charting of one phase of Israel’s history for the following six hundred years.”³⁴

That being true, some of the language cannot be explained by anything experienced thus far, and thus seems to be describing conditions in the Messianic Kingdom. This especially is true of the description of the relationship between Egypt, Assyria, and Israel, contained in verses 23-25. Halley’s explanation, although interesting, seems to fall short of the picture of these nations (which had been embroiled in turmoil throughout history) becoming united in peace, reflecting earlier descriptions of the peace that would prevail in the Messianic Kingdom.

Chapter 20 A Prophecy against Egypt and Ethiopia

Note how clearly Isaiah states that Jehovah is the one speaking (verse 2) and that Isaiah, is but the messenger.

This prophecy is dated: in the year that Sargon sent his armies against Ashdod (known as, *Azotus*, in the New Testament [Acts 8:40]).³⁵ Ashdod was one of the most formidable Philistine cities. Like the other Philistine cities, Ashdod finally came under the control of the Assyrians. When Ashdod revolted in 711 BC, Sargon immediately sent a force to subdue the rebels and the city was punished severely. These events date this prophecy as having been given to Isaiah during the year, 711-710 BC.

The name, *Tartan*, in verse 1 is the same name as that seen in II Kings 18:17, and probably is the same commander of the Assyrian army mentioned in the siege of Jerusalem. Some argue that *Tartan* is a title (second in command), referring to the commander just under the monarch. Most recent versions (in contrast with older versions) render the word with that understanding:

^{KJV} **Isaiah 20:1** *In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it;*

^{NAS} **Isaiah 20:1** *In the year that the commander [tartan] came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him and he fought against Ashdod and captured it,*

³⁴ Henry H. Halley, *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, Twenty-Fourth Edition, 1965) page 295.

³⁵ This is the customary manner of dating something in ancient times – the year in which something significant happened (Isaiah 6:1, 14:28, etc.)

^{NIV} **Isaiah 20:1** *In the year that the supreme commander [tartan], sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it--*

The name, *Sargon*, is of special interest. This is the only place that the name is found in Scripture. Until 1843 the name was totally unknown outside of this verse. Those who advocated the view that the Bible is a human product, claimed that this was a biblical error. However, in 1843, the French consular agent at Mosul, Paul Emile Botta, discovered Sargon's palace at Khorsabad. Further excavations have made Sargon one of the best known of the Assyrian emperors.

One of the things that caused confusion concerning this monarch's identity is the manner in which he came to power and his assuming different name. Sargon's saga began during the Assyrian siege of Samaria, Israel's capital-fortress. At the time the siege began, the Assyrian monarch was Shalmaneser V; the general who led the army was Sharrukin II. For three years Samaria held out in spite of the relentless pressure of the Assyrian army. Before the city fell, Shalmaneser V died. Sharrukin, assumed the role of monarch and those who were rightful heirs to the throne were not powerful enough to resist him. After he usurped the throne, Sharrukin assumed the ancient and venerable name of *Sargon*.

Jehovah instructed Isaiah to act out this word (verses 3-4). For three years he was to walk the streets of Jerusalem, "naked and barefoot," as a visual sign of the humiliation that Ethiopia and Egypt would experience at the hand of the Assyrians (at the close of the three years). This acted-out word was a warning to those who were tempted to lean upon Egypt and Ethiopia for help against the Assyrians. Isaiah received this prophecy before the events prophesied in Chapter 19. Many argue that Isaiah was not to walk around totally naked, but that he was to remove his outer garment and to wear only a tunic, described as the costume of a man who had been robbed, or of a beggar, or a prisoner of war. Whatever view one takes on this issue will be based upon preconceptions. The fact that his appearance was to foretell the exposure of the buttocks (verse 4) of the captive Egyptians does tend lend credence to the view that he was to be totally naked.

Chapter 21:1-10 The burden of the desert of the Sea

Elam and Media, in verse 2, as well as the lament in verse 9, assist in identifying the focus of the burden as being Babylon. This is a very poetic section. In many ancient records, Babylon is called "the city by the sea." The wilderness was to the east of Babylon. Babylon itself was surrounded by and the possessor of the Euphrates River, plus many canals, and marshes. It was a city in the midst of waters.

Why didn't Isaiah mention the Medes and Persians, as the invaders? When Cyrus came against Babylon, he was known as *the King of Ansham* (or *Ashshan*), one of the ancient cities of Elam. The Persian Empire was composed of Ansham (Elam), Media, and other groups that had been brought into the empire. The Persians never called themselves by that name, but instead, called themselves, *Airyana*, which evolved to the modern name, *Iran* (even today, Persians do not use "Persia" as a name for themselves). So, in a

prophetic, poetic manner, the appropriate names for the people groups, rather than the name of the empire is used.

Note that Isaiah (verses 3-4) does not record what he saw, but his reaction is one of fear.

Verse 5 brings to mind the feast of Belshazzar.

Verses 6-9 picture Isaiah in the role of prophetic watchman. Verse 9 is a perfect picture of the Medes and Persians as they came upon Babylon.

Verse 10 declares that the vision is given to Judah.

As with the prophecies in Chapters 13-14, this vision was given about 150 years before its fulfillment.

Chapter 21:11-12 The burden of Dumah

Because of the mention of Seir, most conclude that *Dumah*, is a poetic name for Edom, and most modern versions render verse 11 as, *Edom*.

The precise meaning of this word is very difficult, and, this side of heaven, we probably never will know for certain, the import of this word.

Chapter 21:13-17 The burden of Arabia

Arabia's sun is setting. Evening darkness is settling upon the land. The trading caravans of the Dedanians (a mixed tribe of Cushites and Abrahamides dwelling in the area of the Edomites), when on their way from east to west, would be obliged to encamp in the wilderness, being driven out of the caravan road in consequence of the war that was spreading from north to south. Isaiah's sympathy is stirred mingles with these refugees and he begs for water for the panting refugees. They are driven with fright back to Tema, on the border of the Syrian desert.³⁶ Even in Tema they do not feel safe. The residents of Tema are urged to bring water and bread to these fugitives.

Kedar is the collective name for all Arabian tribes. In one year, all of their military might and glory will have disappeared. From time to time, there were glimmerings of the former glory, but there followed successive subjugations by rising empires.

The vision closes with finality, *for Jehovah, God of Israel, has spoken*.

Chapter 22 The burden of the Valley of the Vision

Prophecy against Jerusalem 22:1-14

³⁶ This Tema is the one on the Damascus to Mecca pilgrim road – about four days journey on foot to either city.

We do not know the date of the giving of this vision. Whenever it was given, it relates to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the coming Assyrian siege (Elam, verse 6). The theme of verses 1-14 is the exposure of the people's attitude and God's relentless judgment against such an attitude.

This prophecy is similar to the word that Jehovah gave Jonah to deliver to Ninevah (Jonah 3:1-4). No promise of mercy or reprieve was contained in the prophecy God spoke through Jonah, yet, its fulfillment was delayed, because of the repentance of the people. In time, when Ninevah forgot Jehovah, the city was overthrown, as prophesied by Jonah, but on a different timetable.

This prophecy against Jerusalem is cut from the same cloth as Jonah's word. No mercy is mentioned; judgment is certain. Yet, when the Assyrians came, King Hezekiah led the people of Jerusalem in humble submission to Jehovah and Jerusalem was delivered.

Even though Jerusalem was built upon two mountains, they were lower than surrounding mountains. Thus, Scripture in various places has called Jerusalem a valley (Examples: Psalm 125:2; Jeremiah 21:13).

Verses 1-3 picture the citizens of the city on their flat roofs, looking out over the walls, observing an approaching army. The citizens have no fear of defeat and so they are defiant. They have no idea what awaits them. They will not even be allowed the honor of dying in battle. Their rulers seek to flee the city and are captured without the enemy's even drawing a bow. The city is besieged, and the resulting hunger and pestilence destroy the inhabitants, to the point that all who seek to escape are so weak that they are taken, without exception.

Verses 4-5 describe Isaiah's inconsolable anguish – this is similar to the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Verse 5 has an interesting play upon words:

- Masses crowd together in great noise – panic *mehumah*
- The inhabitants are trodden down – subjugation *mebusah*
- All are thrown into confusion – *mebucah*

Another makes the crashing of the walls audible, as they are hurled down by siege artillery *mekarkar kir*.

Two nations of the Assyrian army are mentioned: Elam and Kir.

Verses 8-11 describe Jerusalem's finally becoming aware of the danger and seeking to adopt prudent measures, without Jehovah.

- The *house of the forest* refers to the forest-house built by Solomon for the storing and display of valuable arms.

- They took note of which houses were made of materials suitable for the repair of the walls and tore down these houses and made the repairs.
- They altered waterworks and storing of water in the city to guarantee a water supply during the siege

Rather than turning to Jehovah, they sought to save their city through natural processes.

Verses 12-14 picture a people whom Jehovah sought to bring to weeping and mourning, in repentance – yet their response to the coming disaster was one of scoffing and a fatalistic giving of themselves to the sensual enjoyment of the present. Such scoffing which defies the chastisement of Jehovah can only be expiated by the death of these scoffers.

When the Assyrians came against Jerusalem, in the days of Hezekiah, the very actions described in verses 8-11 were taken – especially noteworthy is the conduit and waterworks constructed by Hezekiah. However, Hezekiah did not do this without an acknowledgement of ultimate dependence upon Jehovah. As a result, the Assyrians were turned back, for the present. The Assyrians did conquer Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Manassas, whose reign was characterized by a defying of Jehovah. Thus, the prophecy given concerning the days of Hezekiah was delayed in its judgment for one generation.

Prophecy concerning Shebna & Eliakim 22:15-25

Again, we face a prophecy without any dating. This word is given against a specific person, Shebna. Shebna is officially described as *over the house*. This was the title of the highest office of state. It sometimes was filled by the one who was the heir apparent to the throne.³⁷

Shebna was engaged in driving about with splendid trappings and in superintending the erection of a family sepulcher. In reading the introduction to the address, we are impressed with the insatiable ambition of this man. He was building himself a sepulcher among those of kings.

Isaiah's word to Shebna is abrupt, the sense of it being that Shebna is wasting his time building this ornate tomb, because neither he nor his descendents will lie there. Given the powerful position of Shebna, it took both faith and courage for Isaiah to deliver this word.

Eliakim will replace Shebna. Eliakim is called, *servant of Jehovah*, as if he already was a man who served God in his heart, but did not have the official role³⁸. Eliakim will be given the official girdle, signifying his office.

³⁷ I Kings 4:6; 18:3; Isaiah 36:3; 37:2; II Chronicles 26:21

³⁸ The term, *Servant of Jehovah*, in reference to an individual, is used rarely in Scripture. The instances of its use, in addition to the passage before us, are Genesis 26:24; Numbers 12:7; 14:24; Job 1:8; 42:7-8; Haggai 2:23. The term,

The *key* signifies the power of the keys, and for this reason is not put into Eliakim's hand, but on his shoulder. Ordinarily, only the king could use the key, and the one in the role of *over the house* used this authority only in the king's absence. This is not far from the sense of what Jesus said to Peter, *I give to you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven* (Matthew 16:19).

The figures of pegs in verses 23-24 are interesting. First, Eliakim is described as a tent peg – signifying the role of holding firmly and keeping upright the commonwealth. As the tent peg is rammed into the ground so that someone could sit upon it, the figure is changed and the tent peg becomes a seat of honor that will bring honor to his father's house.

Eliakim then is described as being a peg that is on a wall holding a wardrobe and various utensils. These objects are symbols of the members of his family – some are rabble, and some are noble. This family would climb through him to places of honor – Eliakim evidently would become guilty of nepotism - and the peg would break. No Eliakim dynasty of service would be established. A sad ending to a good man's legacy – much like Samuel's sons who did not follow the righteousness of their father.

Chapter 23 The burden of Tyre and her restoration

This is the last of the cycle of prophecies that relate to heathen nations. The cycle began with Babylon which represented the city of imperial power; it ends with Tyre, the city of world commerce. Ezekiel 28 also is a prophetic word to Tyre.

The Phoenician cities formed at least six (possibly eight) independent states, each one having its own king. Sidon was much older than Tyre, but during Isaiah's era Tyre had gained supremacy over the other Phoenician states. Tyre was on the seacoast, five miles from Sidon. Thus, the two often are spoken of together in Scripture.³⁹ Phoenicia was well known for its sailing vessels and ocean-going commerce.

The fall of Tyre 23:1-14

The homeward bound sailors, stopped at Cyprus (Chittim), the last port before they completed the last leg of their journey home. They are told by eyewitnesses of the devastation of their home port.

My servants the prophets, is used , ten times in the Old Testament: II Kings. 9:7; 17:13; Jeremiah 7:25; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Ezekiel 38:17; Amos 3:7; Zechariah 1:6

³⁹ I Chronicles 22:4; Ezra 3:7; Jeremiah 25:22; 27:3; 47:4; Joel 3:4; Zechariah 9:2; Matthew 11:21f; 15:21; Mark 3:8; 7:24, 31; Luke 6:17; 10:13f; Acts 12:20

The lament of verses 2-3 refers to the cargo of Egyptian grain that often filled the Phoenician vessels. Verse 4 refers to the rock-island on which Neo-tyrus stood with its strong and lofty houses. In the lament, Sidon, the ancestress of Canaan, hears with overwhelming shame how Tyre mourns the loss of her young men and women – it is as if she were a barren woman and never had given birth – her children are gone. Even in Egypt, where Phoenician vessels traded, the fate of Phoenicia causes alarm (verse 5).

Phoenicia's merchants were called, "princes," the most honored of the earth. Jehovah will profane the supposed inviolable glories of Phoenicia (verse 9)

Verses 13-14 refers to the Chaldeans (Babylonians), who defeated the Assyrians and then the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians would remain under Chaldean domination until Babylon was captured by Cyrus. The 70 years of Tyre's devastation coincide with Judah's captivity in Babylon.

This prophecy accurately describes the events as they happened. The Assyrian monarch, Shalmanassar, even with the help of a large navy and various allies, was not able to subdue Tyre. As a result, Tyre was raised to greater honor among the nations. It was not until the Babylonians became the world power that Tyre was subdued.

The restoration of Tyre 23:15-18

When Tyre is freed from Chaldean domination, she will return to her seagoing commerce. The language describing Tyre's restoration is fitting. From most ancient times, prostitution was a common thing in the markets and fairs, especially in Phoenicia (the Phoenicians were worshippers of Astarte). The mercantile trading to which they returned was a commerce that did not recognize any limits set by God, and made itself common to all the world. In other words, it sold itself for whatever profit was available.

The prophecy that the wages of Tyre (after the 70 years of Chaldean domination), however ignobly acquired, would be used for food and attire of those who "dwell in the presence of Jehovah," has some interesting twists.

First, when Cyrus authorized the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem, the Sidonians and Tyrians were ordered to assist (Ezra 3:7; cf. 1:4). A second fact is that at the very beginning of the spread of the church there was a flourishing church in Tyre, which was visited by Paul (Acts 21:3-4). This became one of the great churches of the Mediterranean. Eusebius, the early Christian historian of the spread of Christianity, says that much wealth in Tyre was consecrated to the service of God.

IV. THE FIRST BOOK OF GENERAL JUDGMENT Chapters 24-27

“The cycle of prophecies which commences here has no other parallel in the Old Testament than perhaps Zech. 9-15. Both sections are thoroughly eschatological and apocryphal in their character, and start from apparently sharply defined historical circumstances, which vanish, however, like the will-o’-the-wisps, as soon as you attempt to follow and seize them; for the simple reason, that the prophet lays hold of their radical idea, carries them out beyond their outward historical form and uses them as emblems of far-off events of the last days.”⁴⁰

Chapter 24 Universal Judgment

Verses 1-6 picture a judgment that involves the entire ethical world.⁴¹ No one, regardless of status, will escape.

Verses 7-9 describe the emotional effects of this judgment. The description begins and ends with wine. Wine is described as a blessing in Scripture and usually is associated with prosperity (Psalm 104:15; Judges 9:13; Isaiah 16:10; Jeremiah 48:33 etc.). Its absence is a curse. Music also ceases. All of the sources of joy and gladness are destroyed and even if anything is left, the taste of the men turns it into bitterness. Joy is just out of place.

The devastation described is severe. There are no more inhabitants in the entire world than there are of olives and grapes after the principal gathering has taken place.

Verses 14-15 describe the survivors – the ones who have been refined by judgment. Because of the majesty of Jehovah, they shout praises

Verse 16-20 picture the impossibility of escape.

Verses 21-22 call to mind Paul’s words in Ephesians 6:12 *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.* In reading the wrestling of various commentators over these two verses, the conclusion is reached that commentators are fairly well agreed that these verses refer to the angelic The heavenly powers of Satan, as well as the transgressors on the earth will be punished. There is a rabbinical saying, “God never destroys a nation without having first destroyed its prince,” *i.e.* the angel who has exercised control over or influence on a nation (see Daniel 10; 12:1). These verses find their New Testament counterpart in II Peter 2:4 and Jude 6.

⁴⁰ Keil & Delitzsch, page 421

⁴¹ In the New Testament, this idea is conveyed by the Greek term, *kosmos*.

2 Peter 2:4 *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;*

Jude 6 *And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.*

In verse 25, the two great lights of heaven become (according to a Jewish expression) “like a lamp at noonday” in the presence of such glory.

The elders in verse 25 probably are human elders admitted to the immediate presence of God and reigning together with Him have nothing but glory in front of them (Revelation. 4:4, 10; 5:5f, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4).

We can only conclude that Chapter 24 pictures the end of the age, the Great Day of Jehovah.

Chapter 25 A song of praise for Jehovah’s triumph

Verses 1-5 declare Jehovah’s omnipotence. He has done as He wished with nations, kingdoms, the earth, and in the midst of all of this has been a defender of the helpless.

Verses 6-12 continue to declare Jehovah’s ultimate triumph. These verses contain hints of the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6ff) and the time when God will end all tears (Revelation 21) and dwell forever with His people.

Note that in I Corinthians 15:54, Paul quotes Isaiah 25:8, which points to the time when Christ shall come and the grand resurrection will occur.

Chapter 26 A song of trust in Jehovah’s protection

This chapter is a poem that exalts Jehovah and His faithfulness. It is a poem, reminiscent of the Psalms. Since it is a poem, it is best to not pick it apart, but to read it and experience the mood of the poem. 27:1 is the last verse of the poem – another unfortunate insertion of a chapter division. This clearly is a poem of eschatological hope.

In the poem, Isaiah envisions the tribulation days ahead and urges the people to trust Jehovah, the Rock their place of refuge (verse 4), while the storm of Divine judgment sweeps over the nations and the blood of those ruthlessly slain will be avenged (verses 20-21). In that day, the special vengeance of God will be upon Satan, the dragon, the archenemy of God and His people, as well as upon the “leviathan” (probably the Antichrist), Satan’s final instrument designed for their overthrow.

Of special interest is the declaration of the resurrection in 26:19. This passage is and Job 19:25-27 are the clearest Old Testament declarations of the resurrection.

Chapter 27 Jehovah's vineyard protected – Israel chastened and restored

Verses 2-6 Again, we encounter eschatological poetry and must treat it as such. In this passage there is a descending scale of three Hebrew strophes, one of five lines (verses 2-3), one of four lines (verse 4), and one of three lines (verse 5).

In Chapter 5, Israel (the northern kingdom) was rejected as a vineyard that bore no fruit. In this poem, Israel is a fruit-bearing vineyard, under Jehovah's protection.

Verses 7-13 speak of Jehovah's chastening and saving of Israel. Because of the poetic language, we must pay attention to the point being made, not so much to the details.

In spite of all that Jehovah has done to his people, what He has done (and will do) is different from what He has done with other nations. His actions against His people were to purge the nation of evil; with other nations, it was punitive (verses 7-8). The pulverizing and destruction of all idols and their altars will be required for Israel to return to a relationship with Jehovah.

The people of no discernment is Israel and the isolated city is Jerusalem. Those who are wedded to their idols will be left desolate and forsaken (verses 10-11).

The Euphrates and the brook of Egypt (Wady-el-Arish) were the northeastern and southwestern boundaries of the territorial grant to Abraham (Genesis 15:18). The promise is of the regathering of Israel and the peopling of the Kingdom. The picture is the same as given in Chapter 2:1-4.

VI. THE BOOK OF ZION (BOOK OF WOES) Chapters 28-33

- In Chapters 13-27, Isaiah has covered in his range of vision the whole world and all times. Now, in this collection of "woes," he returns to prophecies concerning his own people and matters related to his own era.
- Note the similarity between the beginning of this section and the beginning of Micah. Both Isaiah (in this section) and Micah take as their starting place the destruction of the northern kingdom's capital, Samaria.
- There is a similarity to this section and Chapters 7-12, i.e., Hezekiah contemplated relying on Egypt; Ahaz relied on Assyria.
- Each of the dominant addresses begins with the word, "woe" 28:1; 29:1; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1.
- Chapter 30 is the climax of the collection, then a change, a decline is experienced.

Chapter 28 Judgment upon Ephraim and Judah

Verses 1-4 The book opens with a denunciation of Ephraim (the northern Kingdom). Amos presents a more magnificent picture of the upper class lavish living in Ephraim (3:15; 4:9; 5:11; 5:23; 6:4-6).

Originally, the capital of the northern kingdom was Shechem. During the Omri dynasty Samaria was made the capital.

The woe immediately blasts those in Ephraim who are spending their days in partying and drunkenness. In 29:9, it is pointed out that some are drunk with pride, not with wine. The walled city of Samaria was a fading flower as Jehovah planned its destruction.

Verses 5-6 Jehovah Himself would be a diadem of beauty and strength to those who trust in Him.

The description of Hezekiah's reign is in conformity with this promise.

2 Kings 18:5-7 *He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.*

Verses 7-10 A disgusting picture of spiritual leaders who are "professional" religionists. Their lives are far from holy. They are drunk when they supposedly are ministering under the anointing of God. The vomit from the drunken priests and prophets fill the place where they minister.

They ridicule ironically God's efforts (verse 10). They do not want to be fenced in by God's constant laws, etc.

Verses 11-13 God had offered rest and comfort, but they wouldn't hear, so He was going to punish them by sending a foreign nation into their land. The presence of foreign languages being spoken in their land was a sign of Jehovah's judgment.

Paul quoted this passage in his discussion of tongues in I Corinthians 14:21-22

In the Law it is written, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me," says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe.

By failing to research Paul's quote, many Charismatics and Pentecostals have struggled with what Paul is saying; on the surface, he seems to be inconsistent. He has argued that if an unbeliever enters a meeting and people are speaking in tongues, the unbeliever will think that the entire church is insane.

1 Corinthians 14:23 *So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?*

However, in verse 22, he has declared that tongues are for a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers.

By researching the context of the quote in Isaiah, Paul's point becomes clear. Since the presence of people who spoke foreign languages was a sign of God's judgment on Ephraim, so the presence of foreign languages (tongues) in a church gathering would be a sign that God considered the church members to be unbelievers. Prophecy on the other hand, in the language of the hearers, was beneficial to Christians and unbelievers who might visit a service. If tongues are to be permitted in a gathering of Christians, there should be no more than two or three, in orderly fashion, and what they say must be interpreted. If the leaders overseeing the meeting do not know that an interpreter is present, then there should be no tongues in the meeting (I Corinthians 14:26-28).

Verses 14-22 contain a strong rebuke of the leaders in Jerusalem. Scoffingly, these leaders affirmed their self sufficiency (verse 15). They mockingly boast that they have made a covenant with Sheol and that Sheol will honor the covenant and not allow the Assyrians to do them harm.

Jehovah declares that falsehood, deception, and all other maneuvers will fail, but that He is laying a cornerstone – a tested stone – and he who believes in it will not be harmed. However, those who trust in lies and their covenant with death, will be swept away (verses 16-18).

This section has Messianic overtones. Jesus said the rejection of His ministry was a fulfillment of verse 16, thus declaring that He was the chief cornerstone laid in Zion. Thereafter, the writers of the New Testament used Isaiah 28:16 as a reference to Christ.⁴²

Matthew 21:42 *Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes '?"*

Mark 12:10-11 *"Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes '?"*

⁴² The same language is used in Psalm 118:22.

Luke 20:17 *But He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written, 'The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone'?"*

Acts 4:11 *"He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone.*

Romans 9:33 *just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."*

Romans 10:11 *For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."*

1 Corinthians 3:11 *For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Ephesians 2:20-21 *having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;*

1 Peter 2:6 *For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed."*

For those of us living in Anno Domini, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is the fulfillment of verse 17.

Whatever specific fulfillment might be predicted in verses 17-18, the principle is established that nothing that man can do will be capable of surviving the test that God is going to allow/cause. Only by trusting in the Cornerstone and abiding by the measuring line and level that He employs will one be enabled to survive the test. This is an abiding principle.

The Assyrians passed through the land again, and again (verse 18-19). They did not at first conquer Jerusalem (because of Hezekiah's faithfulness), but they wrecked havoc throughout the land and did conquer and sack many Judean cities. Later, during the reign of Manasseh, they did conquer Jerusalem.

The short beds and narrow corners of verse 20 represent those human efforts to provide comfort and safety. They will be inadequate in the day of God's judgment.

In verse 22 Isaiah exhorted the leaders to cease their scoffing or else things would be even worse for them. He expressed the certainty that this word is from Jehovah.

Isaiah used a very awe-filled name for God, *The Lord Jehovah of Hosts*, to emphasize the authority by which he spoke and the certainty of the dark prophecy's being fulfilled.

Verses 23-29 speak of God’s knowledge of each person and nation and what sort of punishment/chastisement is appropriate for each one. This is an encouragement to all of us who believe that God is in charge of the circumstances of our lives.

Chapter 29 Siege and deliverance of Ariel (the line of God)

Verses 1-4 If the Hebrew consonants are pointed in one manner, *Ariel* means, “Lion of God.” If the consonants are pointed another way, the word means, “God’s altar-hearth.”⁴³ The prophecy specifically refers to Jerusalem (verse 1). Either of these understandings of the Hebrew are appropriate for Jerusalem. Judah was supposed to be God’s lion. On the other hand, since David brought the ark of God there, Jerusalem became the “hearth of God.”

Throughout his ministry Isaiah constantly mixed the message of comfort and devastation. Always, there was hope.⁴⁴ That pattern continues in this section.

- Verses 1-4 warning
- Verses 5-8 promise
- Verses 9-16 warning
- Verses 17-24 promise

The worship had become so hypocritical (as highlighted in Chapter One) that within a year, Jehovah would allow the city to be besieged.

Verses 5-8 The enemies who besiege the city will have dreams of conquering Jerusalem, but that is all that it will be – a dream. The experience will be horrible for Jerusalem, but God suddenly will whisk away the invaders. Indeed, as we shall see later in Isaiah, this is what happened.

Verses 9-16 These worshippers drew nigh to Jehovah with their lips, but their hearts were far from him. They did the right thing but with the wrong motives. Their hearts had been so steeled against God, as being God, that spiritually they were not within hearing distance of His word. They were spiritually drunk. God sovereignly exercised judgment by sealing His word, even though it was delivered in their presence.⁴⁵

Verse 15 is a reminder that no one can hide from God, either one’s actions or one’s thoughts. Jesus emphasized this truth (Matthew 15:7ff; Mark 7:6-7)

Verses 17-24 are Messianic/apocalyptic. The end of Israel’s history will be like its beginning. As God ransomed Abraham from his heathen compatriots, so Jehovah will rescue Jacob/Israel from their idolatrous surroundings.

⁴³ In the original document, the consonants were not pointed. Vowel points in Hebrew were not added until many centuries later.

⁴⁴ One of the gloomiest aspects of hell is its finality and hopelessness.

⁴⁵ Mormons use verses 11-12 to argue for substantiation of the origin of the Book of Mormon.

Chapter 30 The vanity of reliance upon Egypt

Verses 1-5 There was an “Egyptian faction” in Judah, who advocated turning to Egypt for help against the Assyrians. These leaders would depend on Egypt, but not on Jehovah. Secretly, they had sent a delegation to Egypt to discuss an alliance (this is the secret of 29:15). Isaiah pictures the embassy from Judah’s arriving at Zoan and Hanes where they meet the Egyptian princes, who apparently scorn the Judean representatives proposals as being worthless.

Verses 6-7 These ambassadors travel through difficult terrain, their caravan consisting of donkeys and camels, bearing expensive gifts to Egypt – all in vain. *Rahab* conveys the idea of “sitting” or “doing nothing.” Thus the Egyptians won’t do anything to help Judah.

Verses 8 The stubborn advocates of the pro-Egyptian party refuse to heed Isaiah’s admonitions. Jehovah, therefore, instructs Isaiah to repeat the action of Isaiah 8:1. Hebrew scholars interpret the verse 8b inscription as being either, *The bragging people, they are sit-still*, or *Boast-house, they are idlers*. This inscription is to be inscribed on a large tablet, then to write it on a scroll. As in the case in 8:1, this will be a perpetual witness to God’s pronouncing upon them what they later experienced.

Verses 9-17 contain God’s promise of judgment. The people told prophets and seers to cease bringing their harsh messages and to bring pleasant words to them. This reminds us of Amos 7:10-13, in which the prophet is told to leave the country and stop bringing words of rebuke; of I Kings 22:5ff in which the king of Israel did not want Micaiah to prophesy because of the honest word that he brought; and of I Timothy 4:3ff, in which Paul warned that the time would come when churches will employ teachers who say what the people want to hear, rather than delivering the true word of God.

Because the people reject Jehovah and His covenant with them, disaster will be their lot (verses 12-17)

Verses 18-26 beyond doubt are Messianic in their ultimate fulfillment. Yet in this section is a beautiful picture of Jehovah’s graciousness. Grace waits for them, if only they will repent (verse 18-19). They must be chastened because of their persistent disobedience (verse 20), but He will raise up faithful teachers and would guide them in His paths (verse 21). Their response would be characterized by repudiation of their (verse 22). Abundant material blessings in which all nations would participate would follow their obedience (verses 23-26).

Verses 27-33 are a poetic description of the destruction of Sennacherib’s army. Verse 31 clearly declares this. Tophet (verse 33) which means, “that which causes loathing or abhorrence,” was the Vallen of Hinnom, where sacrifices were offered to Moloch and which later became the garbage dump of Jerusalem. This would be the

place of funeral pyres of the Assyrian army. When the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers died mysteriously in one night before the walls of Jerusalem, this prophecy was fulfilled.

Chapters 31-32 False hope in Egypt compared with the power of God

This is the fifth of the “woes” in this section. These chapters are a more vigorous denunciation of those who trust in Egypt’s horses and chariots instead of the Holy One of Israel.

Chapter 31 is rather forthright and needs little comment. The prophet reminds Judah that the Egyptians and their horses are mere flesh and blood, whereas the conflict with Assyria is to be won by spiritual, unseen forces.

Chapter 32:1-8 Many attempt to limit these verses and their description to Hezekiah and his reign. It is difficult to limit them to earthly fulfillment. Although there are accurate descriptions of fools, rogues, etc., the fulfillment seems to point to conditions in the Messianic Kingdom. Only Christ, the God-man, could fulfill the promises of these verses. The point is that Jehovah is not through with His people. There is a future.

Verses 9-14 frequently are referred to as a supplement or an auxiliary or a subordinate prophecy tied to the fifth woe. These verses run in the same vein as 3:16-4:1, and chastises the frivolous ease and self-security of the women of Jerusalem. Some speculate that when Isaiah was giving this prophecy that there were a group of women on the fringes of the crowd who were opposing Isaiah’s word from Jehovah.

Verse 15 is one of those passages that speak clearly of the pouring out of the Spirit upon Jerusalem, foreshadowing Pentecost (Acts 2).

Verses 18-19 pose a bit of a question. Assyria often was referred to as a forest. That may be a key to the verses, but we must ask, “What city is referenced in verse 19?” Is it Ninevah? Since the focus in this section has been on the threat of Assyria (Ninevah was its capitol) and the ultimate defeat of Assyria, some would argue strongly that Ninevah is the city in verse 19.

Verse 20 Isaiah frequently uses the symbol of fertility and peace to picture the Messianic promises.

Chapter 33 Judgment on Judah’s oppressors and the gracious reign of Jehovah

Verses 1-6 These verses, in general terms, speak of judgment on Syria and deliverance of Judah. Even with the downfall of Sennacherib, Judah was not finished, completely, with Assyrian threats. Of course, Judah was going into Babylonian captivity in the next century. The description of the fall of Assyria is a type, describing the fall of all of God’s enemies.

Verses 7-12 This probably describes Sennacherib's breaking his word concerning the fate of those who surrendered, when he seized various cities in Judah. Verses 7-8 picture the grief of the ambassadors who negotiated the surrender. Jehovah, in anger, will arise and overthrow the Assyrians.

Verses 14-16 contrast the different responses in Jerusalem to God's shattering the army of Assyria. The wicked are filled with consternation and fear. The righteous feel secure.

Verses 17-24 Isaiah mingles visions of the Messianic kingdom with prophecies of deliverance from Assyria. They are promised a kingdom in which the people of foreign languages no longer will be tramping through their land (in contrast to the curse promised in 28:11-13).

In one of the most usual poetic figures in all of Scripture, verse 21 Isaiah describes Jehovah's future relationship with Judah. Jehovah is described as the *Majestic One* who will be for Judah,

*A place of rivers and wide canals,
On which no boat with oars shall go,
And on which no mighty ship shall pass—*

Because of Jehovah's presence, Jerusalem will become the equivalent of a place that is protected by broad streams and canals, that not even the greatest of ships would be able to navigate. Jehovah's presence would make perfect the security of the city. This encouragement was given as an encouragement to Jerusalem which shortly would face the onslaught of Assyria and the siege of Jerusalem.

Verses 23-24 picture Jerusalem as a ship whose rigging is slack, its mast is slipping, etc., but because of the dividing of plunder of their enemies, they will be replenished.

VII. THE SECOND BOOK OF GENERAL JUDGMENT Chapters 34 -35

These two chapters are a single prophecy. Isaiah moves from the prophecies dealing with his own time to apocalyptic revelations.

Chapter 34 The judgment of all nations

Verses 1-4 are a general statement that all of the enemies of Israel would be destroyed. The nations of the earth are summoned to hear a prophecy of future judgment, universal in scope (verse 1). The destruction of Jehovah's enemies is pictured as a terrific slaughter – unburied bodies, streams of blood, celestial and terrestrial convulsions attending this destruction (verses 2-4).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ This scene is similar to Revelation 6:12-17; 14:14-20; Matthew 24:29-30

Verses 5-17 Edom is selected as a representative of the enemies of God. The Greeks gave the name, *Idumea*, to Edom. Edom was the great nation which descended from Esau. A harsh relationship existed between Edom and Israel, beginning with Edom's refusal to allow Israel to pass through their land during the exodus (Numbers 20:14-20). David subjugated Edom (II Samuel 8:13); during Jehoshaphat's reign (after the division of the kingdom) Edom threw off the Judean yoke. Edom always displayed hatred toward Israel (and later, Judah), and rejoiced in every calamity that the Israelites experienced (Psalm 137:7; Ezekiel 25:12; Ezekiel 35; Obadiah 10-16; Malachi 1:2-5). The prophecy of Obadiah focuses totally on the destruction of Edom and its capitol, Petra.

This chapter closes with the certainty of the Word of God (verses 16-17).

Chapter 35 The grand counterpart of God's judgment

This is a beautiful song, which is the counterpart to the judgment of Jehovah. Chapter 35 is one of the most glorious and best known chapters of Isaiah.

Even a cursory glance at this chapter causes us to realize that it is Messianic. The multiplied blessings of Israel are described, but with a literalness that cannot be avoided.

- Great physical and topographical changes will occur.
- The weak in faith, the hopeless, and the despairing will be encouraged.
- The bodily defects of God's people will be obliterated.
- There will be an easy access to the land, over a highway of holiness.
- With final and everlasting joy upon their heads, sorrow and sighing are known only in retrospect.

This chapter is a prelude to the Book of Consolation (Chapters 40-66) which is spoken to the exiles in their captivity.

VIII. THE BOOK OF HEZEKIAH Chapters 36-39

These chapters are the connecting link between the first and second portions of the book. Chapters 36-37 form the conclusion to the preceding chapters. Assyria dominates the prophecies in the first portion of Isaiah, and Chapters 36-37 recount the events that brought an end to Assyria's role in Judah. Chapters 38 -39 look to Babylon. The Babylonian captivity is a major focus of the latter portion of Isaiah.

Before beginning this section, it is important to know the historical background. These four chapters parallel the history recorded in II Kings 18:13 - 20:10. Archeologically, this is one of the most interesting periods of history. Abundant Assyrian records recount much of that which is recorded in Scripture. Sennacherib recorded his annals on clay cylinders and prisms. The final edition of these is contained in the so called, Taylor Prism, kept in the British Museum. This prism contains a record of Sennacherib's Judean campaign. Moreover, the things that Hezekiah did to insure the safety of Jerusalem (water supply, etc.) have been confirmed by archeologists in and around Jerusalem.

Sennacherib was the son of Shalmaneser. He began his reign in Assyria in 714 BC and reigned for eighteen years. Judah had been a vassal of Assyria since the days of Ahaz. Hezekiah had shaken off the yoke. Sennacherib embarked on a campaign to conquer Egypt, and enroute he planned to resubjugate Judah. He ravaged the countryside of Judah, took the strong towns and fortresses, and planned to lay siege to Jerusalem. As soon as the Assyrians entered Judah, Hezekiah began to prepare Jerusalem to withstand the Assyrians. At the advice of his counselors, he stopped the waters that flowed in the neighborhood of the city so that the Assyrians would not have any water. He built up the walls, enclosed one of the fountains, and gathered shields and arrows in abundance. Hezekiah organized the citizens into military units and encouraged them by the fact that there were more people inside of Jerusalem than in Sennacherib's army. He also declared that Sennacherib's army was mere flesh, but that Jerusalem fought on the side of Jehovah (II Chronicles 32:2-8).

When Sennacherib saw that Jerusalem was not going to be easy to conquer, and with the pressing need to get on to Egypt, he became open to negotiation with Hezekiah. Hezekiah sent word to Sennacherib that he was willing to negotiate, and asked what conditions Sennacherib would require. Hezekiah said that he had erred in ceasing the payment of tribute to Sennacherib. Sennacherib demanded three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold (II Kings 18:13-16). Hezekiah's understanding was that if he met these conditions that Sennacherib would withdraw his forces and return to Assyria. Sennacherib disregarded this treaty. He did give Hezekiah some respite, however.

Sennacherib and his army proceeded to Egypt. At first, he had great success, but when he came to Pelusium, and laid siege to that city, he found that he had encountered a rock that he could not break. Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, looking to gain prominence throughout all of Egypt, came to the aid of the Egyptian ruler, Sevechus. When Sennacherib learned that Tirhakah was coming to the aid of Pelusium, he lifted his siege and retreated to Judah. He besieged and ultimately took Lachish. While engaged in the siege at Lachish, in disregard for his compact with Hezekiah, he sent an army under the command of Rabshakeh to lay siege against Jerusalem. At this point, the episode in Isaiah 36 begins.

Chapters 36-37 Sennacherib's invasion

Chapter 36 records the activities of the Assyrian commander. II Kings 18:17 records that Sennacherib sent a huge force with three commanders against Jerusalem. The commanders were Tartan, Rabsaris, and Rabshakeh. Since Isaiah mentions only Rabshakeh, we conclude that he was the commander in chief.

A chronological question is faced in verse 1,

Now it came about in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them.

Assyrian monuments verify the essential elements of this event. However, research of these monuments indicates the siege as having occurred in the twenty-eighth, rather than the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign (the difference is between 714 BC and 700 BC). Some argue that the fourteenth year refers to the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's extended life (38:5).⁴⁷ If this is true, then the biblical and Assyrian records agree chronologically. However, the problem is not fully resolved in the minds of most. If and when all archeological data have been compiled, no doubt the discrepancy will be resolved.

Rabshakeh took up a vantage point outside of Jerusalem from whence he could look into the city and summon Hezekiah (II Kings 18:18). Hezekiah sent two representatives to meet with Rabshakeh.⁴⁸ In an oral address in Hebrew, Rabshakeh defied Hezekiah and Hezekiah's God (36:4-20). He revealed that Sennacherib knew about the Egyptian faction in Jerusalem that had send ambassadors to Egypt in an effort to gain Egyptian assistance against the Assyrians. Rabshakeh displayed utter ignorance of the nature of Israel's God (verse 7), confusing Jehovah with the idols that Hezekiah had removed. Rabshekah also declared that Sennacherib's campaign against the city was commissioned by Jehovah (verse 10). There are three possible explanations of this statement:

1. Sennacherib may have heard a rumor about Isaiah's prophecy concerning what God would bring upon Judah by way of Assyrian conquest. Therefore, any resistance would be in vain.
2. Rabshekah used the name of Judah's God, Jehovah, as being the name of God, in general. Thus, he argued that Sennacherib came by divine direction.
3. He did this, totally without substantiation; it was a pretense designed to influence the people who heard him to lose their nerve and to instill low morale in the city.

Rabshakeh exalted the gods of Assyria, saying that they were more powerful than the gods of the nations that they had conquered and that Jehovah would fare no better (verses 14-20)

The delegation that Hezekiah had sent to Rabshekah wisely kept their mouths shut and returned to the king in great sorrow, because of the insolence of Rabshekah against their God and their king, as well as the threat of captivity (verses 21-22).

Chapter 37 describes the events in Jerusalem.

When Hezekiah received the report from his delegation, he rent his clothes, went to the Temple, and sent a request to Isaiah to pray for Jerusalem. The committee that was sent to Isaiah received positive assurance of Divine intervention. Isaiah reported that Jehovah had said that he would put a "spirit" in Sennacherib, so that he would

⁴⁷ Those holding this position would have to view the events of Chapter 38 as happening before Chapters 36-37/

⁴⁸ Note that Eliakim's involvement is consistent with Isaiah 22:20-21.

hear a rumor that would cause him to return to his capital and in that place he would be killed (verses 1-7).

When Rabshekah saw that Jerusalem was not going to surrender, he went to Sennacherib for instructions. Sennacherib, having subdued Lachish, had moved his army to Libnah. While Rabshekah was in Sennacherib's camp, word came that the Ethiopian ruler, Tirhakah, whose intervention had caused Sennacherib to withdraw from Egypt, was planning to attack him. Because of the impending attack by Tirhakah, Sennacherib was not able to send more troops to Jerusalem. Instead, he sent some messengers with an insulting letter, again exalting the achievements of his gods over the people whom he had subdued (verses 9-13).

Hezekiah received the letters then took them to the Temple and spread them out before Jehovah. In his prayer, Hezekiah pointed out the arrogance of Sennacherib, against Jehovah and pled with Jehovah to vindicate himself (verses 15-20). In the meantime, Isaiah had received a word from God in response to Hezekiah's prayer. The message is in a magnificent poetic figure (verses 22-35).

One quite interesting element in God's word to Sennacherib is *Have you not heard?* (verse 27). Jehovah declared that He had preordained the rise of Sennacherib and that He had used Sennacherib to punish and subdue certain cities and nations. Therefore, the Assyrians were completely in Jehovah's hands.

In verse 30, the discourse turns from Sennacherib to Hezekiah, assuring him that Judah would be delivered and that not even one arrow would be launched into the city.

The literal fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (37:7, 33-35) is recorded in verses 36-38.

- Before any siege mound was erected,
- before any battering ram was constructed,
- before any military actions had begun,
- the Assyrian army assembled before Jerusalem died in a single night,
- Sennacherib hearing the rumor about the plans of Tirhakah to come against him, returned to Ninevah,
- Sennacherib was assassinated by his sons.

Chapter 38 Hezekiah's sickness

Hezekiah was thirty-eight years old when this episode occurred. His illness is described as a "boil," but it must have been the result of some pestilence, which would have immediate and dire results. One thing that would have caused him anxiety was the fact that at this time he was childless,⁴⁹ which would mean that the

⁴⁹ Since no mention is made of Hezekiah's children, to this point, and since Isaiah spoke of children that Hezekiah would beget (future tense) in II Kings 20:18, we assume that Hezekiah was childless when the illness struck him.

dynasty of David, along with all of the Messianic hopes, would come to an end, and confusion would surround the accession to the throne.

Isaiah was commissioned to pronounce the sentence of death (verse 1). Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, probably to hide his emotion from those in the sick room. He prayed to Jehovah, pleading on the basis of the integrity that he had shown throughout his life. In response to this prayer, Jehovah, *the God of David*, revoked the death sentence and added fifteen years to his life.

Some argue that verse 6 places this episode before the invasion by the Assyrians, thus making possible the agreement between Isaiah 36:1 and the dating of the event in the Assyrian annals (see comments on 36:1 above). However, this is not necessarily so, because the Assyrians continued to be a conquering power, under the leadership of Sennacherib's son, Esarhaddon.

No explanation is given in the text as to why God had allowed this sickness and the resulting pronouncing of the death sentence. II Chronicles 32:24-26, infer that the sickness came upon him because of pride that developed after Jehovah delivered him from the Assyrians and the manner in which various nations esteemed him after that deliverance. The sickness may have come upon him to heighten Hezekiah's spiritual sensitivity and his concern for the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. Indeed, as a result of this sickness, Hezekiah pondered death and life, as demonstrated in the poem that he wrote after his recovery (verses 9-20). The poem displays a homocentric view, i.e., how death and the dead appear to those who are alive, especially in the era before the New Testament revelation was given.

Isaiah, we assume by Divine instruction, told those caring for Hezekiah to apply a fig poultice to the boil. This they did and Hezekiah recovered.

Of special interest is the sign that Jehovah granted to Hezekiah, to assure him that the Assyrians would not conquer Jerusalem and that Hezekiah would live fifteen more years (verses 6-8). II Kings 20 also records this event. The II Kings account records that Isaiah's message of healing to Hezekiah included the promise that in three days he would be able to go to the House of the Lord for worship (II Kings 20:5). In his despair, Hezekiah asked for some sign to assure him that this would happen – that he would be healed and then go to the House of the Lord on the third day (II Kings 20:8). The prophet told Hezekiah that Jehovah had granted a sign to assure him of the prophetic word – that Isaiah had not missed God, so to speak. The sign would be that the shadow on the sundial either would go forward ten degrees or backward ten degrees – Hezekiah could choose (II Kings 20:9). Hezekiah said that the greater sign would be for the shadow to go backward ten degrees and so that is what he asked for (II Kings 20:10) and indeed that is what happened. It seems that what Hezekiah was observing from his sick bed was the staircase of Ahaz, whereby the king would go up to the House of the Lord. By watching the shadow on these steps, Hezekiah kept track of time from his sick bed. The shadow was turned back “ten steps.”

There has been a lot of debate and speculation over this sign. Yale University Professor Totten⁵⁰ calculated that the forty minutes added to the day by this action would be the amount needed to fill out the twenty-three and one third hours of Joshua's long day.^{51 52} Others have argued that the sign was accomplished by the refraction of the sun's rays. In either case, the sign was a miracle (the first explanation being the greater miracle).

Chapter 39 The delegation from Babylon

Because Sennacherib and his army were repelled from Jerusalem, various monarchs gave great honor to Hezekiah. He came to be viewed as invincible (II Chronicles 32:22-23). When he became ill and then recovered, the Babylonian, Merodach-baladan, sent a delegation with a letter of good wishes and gifts to celebrate Hezekiah's healing (verse 1).

While the delegation was there, Hezekiah showed them through his house and through the Temple. He gave them the full tour, showing them the wealth stored in Jerusalem (verse 2).

Isaiah informed Hezekiah that because he had done this, the Babylonians would carry away everything, including Hezekiah's sons (verse 3-7). Isaiah prophesied that some of Hezekiah's descendants would become officials in the Babylonian government.

II Chronicles 32:31 states that Jehovah left Hezekiah on his own, while the Babylonian ambassadors were visiting, in order for Hezekiah to display his true heart. The intimation in II Chronicles and the prophecy of Isaiah is that Hezekiah still struggled with pride.

Hezekiah's response to the word from Isaiah is an interesting one. He took the prophecy to be a guarantee that in his lifetime, all would go well (verse 8, II Kings 20:19), and didn't seem to express any remorse of what would happen after his death.

IX. THE BOOK OF COMFORT Chapters 40-66

The content and topic of the first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah consisted for the most part of prophecies relating to conditions that existed in Isaiah's lifetime. Assyria was the constant antagonist of God's Chosen People in the first thirty-nine chapters. The main theme of those chapters was God's judgment on Judah and Israel, as well as His judgment on many surrounding nations. Visions of the Messianic Kingdom frequently are included in these

⁵⁰ Frank M. Boyd, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, (Springfield, MO, Gospel Publishing House, 1950) page 141

⁵¹ Joshua 10:10-14

⁵² From the early 1950's reports began to be circulated that NASA scientists, in their astronomical data, had detected the addition of 24 hours in the history of the world. Christians on the NASA team supposedly called attention to the long day of Joshua. NASA always has denied these reports, but they do persist.

visions. There also are some isolated words concerning the Babylonian captivity and the Jews' ultimate deliverance.

The topic and theme of the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah are of a different tone and have a different topic. Very little in the final twenty-seven chapters relate to Isaiah's own time. Assyria no longer is the antagonist. Pending judgment on the sinful nation of Judah no longer is the dominate theme. The theme is the comfort and encouragement to God's people who are exiles in Babylon. The word, *comfort*, occurs only one time in the earlier chapters (12:1), but it is a frequent term in the final chapters (40:1, 2; 49:13; 52:11; 61:2; 66:13).

Yet, even though these prophecies relate to a later century, they did furnish consolation to those in Jerusalem who grieved over the nation and its spiritual condition. Ezekiel later characterized these as *men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst* (Jerusalem).⁵³

In this section, Isaiah prophetically projects himself into the future. At times, he experientially is among the exiles in the next century. In order to appreciate and grasp the message of these chapters, we also must place ourselves among the Judeans who were forced to leave their homeland and establish lives in a strange country; we must enter into their homesickness and their yearning to know, once again, the presence of God that was evident in the reign of David; we must yearn for the Temple, wherein dwelt the Ark of the Covenant and the holy Shekinah.

The final twenty-seven chapters are divided into three parts of nine chapters each. The parts are delineated by the expression, *There is no peace for the wicked, says Jehovah* (48:22; 57:21). At the close of the third part, Isaiah drops this peculiar refrain but in very horrifying terms states that the wicked will have no part in the coming glories (66:24). Each section has a distinct theme:

- Chapters 40-48, the contrast between Jehovah and the idols; the contrast between Israel and the nations
- Chapters 49-55 the contrast between the Suffering Servant and the future glory of His exaltation
- Chapters 55-66 the contrast between the hypocrites, the wicked and the rebellious, on the one hand and the faithful, penitent, and persecuted on the other hand.

The general view is that twelve to fourteen years passed between the prophecies in the first section and those in the closing section. Since the last two chapters of the previous section (Chapters 38-39) describe events that occurred 12-15 years before Hezekiah's death (he was given 15 additional years of life in Chapter 38), and if we accept the general view that Chapters 40-66 were written twelve to fourteen years after the prophecies in the first section, Chapters 40-66 would have been composed in the earliest years of Manasseh's reign.

⁵³ Ezekiel 9:4

As noted in the Introduction, Manasseh began to reign in 697 BC.

As also noted in the introduction, Nebuchadnezzar accomplished the captivity of Judah in four stages, beginning in 606 BC. Cyrus conquered Babylon and began sending Jews back to Jerusalem in 536 BC – 70 years after the captivity in Babylon was begun.

If we accept the conclusion expressed above, these prophecies were composed 697 – 695 BC. If that date is correct, then Isaiah prophesied the Babylonian captivity 90 – 96 years before the event took place. This would mean that he prophesied the victory of Cyrus and the freeing of the Jews 160 – 166 years before the event. Of special note is the fact that when Isaiah wrote the prophecies, Assyria, not Babylon, was the world power and the Medes and Persians (Cyrus' kingdom) were not even on the radar screen.

Chapters 40-48

God's self-description in preparation for Israel's deliverance from Babylon.

This first section of the Book of Comfort foretells the future deliverance from Babylon and declares Jehovah to be the one and only true God. Jehovah is contrasted with the idols, in that they cannot declare the future. Idolatry was a persistent, besetting sin in Israel. The worship of the Golden Calf in the foundational days of the nation (Exodus 32) was a predictor of future sin. Idolatry was like a pernicious disease in Israel. There would be times of repentance and the removal/destruction of idols. Then, in a few short years, the idols would be back. Israel especially was susceptible to the idolatry practiced by the nations whom they had displaced from Canaan.

Rather than discontinuing their worship in the Temple of Jehovah, and turning exclusively to idols, the Israelites usually mixed idolatry with their worship of Jehovah. While worshipping at the Temple, they also worshipped idols. Their idolatry was a functional declaration that even though Jehovah had made covenant with them, He was not capable of fulfilling the covenant, or that he just couldn't be trusted to keep His word. The Babylonian captivity was designed by Jehovah to purge Israel of the sin of idolatry. That end was achieved. After the Babylonian captivity, idolatry never again was a problem.

In the first nine chapters of the Book of Comfort, Jehovah makes a number of statements concerning idols. Some of the statements call Israel to serious reflection. Some of them are sarcastic, mocking those who make idols and worship them. The following is a compilation of the statements in this section concerning idols.

Isaiah 40:18-20

To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?

As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, A goldsmith plates it with gold, And a silversmith fashions chains of silver.

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.

Isaiah 41:6-7

Each one helps his neighbor, And says to his brother, "Be strong!"

*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, That it should not totter.*

Isaiah 41:21-24

"Present your case," Jehovah says. "Bring forward your strong arguments," The King of Jacob says.

*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.*

*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.

*Behold, you are of no account, and your work amounts to nothing;
He who chooses you is an abomination.*

Isaiah 41:29

*Behold, all of them are false;
Their works are worthless,
Their molten images are wind and emptiness.*

Isaiah 42:8

*I am Jehovah, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images.*

Isaiah 42:17

*They shall be turned back and be utterly put to shame,
Who trust in idols,
Who say to molten images, "You are our gods."*

Isaiah 44:9-20

*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.*

*Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit?
Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men.*

Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame.

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. 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.

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.

*Then it becomes something for a man to burn,
so he takes one of them and warms himself;
he also makes a fire to bake bread.*

*He also makes a god and worships it;
he makes it a graven image, and falls down before it.*

*Half of it he burns in the fire;
over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast, and is satisfied.
He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire."*

*But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image.
He falls down before it and worships;
he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for thou art my god."*

*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.*

*And no one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say,
"I have burned half of it in the fire, and also have baked bread over its coals.
I roast meat and eat it.
Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!"*

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?"

Isaiah 45:16

They will be put to shame and even humiliated, all of them; The manufacturers of idols will go away together in humiliation.

Isaiah 45:20

*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.*

Isaiah 46:1

*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.*

Isaiah 46:5-7

To whom would you liken Me,

*And make Me equal and compare Me,
That we should be alike?*

*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.
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.*

Isaiah 48:5

*Therefore I declared them to you long ago,
Before they took place I proclaimed them to you,
Lest you should say, 'My idol has done them,
And my graven image and my molten image have commanded them.'*

This initial section of the Book of Comfort (Chapters 40-48) consists of nine addresses:

Chapter 40	Chapter 44:24 – 45:25
Chapter 41	Chapter 46
Chapter 42:1 – 43:13	Chapter 47
Chapter 43:14 – 44:5	Chapter 48
Chapter 44:6-23	

The First Address Chapter 40

The first eleven verses of Chapter 40 serve as a prologue to the entire closing twenty-seven chapters. Verses 1-2 are a prologue to the prologue.

Verses 1-2 The term rendered, *Comfort*, is *nacham*, (נחַם) which is an onomatopoeic term, *i.e.* it sounds like what it is conveying – *to sigh*. A form of this word is used in Genesis 6:6. The idea is identifying with one who is suffering and feeling compassion, or grief. One is compelled to comfort the afflicted because he hurts for and with them. The form of the Hebrew imperative in this verse literally conveys the idea of causing the people to breathe again.⁵⁴

The Greek term used in the Septuagint in these comfort passages is *parakaleo* (παράκαλέω) which conveys the idea, *to call alongside*. The Holy Spirit is called, *The Comforter*, in some versions of the New Testament because the Greek term applied to the Holy Spirit in several passages is *parakletos* (παράκλητος), which

⁵⁴ נחַם (Nachamu) Piel form of *nacham*

conveys the idea of one who is *called alongside*. These words convey the biblical concept of comfort. The biblical concept is best illustrated by the picture of a weary traveler who is trudging along through a horrible blizzard. He sees the light in a cabin window a few hundred yards ahead, but he is so weary that he cannot go on. Just at that moment, a friend comes alongside and grabs his arm and says, “come on, we can make it.” The arrival of the friend does not take away the cold, the storm, nor the fatigue, but with his encouragement, the traveler is able to go on and reach his destination. The biblical idea of the comforter, and thus of comfort is that we are not in this thing alone. God is with us in all circumstances. Thus, Paul prayed for the removal of his thorn in the flesh, but God responded, “My grace is sufficient for Thee.”

To the Jews in Babylonian captivity, Jehovah says, “you are not alone, you are not forgotten, I am in this experience with you.”

The message of comfort includes the good news that Judah has paid the penalty for her sins and that the justice of God has been satisfied. The compassion of God is seen in the third clause of verse 2, *That she has received of Jehovah’s hand double for all her sins, i.e.*, that God considered as superabundant what His justice had compelled Him to inflict upon Jerusalem.

Also significant is the expression, *for all*, (verse 2c). There is nothing left to receive further punishment.

Verses 3-11 Five reasons are given as to why Israel can be comforted:

- Jehovah’s grace and forgiveness are revealed, the time of chastening is ended and sufficient punishment has been meted out (verses 1-2)
- The voice of the Divine “Crier” is heard sounding out the *word of our God* (verse 8) in constant assurance that every obstacle in His way will disappear, including difficult terrain (verses 3-4), and any opposition from man who is like grass (verses 6-8)
- God’s word stands forever, it will not be overruled (verse 8)
- Jehovah is returning to His people, actively ruling over them, shepherding them, and dwelling in their presence (verses 9-11)
- The glory of Jehovah will be revealed and all will acknowledge it (verse 5)

Verse 9 is a wonderful text...***Behold your God!***

Verses 10-11 were inspiration for Handel’s *Messiah*

Verses 12-27 These verses present one of Scripture’s most sublime pictures of God, the Incomparable Jehovah.

After hearing the proclamation of verses 1-11, the prophet rhetorically notes the questions that plague the minds of the exiles. Does Jehovah mean what He says,

when He promises; is He really able to surmount all obstacles; did He not fail us when our enemies prevailed; can He lift us up again when we have fallen? These doubts find clear expression in verse 27.

All of these questions are answered in the sublime picture of Jehovah presented in this chapter. Impressive is the twice repeated question, *Do you not know? Have you not heard?* (verses 21, 28).

The conclusion of this beautiful chapter is one of the Bible's best-known passages. Jehovah is neither ignorant of nor indifferent to their need. He, Himself, never is weary or tired. His timing is not man's timing. To those who wait on Him, He will give His strength to enable them to mount above their personal circumstances and to reach their national destiny, even though sometimes they must plod.

The Second Address Chapter 41

Verse 1-4 This word is addressed to the whole heathen world. The expression, *coastlands* (*islands* in the KJV) is used in Scripture to refer to various geographical areas. Sometimes it was used to designate the continent of Europe, sometimes the Phoenicians, but the context of Chapter 41 makes it clear that the nations of the world are being addressed.

The nations of the world are called to par lance. First, they are listen to all of the evidence, then, to use reason, which cannot fail to recognize the facts and the consequences to be deduced from them.

Isaiah, using a prophetic present tense, pictures the events in verses 2-4 as accomplished fact, when, in truth, the events are about 150 years in the future. The reference is to Cyrus, who is mentioned several times in these chapters, without revealing his name until 44:28.

Jehovah began the debate by asking the question, *Who has aroused one from the east...*(verse 2), and then answered it, *I Jehovah am the first, and with the last, I am He* (verse 4).

Verses 5-9 describe the fear that the heathen nations have when they contemplate coming into the presence of Jehovah. They frantically hurry to get their idols built and solidly erected so that they can be protected.

Verse 8-10 Israel has no need to panic or be in fear, because of the covenant relationship with Jehovah, dating to the time of Abraham, Jehovah's *friend*. This is the first time that Israel is called Jehovah's *servant*.

The term, *servant*, is a frequently recurring theme in the last 27 chapters. It occurs in the singular twenty times:

41:8, 9;	44:1, 2, 21 (twice), 26;	49: 3, 5, 6, 7;
42:1, 19 (twice);	45:4;	50:10;
43:10;	48:20;	52:13;
		53:11.

The term, *servant*, occurs in the plural eleven times:

54:7;	65:8, 9, 13 (thrice), 14, 15;
56:6;	66:14.
63:17;	

Verses 11-13 urge Israel to look at Jehovah's saving intervention. He will cause their enemies to vanish and will hold their hand, as a loving father would do to keep his child from falling.

Verses 14-16 repeats the exhortation to not fear (verses 10, 13, 14). Jacob (Israel) is described as a worm, but the worm will grind to powder all of the hills and mountains that oppose her.

Verses 17-20 contain abundant synonyms depicting God's desire and ability to meet every need of his people.

Verse 21-24 The dialogue is addressed to the idols, who are challenged to predict the future or to at least do something, either good or bad, that will give evidence that they are more than just a block of wood or a piece of metal.

Predictive prophecy often is cited in Isaiah as proof of deity:

41:21-24 (with verse 2)	43:9	46:8ff (with verse 11)
41:26	44:6-8	48:3-5
42:9	45:20-21	

Cyrus, although not always mentioned by name, is referenced throughout this section:

41:2-5	43:14	45:1-7	46:11
41:25	44:28	45:13	48:14-15

Verse 25-29 Jehovah declares again that He will raise up a hero from the north (Cyrus) who will subdue all who oppose him. Jehovah announces this in advance as evidence of his foreknowing the future. He speaks from the prophetic future, as if the prediction has been fulfilled, and none of the heathen deities had been able to predict it.

Third Address Chapter 42:1 – 43:13

Verse 1 The closing verse of the previous address called the hearers to behold the idols. This verse calls the hearers to behold the *Servant* of Jehovah. Note that the expression used to describe the nation in 41:8. In this passage, an individual is describe by the title.

Not only will Jehovah raise up Cyrus to deliver Israel from Babylon, which is a preliminary step in restoring the theocracy, but He also will raise up a Servant who will bring good tidings of salvation and justice to the Gentiles (Jesus Christ).

Verses 2-4 describe the Servant's demeanor, which is humble and gentle, yet strong to the point that He will not be deterred in His mission until it is accomplished.

There is no doubt that these verses were fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ, because under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Matthew assigns them to Jesus (Matthew 12:18-21).

Verses 5-9 continue to describe the Servant. Jehovah pledges His Name as assurance that what He promises will come into effect:

- first, the destruction of idolatry in Israel;
- second, the restoration of Israel;
- third, the conversion of Gentiles.

In this section we have a glimpse of the truth of Philippians 2:7, *i.e.* that in a great act of moral surrender the Christ would place Himself in dependence upon the Father, through the Holy Spirit.

Verses 10-16 The accomplishment of the *new things* (verse 9), *i.e.* the work of Christ, calls forth a paean of praise from the Gentile nations. The praise moves from shore to shore, from mountain to mountain, from city to city, acclaiming the victory of Jehovah. Its climax awaits the final era of justice and peace when all spiritual and fleshly enemies shall be scattered and the Messianic Kingdom will be established.

Verses 17-25 The utter folly of idolatry will be recognized. Israel, God's servant, has been blind and deaf to His ways and laws. He has had to punish them, yet, in time, through this nation His law will be published to all nations (the Gospel?).

43:1-13 Suddenly, the address becomes one of deep consolation. Here is the promise that Jehovah plans to regather Israel from a world wide diaspora. The language here implies a gathering of Jews, even before the end of the age. The establishment of the modern nation of Israel could be the beginning of the fulfillment of these verses.

The nations of the world and Israel, herself, are exhorted to examine the evidence of God's historical dealings with Israel and let all be aware that Jehovah alone is God and that He alone can save Israel throughout all centuries.

The Fourth Address Chapter 43:14 – 44:45

Verses 14 – 17 declare the deliverance from Babylon and the total demise of that empire.

Verses 18-21 declare that as great as was the display of Jehovah's power in the past, a supernatural display, beyond anything ever seen, is in the future.

Verses 22-25 declare that Jehovah is not going to deliver Israel and forgive them their sins because they have done anything to deserve it. He is going to do this for His own sake

Verses 26-28 Israel is challenged to prove that the nation deserves grace. They can't because even Abraham was a sinner, justified by faith, their priests had been unfaithful, and even spiritual leaders had resorted to soothsaying and false worship. Consequently, in His holiness and justice He was obligated to remove these leaders and allow them to be reviled by the world.

44:1-5 Though both the northern and southern kingdoms were given over to the Assyrians and Babylonians, the nation is not done away with, as a whole. The covenants must be fulfilled.

The Fifth Address Chapter 44:6-23

Verses 6-8 In this address there is another pledge of redemption and a fresh exhortation to trust in Jehovah.

Verses 9-20 The vanity of idols is contrasted with the living and true God.

Verses 21-23 This is the New Testament doctrine of grace in an Old Testament setting. In spite of idolatry and sin, Jehovah has wiped out their transgressions.

The Sixth Address Chapter 44:24 – 45:25

Verses 24-27 Only Jehovah can effect all of the glorious promises that He has put forth. He has frustrated Chaldean soothsayers and wise men. The word concerning the drying up of the rivers is an exact description of how the army of Cyrus was able to take the city. The promise of the rebuilding of Jerusalem is specific.

Verse 28 At last the prophet reveals the name (Cyrus) of the hero of Israel's deliverance from Babylon.

Jehovah did this, even though Cyrus had never heard of Him (verse 4). Jehovah says that no one has the right to complain about how He accomplishes His purposes (verses 9-12). Cyrus will build Jerusalem and will let the exiles go free, and he will not be paid or rewarded for doing this.

Verses 14-25 are a mixture of prophecies about the release from Babylon and the restoration of Jerusalem, but also much more is described. There will be a time when the nations of the world will forsake their idols and be attracted to Jehovah as the savior of mankind (the Gospel age?). God has decreed that the earth will be inhabited by His covenant people. Israel's salvation, foretold and accomplished by Jehovah, will become the salvation of those in the heathen world who escape the judgment of the last days.

Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10 make clear that these verses are still in our future.

Romans 14:11 *For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God."*

Philippians 2:10 *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,*

The Seventh Address Chapter 46

This address and the next speak of the fate that awaits Babylon. Chapter 46 pictures Babylon at the time when it is about to be taken by Cyrus.

Verses 1-2 The idols of Babylon are unable to save the city and they are carried away by Cyrus. Bel, Nebo, and Merodach constituted Babylon's trinity of divinities (Jeremiah 50:2).

Verses 3-4 God always has protected Israel and he solemnly assures them that He will not abandon them.

Verses 5-7 Again, a demonstration of the folly of idolatry.

Verses 8-11 Jehovah always has been able to predict the future. He also can call (prophetically, *has called*) Cyrus from the east (a bird of prey) and what Jehovah has planned will be done.

Verse 12 is a closing warning to the skeptical Jews who will not believe.

The Eighth Address Chapter 47

This chapter pictures the fall of Babylon.

Verses 1-7 Babylon is described as a delicately reared female reduced to humiliation and disgrace. One reason for the severe treatment of Babylon is the manner in which Babylon had treated the captives from Judah. God had given His people over to punishment, but this did not justify the severe manner in which the Babylonian rulers had treated them.

Verses 8-11 No amount of sorcery or enchantment will be able to avert the double judgment to come upon Babylon.

Verses 12-15 All of the learned sorcerers, astrologers, diviners, etc., will be swept away like stubble before a flame.

The Ninth Address Chapter 48

This chapter contains renewed assurances of deliverance from Babylon.

Verse 1 Isaiah, in the name of Jehovah, first addresses the Jews by their natural designation, *the house of Jacob*, then adds their covenant name, *Israel*. However, since both of these names would include the entire twelve tribes, and since he is addressing those from Judah, in Babylonian exile, he adds, *and have come forth from the loins of Judah*.⁵⁵ Ironically, he uses the designations of those who *invoke the God of Israel*, even though their hypocrisy was quite evident in the time that Isaiah wrote this prophecy. Thus, they also are described as those who invoke the God of Israel, *but not in truth nor in righteousness*.

Verses 2-8 highlight their hypocrisy, while once again appealing to prophecy as a sign of Jehovah's deity.

Verses 9-11 These verses reaffirm that the salvation which Judah is receiving is by God's grace. Jehovah might have taken unrestrained vengeance, totally destroying Judah, but He did not do so because that would have compromised His reputation in the eyes of the heathen.

Verses 12-16 Three times, in rapid succession (verses 12, 14, 16) appeal is made to Judah to listen to Jehovah, because He alone is God.

The reference in 14-15 is to Cyrus, Jehovah's agent who will perform God's pleasure upon Babylon. Jehovah did not call Cyrus in secret; by this prophecy, He openly is calling him.

Verses 17-19 Isaiah records Jehovah's lament over Judah's crooked path. Even the chastisements that He imposed upon them were to teach them, but they would not listen. Had they listened and learned, then their *well being would have been like a river and [their] righteousness like the waves of the sea*.

Verses 20-21 Isaiah, prophetically, moves a century forward so that he is in the presence of the Babylonian captives. He addresses them directly and commands them to depart from Babylon. They will depart from Babylon in great joy and will publish to the world the story of their redemption, as prophesied. Their deliverance will be as much of an evidence of God's providence and miraculous power as was the deliverance from Egypt.

Verse 22 The godless element in Judah/Israel will have no part in these glorious events.

⁵⁵ The Hebrew, מִיְּדֵי יְהוּדָה literally means, *water*. The NAS, *loins of Judah*, and the NIV, *line of Judah*, are interpretations of the meaning of this expression.

Chapters 49-57

Salvation will come through the Servant of Jehovah

The theme of the nine chapters just concluded is the deliverance from Babylon. From Chapter 49 onward, neither the name of Cyrus nor Babylon occur. A new scene presents itself in the prophetic picture. The citing of prophecy as evidence for the deity of Jehovah also ends with Chapter 48. The theme of the nine chapters before us is the character and mission of the “Suffering Servant.” Already, in Chapters 40-48, Isaiah had alluded to this mysterious person. In the present section, the Suffering Servant is defined in his Prophetic and Priestly functions, His task, and His equipment for the task, His sufferings, His humiliation, and His final exaltation. The Servant is mentioned twenty times in Chapters 49-57.

Four *Servant Songs*, are found in Isaiah:

- **42:1-9** a poem describing the Servant’s gentle manner and world-wide mission;
- **49:11-13** describing the Servant’s mission and spiritual success;
- **50:4-11** the Servant’s soliloquy, concerning His being perfected through suffering;
- **52:13-53:12** The Servant’s suffering and ultimate exaltation.

Chapter 49: The Servant of Jehovah testifies concerning Himself

This chapter, as have earlier sections, reflects the *kenosis* of Philippians 2:6-7

who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied⁵⁶ Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Verses 1-6 The Messiah is introduced as speaking of Himself.

- He calls the distant nations to hear His voice (verse 1)
- From the womb, He was called to the role by Jehovah (verses 1 – 3)
- Jehovah has fashioned Him as a sharp sword or a polished javelin for the task assigned. (verse 2)
- Jehovah chose Him to be a means of glorifying Jehovah (verse 3)
- His mission will appear to fail, but He has assurance of success and of Divine approval (verse 4)
- His future success would be glorious. Israel’s unbelief would not prevent her redemption; there will be an illumination of the Gentiles and salvation that would reach the ends of the earth (verses 5-6)

Verses 7-12 Jehovah gives a direct promise that the Messiah will experience the ultimate success of his mission.

- Individuals and the nation of Israel would reject Him (verse 7)
- Even so, in time, kings and princes would rise and honor him (verse 7)

⁵⁶ *κενόω* (*kenow*) “to deprive of power”, or “to make of no meaning or effect”; in this passage, the expression, *εαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν* (*eauton ekeosen*) “He, Himself, gave up or laid aside what He possessed.”

- In an apparent reference to the prayer life of the Messiah, Jehovah heard Him, and would give Him as a covenant of reconciliation (verse 8)
- He would bring deliverance to those in bondage and darkness; He would provide for His people; He would overcome all obstacles; He would bring into His Kingdom people from distant lands, even from China (*land of Sinim*). (verses 9-12)

Verse 13 Isaiah follows a practice that is common in his writing – on the announcement of something glorious and great, he inserts a song of praise.

Verses 14-26 Zion is rebuked for her despondency

- The exiled Jews are portrayed as complaining that Jehovah has forsaken them (verse 14)
- Jehovah assures them that He could no more forget them than a woman could forget her child (verse 15)
- Jehovah describes His people as being engraved on His hand (verse 16)
- Jehovah assures them that He will drive away all of her destroyers (verse 17)
- Judah will not be abandoned as a bride, but she would be so enlarged by Gentiles that her borders would have to be enlarged (verses 18-21)
- The Gentile nations would compete with one another to bring Zion's children back home; Zion will be vindicated in the eyes of Gentile rulers (verses 22-23)

Every nation of the world will have to acknowledge the reality of the fact that it is futile to stand in opposition to Jehovah's covenant nation. Jehovah will destroy those who try to resist. (verses 24-26)

Chapter 50:1-3 Jehovah's response to Israel's complaint

In this vision, the Jews are viewed, once again, as hopeless exiles. Some of the unbelieving among them claim that their calamities were the result of Jehovah's caprice, rather than what they deserve because of His righteous displeasure.

- Jehovah declares that He did not capriciously put them away as an husband might do in Old Testament times (verse 1)
- Their suffering was caused by their own sins, they had "sold themselves." (verse 1)
- There was no lack on Jehovah's part. He had saved them again and again (verse 2-3)

Chapter 50:4-11 The Servant of Jehovah

This is a beautiful soliloquy concerning the Servant. Much of it can be seen clearly as referring to what was experienced by Jesus Christ.

Verse 4-5 He is endowed by Jehovah for his work among the weary and afflicted. He listens for instructions from Jehovah. Jesus' self description is a strong echo of these verses:

John 5:19 *Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.*

John 8:28 *Jesus therefore said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.*

John 8:38 *"I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."*

John 12:49 *"For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak.*

John 12:50 *"And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."*

John 14:10 *"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.*

Verse 6 When abused by physically violent enemies, the Servant does not hide from the shame of the experience. The description of Our Lord's suffering at the hands of His enemies is so fitting of this description.⁵⁷

Matthew 26:67-68 *Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, "Prophesy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"*

Matthew 27:26-31 *Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. And they stripped Him, and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.*

Verses 7-9 The Servant trusts Himself into the hand of Jehovah. Those who resist Him, mock him, and contend against Him, will not be able to last.

Verse 10 Those among the exiles who reverence Jehovah, and who in their situation are in a dark place, are urged to trust only in Jehovah.

Verse 11 A dire warning is given to those who try to create their own light and try to be self-sufficient, instead of relying on Jehovah.

Chapter 51:1-23 Salvation and Deliverance

⁵⁷ See also Mark 15; Luke 23; and John 19

This beautiful and dramatic chapter is addressed to the believing remnant of exiled Jews, who long for righteousness and salvation. The chapter is filled with metaphor. To a large degree, the message is in the metaphor, rather than in its interpretation *i.e.* as in an instrumental musical piece in which non-verbal sounds and rhythm impact the soul, in the same manner beautiful language speaks to the inner being.

Verses 1-3 Jehovah begins by telling the pious Jews to pay attention to what He is saying. He calls to mind that they began as an insignificant people, but that Jehovah had made them great. Since He birthed the nation out of humble beginnings, He had the power to make their homeland once again a place of beauty and prosperity.

Verses 4-6 Again, He tells them to pay attention. His salvation will be for both Jews and Gentiles. This salvation would be more permanent than the present physical universe.

Verses 7-8 Again, the exhortation to pay attention. The pious Jews are urged to have no fear of any man for all men will pass away, but Jehovah's righteousness and salvation shall be forever.

Verses 9-10 These glorious promises stir a response. Isaiah shouts that response. He urges Jehovah to act with strength and certainty, even as He did when He supernaturally delivered them from Egypt.

Verse 11 This verse can be understood as Jehovah's own antiphonal response to the outcry, declaring that the exiles will return to their homeland in great joy.

Verse 12-16 Jehovah addresses them as their comforter. He urges them to have no fear of any of the earthly powers that appear to be invincible. In verse 16, there is an immediate reference to the release from Babylon, the language pictures a final fulfillment in the Messianic Kingdom age.

Verses 17-23 The prophet metaphorically urges Jerusalem to wake up. Having known the cup of Jehovah's anger, they are reeling, drunk, and helpless. Their enemies walk over them as they lie drunk on the ground. That situation will end, and those who have oppressed them will drink of the cup of God's anger. Although the role of captor and captive will be reversed, the chapter closes with Israel still lying in the dust.

Chapter 52:1-12 Freedom and restoration for Judah

This is another instance in which the chapter division is unfortunate. The first twelve verses of Chapter 52 are a continuation of the soliloquy of Chapter 51.

Verses 1-2 Jerusalem is lying upon the ground, devastated and exhausted. Jehovah declares that this condition is going to end. The heathen Gentiles no longer will be able to ravish Jerusalem.

Verses 3-6 The people of Judah had sold themselves for nothing. Jehovah will redeem them without money. He delivered them from Egypt, and He delivered them from the Assyrians; their present state will again require supernatural intervention. Those who howl in mocking derision of Jehovah, because they were able to defeat His chosen people, and thus, in their minds, defeat Him, are about to learn the truth.

The picture of Babylonian aristocrats' mocking of Jehovah fits the description of Belshazzar's feast in Daniel Chapter 5 *i.e.* the holy utensils from the Temple were used as wine vessels in their drunken orgy, which included the worship of Babylon's idols.

When the deliverance came, it would be obvious that Jehovah had given Babylon into her enemies' hands. Note that Jehovah said that when this happened, He would say, *Here I am...* just as promised, I have arrived.

Verses 7-8 Isaiah pictures messengers running before the Israelites in their journey home. The messengers are proclaiming to Jerusalem the good news that the exiles are coming. The running is a beautiful sight, because of the good news borne by the messenger. Paul applies this passage to those to preach the Gospel (Romans 10:15).

Verses 9-10 The poetic picture of watchmen on a wall, seeing distant runners, and hearing from a distance their joyous announcement, begin to burst forth in joyous praise. As the watchmen convey the news to the city, the city begins to rejoice. Of course, all of this is poetic imagery, because Jerusalem and her walls were laid in waste when the exiles began their journey back to Jerusalem. Nations of the world would take notice of what Jehovah had done for His people.

Verse 11-12 Most of those who were carried into captivity had died in the intervening seventy years. The generation that received the command to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem consisted of those who never had lived in Jerusalem. Babylon was their home. Their families were buried there, some had achieved positions of influence in the government, some probably had real estate holdings. This was in keeping with God's instruction to them.

Recall that the captivity of Judah was accomplished in four waves (BC 606, 597, 586, 581). When the second wave of exiles had been taken to Babylon, various prophets among them assured them that Jehovah was going to deliver them and that they would return to Jerusalem. As a result, the exiles found it difficult to settle down and begin a life in Babylon. Jeremiah was among those who had not been removed to Babylon. When he received word of the unsettled spirit among the exiles, he sent them a prophetic letter. The description of the situation and Jeremiah's letter are recorded in Jeremiah 29:1-14.

Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. (This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the court officials, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.) The letter was sent by the

hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying,

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, 'Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens, and eat their produce. 'Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. 'And seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.'

“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. 'For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,' declares the LORD.

"For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. 'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 'And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 'And I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'

Thus, the Judean families that had made a good life for themselves in Babylon had done so in keeping in response to Jehovah’s command. Now, however, when it was time for the younger generation to leave, many found it difficult to do so. For this reason, Jehovah prophetically gave the exiles a strong exhortation to leave Babylon.

When the Israelites left Egypt, they took all sorts of Jewels and other valuable things with them. These materials were used to build the Tabernacle. The departure from Babylon was to be different. It was to be a holy procession. The Levites who would begin performing holy duties in the rebuilt Temple were to be careful to avoid defiling themselves.

Chapter 52:13 – 53:12 The Suffering and Exaltation of the Servant

This passage consists of five three- verse strophes.

Strophe #1 the first and second advents contrasted 52:13-15

Verse 13 Isaiah’s earlier prophecies concerning the Servant depict Him in his victorious reign. This verse begins at that point.

Verse 14 abruptly directs our gaze to the lowest point of his humiliation. As many were astonished at the devastation wrecked upon Jerusalem, so many will be astonished at the physical damage done to the Servant.

Verse 15 describes the effect of what happened on Golgotha. Some who witnessed the cross were speechless or moved to adoration.⁵⁸ The same reaction will be displayed when history is consummated and the Servant is beheld in the fullness of His glory.

Strophe #2 The question of unbelief in the light of the Servant's humble character 53:1-3

Verse 1 For the most part, Isaiah preached to an unresponsive audience. When Isaiah was commissioned, Jehovah told him that it would be so (Isaiah 6:9-10). John and Paul both declared that the person and message of Jesus fulfilled these verses (John 12:37-41; Romans 10:16). The Jews who did not believe Jesus were fulfilling what Isaiah had prophesied. New Testament passages such as these make clear that the Servant described in 52:13-53:12 is Jesus Christ.

Verse 2 There was nothing in the humble appearance of the Messiah that would give any hint of His fulfilling what the nation expected. People were not drawn to him because He looked like a king. The description in this verse is the only description that we have of the human, physical appearance, of Jesus – and this is prophetic. It certainly is not consistent with most paintings of Our Lord that have been produced through the centuries.

This description brings immediately to mind the description of Israel's first king, Saul, who had the stature of a king (I Samuel 10:23-24), but lacked character. Also, immediately comes to mind the selection of David, whose brothers had the right outward appearance, but it was David whom God chose (I Samuel 16:6-12) because of his heart.

Verse 3 The servant would be a man of sorrows. Recently, artists have tried to portray an image of Jesus as one who was somewhat of an "hail fellow, well met," laughing and displaying a light hearted personality. Neither this picture in Isaiah, nor the picture presented in the Gospel narratives displays such a spirit.

This verse accurately predicts the scorn and contempt that the Servant would receive from the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Romans.

Strophe #3 The Servant's vicarious atonement 53:4-6

The emphasis in this strophe is the contrast between *US* and *HE*. Because this strophe has been a key battleground in the debate over the Word of Faith theology, we will tarry over these verses and seek a responsible exegesis.

Verse 4 This verse contains one of the two references to healing in this strophe, the other being verse 6, on which we will comment later. The Hebrew terms in verse 4 clearly speak

⁵⁸ The Centurion, after witnessing the death of Jesus, stated, Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39

of sickness and pain,⁵⁹ in that order, even though not all English versions have made this evident. It is significant to note that the Jews of the Third Century BC who produced the Septuagint, translated these Hebrew terms with the Greek terms meaning *sin* and *great pain* (either physical pain or mental anguish)⁶⁰ rather than *sickness* and *pain*.⁶¹

We could immediately proceed from the picture of the marred, disfigured, grieving Servant in verse 3, to the substitutionary suffering of the Servant in verses 5 and following, were it not for the manner in which Matthew quoted verse 4.

Matthew's citation of Isaiah 53:4 is an important key to understanding the verse, but it also has complicated our exegesis. Matthew declared that Jesus was fulfilling Isaiah 53:4 when He performed miracles of physical healing and deliverance from demon possession.

Matthew 8:16-17 *And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases."*

A challenging element in Matthew's quotation is that he follows neither the Hebrew text, nor the Septuagint. Note the following comparison of the three sources:

Textual Source	First Noun	Second Noun
Hebrew Text	חָלִי sickness/disease	מַכְאוֹב sorrow/pain
Septuagint	ἁμαρτία Sin	ὀδυνόμα pain/agonny
Matthew 8:17	ἀσθένεια weakness/illness	νόσος disease/illness

Note that most English translations of Matthew 8:17, render the first of the two terms, *infirmity*. This is an excellent choice of terms, because it accurately expresses the sense of the Greek term, *i.e.*, some sort of weakness, including weakness caused by some sort of disease.

⁵⁹ חָלִי *hali* – sickness or disease (Whittaker's Revised BDB Lexicon entry [pg 318]); מַכְאוֹב *makobh* – sorrow or pain (Whittaker's Revised BDB Lexicon entry [pg 456,568, 251])

⁶⁰ ἁμαρτία (*hamartia*) – “sin” and ὀδυνόμα (*odunaomai*) – “great pain” or “agonny”

⁶¹ Some scholars argue that since the Septuagint differs in some respects from the existing Hebrew texts, that the translators of the Septuagint had an Hebrew text other than the family of manuscripts that currently are available (almost all modern versions of the Bible use the *Biblia Hebraica* text as the basis for their Old Testament). If that is true, then verse 4 could be an instance in which the Hebrew text used by the Septuagint translators differed from the textual families on which current Hebrew Bibles are based. On the other hand, this could be a case in which the Septuagint translators interpreted, rather than translated, something that all translators do from time to time. If that is the case, then the Septuagint reflects the Jewish view that sickness is the result of sin (for example, see John 9:1-2). By their interpretation, the Septuagint translators declared that the Servant would not remove merely the consequences of sin (symptoms), but sin itself. Because we do not have sufficient evidence to reject the Hebrew text in this passage, we accept it as representing Isaiah's autograph, and that in this instance, the Septuagint translators both interpreted and translated.

The second of the two terms in Matthew 8:17 is rendered accurately, *disease, sickness*, or some synonym in all versions.

One has to wonder why Matthew did not follow the Hebrew text, in which the first term refers to sickness and the second to pain; or why he did not conform to both the Hebrew and Septuagint in which the last term is not sickness or disease, but *pain* (sorrow, emotional, or physical, which might result from sickness or disease). All that can be done, at this point, is to speculate as to the why of Matthew's wording.

If Isaiah 53:4 is understood to say that Jesus *took on Himself* our sicknesses (*i.e.*, a substitutionary act, as argued by some), Matthew's citation becomes a problem. Matthew does not apply Isaiah 53:4 in a substitutionary manner. Note that he did not quote the entire verse, which might have implied a substitutionary sense. When Jesus pronounced a healing, and the person was healed, Jesus himself did not take on that disease (as far as all records are concerned, Jesus never was "sick," in the sense of the common understanding of the term). When Jesus healed a cripple, He did not become crippled. When He healed a blind man, He did not become blind, when He healed a leper, He did not become leprous, etc.

For Christians, the New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament always is the correct one. However, intellectual integrity demands that our understanding of the New Testament interpretation not be a contradiction of the obvious meaning of the Old Testament text.

In contrast to most of the other popular versions, the NAS (quoted above) seems to convey Matthew's understanding of Isaiah 53:4, by rendering the Greek verbs⁶² of Matthew 8:17, *took* our infirmities and *carried away* our diseases.⁶³ Since Matthew is our authority for understanding Isaiah 53:4, we look to his citation for our interpretation.

- The word rendered, "took," is *lambano* (λαμβάνω), which can mean, "take," or "receive." As noted above, the sense of "receiving" doesn't fit the result of Jesus's action as described by Matthew, so the rendering, "take," is most appropriate.
- The word rendered, "carried away," is *bastadzo* (βαστάζω) which most frequently has the understanding of "bearing" something. However, it also can have the sense of "carrying away," as it is used, for example, in John 20:15.⁶⁴

John 20:15 *Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away [bastadzo], tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."*

⁶² The NAS does bring confusion into the mix by its rendering of the Hebrew nouns. In the text, the NAS renders both nouns as describing some sort of pain, and in the side note, where sickness is acknowledged, the order of the nouns is reversed (*pain/sickness* rather than *sickness/pain*).

⁶³ as contrasted to the KJV, *bare our sicknesses*, and the NIV, *carried our diseases*.

⁶⁴ See also, Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers, Fourth Printing, May 2000) page 99, entry 941.4,

The Hebrew verbs in Isaiah 53:4, linked with the Hebrew nouns, are in harmony with this understanding.

- The first verb is *nasah* (נָשָׂא),⁶⁵ which can be rendered, *lift*, *carry*, or *take*.⁶⁶ Thus, in keeping with Matthew's rendering, the Hebrew understanding is not that He took on Himself our diseases, but that He lifted them (*i.e.*, He removed them).
- The second verb is *s'bal* (סָבַל)⁶⁷ which usually conveys the idea of *to carry a heavy load*.⁶⁸ The servant did and does take upon himself our pain.

Thus, it would seem that Isaiah 53:4 states that the Servant lifted and took away our diseases, but that He empathetically bears our pain and weakness. Such an understanding is in perfect keeping with Matthew's citation of the Isaiah quote, which he used to declare the significance of Jesus' healing/deliverance activity during the evening described in Matthew 8:16-17. He miraculously took away their infirmities and diseases (Matthew) and grieved over the pain of their human condition (Hebrew text). When we reflect on Jesus' grief over our human experience, immediately comes to mind the sorrow that Jesus experienced before the tomb of Lazarus.

John 11:34-36 ...and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. And so the Jews were saying, "Behold how He loved him!"

This understanding also coincides with what we have written above concerning how God through the Holy Spirit comforts us – He comes alongside and shares our experience. This also is in keeping with the touching description of the Servant, Our High Priest, in Hebrews 4:14-16

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

Thus, we understand the miracles of healing that Jesus performed while upon the earth to be of the same category as all miracles of healing performed throughout the biblical record. Those who argue that Jesus' ability to perform these healing miracles was in some way tied to his atoning work on the cross (still in the future at the time of the scene described in Matthew 8:17), fail to explain healing miracles throughout the Old Testament, which in no way were tied to the crucifixion. Miracles are events in which the God of the Universe enters into the natural course of events and suspends the rules, even altering the physical state of the object of the miracle, whether it be a sick human,

⁶⁵ The form of the verb in this passage is qal perfect 3rd person masculine singular

⁶⁶ Whittaker's Revised BDB Hebrew-English Lexicon, Copyright 1995, Dr. Richard Whitaker, Bible Works Version 6.0 (pg 669, 650, 959, 962)

⁶⁷ The form of the verb in this passage is qal perfect 3rd person masculine singular with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix

⁶⁸ Whittaker, pg776, 775, 251

someone who has died and miraculously is resuscitated, or causing a dry path to suddenly appear through a sea, immediately causing the dry path to become muddy,⁶⁹ and the sea to quickly close the path.

This is the spirit in which Jesus credentialed His ability to forgive sin

Matthew 9:2-7 *And behold, they were bringing to Him a paralytic, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Take courage, My son, your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemes." And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? "For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, and walk ' ? "But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins "-- then He said to the paralytic-- "Rise, take up your bed, and go home." And he rose, and went home.*

Jesus had *authority on earth* to forgive sins – such is the prerogative of God, who ultimately provided the sacrifice to make final and complete all of the forgiveness that had been extended to repentant people through the ages. While on earth, He, being God in the Flesh, also had authority to heal. We will discuss ultimate healing in a moment.

If we accept this understanding of verse 4a, how do we understand verse 4b? I would argue that the verse division at this point is an obstacle to our grasping the sense of the verse. Verse 4b is linked in thought to verse 5. Understood this way, the Hebrew would be rendered as follows:

Surely our diseases He has lifted, and our pains - He has carried them,

And we-- we⁷⁰ have esteemed him plagued, Smitten of God, and afflicted. And he is pierced for our transgressions, Bruised for our iniquities, The chastisement of our peace is on him, And by his scourging we are healed.

Isaiah, speaking for his nation, the Jewish people (at least the establishment), seeing what Jesus went through, continued in the Jewish belief that the abuse and suffering that Jesus endured was because of His sin – God was punishing Him, for blasphemy and other sin. That, of course, was the tale that was spread by the Jewish establishment (already described above in connection with the controversy surrounding Isaiah 7:14).

In vivid language, Isaiah highlights the substitutionary suffering of the Servant. In this section, the *OUR* vs *HE/HIM* stands out starkly and always should be read with that emphasis.

⁶⁹ The usual understanding of Exodus 14:25

⁷⁰ This double, *we...we* is found in that *we* is present in the verb and also, redundantly present in a pronoun, *we*, preceding the verb. This can be rendered, *we, ourselves*, or, as we have rendered it, *we... we*. The presence of a pronoun in conjunction with a verb, in which the number and person are contained in the verb, is to emphasize the identity of the one doing the acting. I first became aware of the possibility of this rendering (*we...we*) through reading *The Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* 1862/1887/1898 (YLT) by J.N. Young, ASCII Version Copyright 1988-1997 by the Online Bible Foundation and Woodside Fellowship of Ontario Canada.

Verse 5 throws us into the very midst of the Word of Faith controversy, concerning the relationship between the atonement and physical healing. The position put forth by advocates of the Word of Faith position (and most Pentecostal groups as well), is that healing is in the atonement and, thus, those who believe in the atoning work of Christ are physically healed and should live in good health. Those who are not healed, or who do not live in good health, lack sufficient faith in the power of the blood and the atoning work of Calvary.

Although I believe that God has, does, and will continue to heal, two major obstacles stand in the way of my coming to the conclusion that healing is in the atonement, at least as the doctrine usually is presented.

The first obstacle that must be overcome in order for me to believe that healing is in the atonement is experience. I have known many people who believed that both salvation of the soul and healing of the body are in the atonement, yet they continued to live with sickness and frailty. If healing of the body and salvation of the soul are both in the atonement, then I must call into question whether or not anyone who is not healed is saved. If the atonement fails on one count, how do I know that it will not fail on the other?

The problem I have with that possibility is my conviction that if I trust the atoning work of Christ to redeem me from my sins, and restore me to a relationship with God, then God's grace covers my sin. If I believe that healing is in the atonement just as forgiveness from sin is in the atonement, and I am not healed, then how can I know that I am saved? Can I trust the atonement to save me, if I cannot trust the atonement to heal me?

Thus, if I accept the doctrine that healing is in the atonement, then I must give up my belief in the certainty of salvation, and in that case, I am no better than those who live by a belief in salvation by works – who “hope” that they are saved. I do not consider such uncertainty to be the biblical view of the security of those who are trusting in Christ's atoning work on cross and thus are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The second and even larger obstacle is Peter's use of this passage. In I Peter 2:21 ff, Peter expresses the content of Isaiah 53, putting Christ forth as an example of how we should handle persecution and abuse. He then quotes Isaiah 53:5

1 Peter 2:24-25 *and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.*

Peter's understanding of Isaiah 53:5 is that the healing that we received had to do with our sins and our condition which had alienated us from God. By His wounds we have been healed, and the healing described is that which has enabled us to experience a metamorphosis of our spirits, which caused us to turn from sin to righteousness, from

being a rebellious wanderer to one who seeks the presence of the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls.⁷¹ Physical healing is not even on the radar in Peter's use of this verse and the extended passage.

To argue that healing is in the atonement is to commit the error of building a doctrine on one verse and forcing the rest of Scripture into that framework. The New Testament account, taken in full, just doesn't allow for that doctrine. For example, members of Paul's team, including Timothy and Paul himself, experienced sickness, in some cases, ongoing sickness.

1 Timothy 5:23 *No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.*⁷²

Timothy obviously did not walk in "atonement health." He had ongoing stomach problems and frequent ailments.

2 Timothy 4:20 *Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick*⁷³ *at Miletus.*

Paul's traveling companion, Trophimus, did not live in "atonement health."

Philippians 2:26-27 *because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.*⁷⁴ *For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*

Even though Epaphroditus was healed, his healing was an act of God's mercy, not because he was living in "atonement health."

Galatians 4:13 *but you know that it was because of a bodily illness*⁷⁵ *that I preached the gospel to you the first time*

Paul clearly became ill on his travels. He did not plan to spend time in Galatia, but because of his sickness he had to do so. His comments in verses 14 and 15, intimate that his sickness was some sort of eye disease which was unpleasant to view. Because of this, and because historically it was understood to be so, I believe that his comments concerning a thorn in the flesh refer to an abiding physical illness.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Jeremiah 3:22, employing the same Hebrew term for healing as is found in Isaiah 53:5 (**נפץ**), expresses this concept *Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness. Behold, we come to Thee; For Thou art the LORD our God.*

⁷² Τὰς πικνὰς σου ἀσθενείας *tas piknas sou astheneias* literally, the frequent infirmities of you. The term rendered, *infirmities*, is the same term used in Matthew 8:17.

⁷³ The term rendered *infirmities* in Matthew 8:17

⁷⁴ The term rendered *infirmities* in Matthew 8:17

⁷⁵ The term rendered *infirmities* in Matthew 8:17

⁷⁶ II Corinthians 12:7

On the basis of this evidence alone, I am not able to accept the doctrine that healing is in the atonement, since some of Jesus' most zealous post-Calvary disciples were sick, and some were not healed.

Ultimate physical healing is in the future for all who are in the Messianic Kingdom.⁷⁷ Healing is in the atonement in that after the resurrection, all of God's people will be in perfect health (Revelation 21:1-6) The resurrection to everlasting life would not be possible were it not for the atonement for the sin of Adam, through which sickness/death entered the world. Romans Chapter 5 is an exposition of this truth.

Strophe #3 The Lamb-like Submission of the Servant 53:7-9

The amazing submission of the Servant to the ignominy, shame, and agony, are accurately portrayed by Isaiah. Not only the Servant's demeanor, but also the fact that he was crucified between two thieves and would have been buried with them, had it not been for the intervention of wealthy Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph, a secret disciple of Jesus' buried Jesus in his own Arimathea family tomb.

Strophe #4 The Reward to the Servant for His faithfulness 53:10-12

Verse 10 clearly reveals the plan of redemption through the Servant as originating in the purpose of God out of His marvelous grace.

Verse 11 Jehovah will behold the suffering of His Servant, the result of which is the justification of many. As a substitutionary sacrifice, He will bear their iniquities.

Verse 12 This is a prediction of the triumph of the Servant. The words reflect the custom of dividing the spoils of victory. The Servant's triumph will be an appropriate reward for His suffering. Here is the amazing spirit of forgiveness in the midst of suffering, shame, and ignomy, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Chapter 54 The surety of Israel's covenant relationship with Jehovah.

Verses 1-3 This address is to Jerusalem, the "Mother of Israel." In this address she is pictured as a counterpart to Sarah's lifelong barrenness followed by the birth of Isaac. Jehovah promises to enlarge His people to the point of embracing the Gentiles. This took place in the founding of the Church and the huge influx of Gentiles. However, there also seems to be a picture of circumstances in the Messianic Kingdom.

Verse 4-6 Even though Israel has been as a widowed wife, those days are over. Jehovah is going to deliver Israel, and restore His relationship with her. Her experience, beginning with the Babylonian captivity, has been like a wife, who in the early days of marriage was rejected by her husband, but in later years she became precious to him.

⁷⁷ Revelation 21:1-4

Verses 7-10 Jehovah's displeasure with His people passes quickly, as they are chastised. This is contrasted with His kindness and His mercy, which are everlasting. Jehovah kept his promise to Noah, *i.e.* that the earth never again would be destroyed by a flood, even though evil would return to the land. In the same manner, Jehovah promises Israel that He will keep his covenant of peace with Israel. The mountains may depart, but His faithfulness will not depart.

Verses 11-12 The despondent people, represented by Jerusalem, will be raised up as a Temple. The foundation and walls will be as precious stones. This is reflecting the treasure that Judah was to Jehovah.

Verses 13-15 Jehovah will be the one who teaches the future generations. Peace and serenity will reign because being so taught, they will be established in righteousness. All fear of oppression will be gone and those who would come against Israel would be destroyed. This vision clearly is an end-times scenario and it is consistent with a "last days vision" described in Zechariah 14:1-4

Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.

Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.

Verses 16-17 These verses continue to look to the future, as Jehovah assures His people that whatever happens, He is with them. Ultimate victory is promised. Once again, we must conclude that either this is a prediction of something yet in the future, or this is one of those promises of God that has an unspoken, "if." If Judah remained faithful, etc., then this would happen. That this describes end-time conditions seems to be more likely.

Chapter 55 The Divine invitation to salvation.

It would be difficult to find any other chapter in Scripture to exceed the hope and grace of God that is displayed in Isaiah 55. This chapter is an expansion of Isaiah 1:18-20. The pre-Christian message of salvation dominating this passage, causes us to recall, once again, I Peter 1:10-12

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these

things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look.

Verses 1-2 These verses highlight the folly of man that causes him to spend himself and his wages on those things that do not satisfy, in contrast with that which gives true satisfaction, the person and the things of God. These verses declare that true satisfaction does not have to be purchased, but it is the result of listening with an obedient ear to the voice of Jehovah.

Verses 3-5 All that is required of Israel is that she hears, comes, and takes. If this is done, Israel will be filled with new life and will be met by an everlasting covenant. The description of David as a “witness” to the nations catches our attention. David did conquer nations by military might, but the real victory of David’s life was his production of the Psalms and the force of his typical life.

The picture in verse 5 is a nation in covenant with Jehovah, who, because of that covenant experiences glory. Because of that glory, nations will attach themselves to Israel, because in so doing they will be attached to Jehovah. (Isaiah 60:9 is almost a quote of the last portion of verse 5).

Verses 6-11 As Jehovah approaches Israel at this time, so this is the time to respond. Jehovah’s ways and thoughts are far different from those of mankind. Humans are not inclined to forgive, but Jehovah is so inclined.

Verses 12-13 As the exiles are freed, having responded to the invitation of Jehovah, nature is pictured as rejoicing. The abundance of the beautiful flora will be a memorial to Jehovah.

Much in this chapter is applicable to every age; some of it is applicable to the exiles; some of it pictures magnificent things which we have yet to see.

Chapter 56:1-8 Sabbatical admonitions and the end of Israel’s bigoted exclusiveness.

God called Israel to practical righteousness. One thing that the returning exiles did was to break the law of the Sabbath.⁷⁸ Isaiah warned them in advance of this sin.

Deuteronomy 23:1 declared *No one who is emasculated, or has his male organ cut off, shall enter the assembly of the LORD.*

The custom in many heathen nations was to emasculate young men and to train them for service in government or in their households. The theory was that by emasculating them, they would have no other purpose in life than to fulfill their assigned duties. Some Israelites had been emasculated against their will, by the Babylonians. These eunuchs had not been unfaithful to Jehovah, they were victims. They feared that on the basis of the Law, they would be declared unfit to stand in the congregation of Jehovah.

⁷⁸ Nehemiah 13:15-22

This is one of those times in which Jehovah spoke of a new Law of the Kingdom, certainly, the Messianic Kingdom, but more practically, the fate of the returning exiles. Perhaps this is a reflection of the “everlasting covenant” and the “faithful mercies” of 55:3.

If this is a reference to the everlasting covenant of 55:3, reflecting a change from the Sinaitic code, the passage is reminiscent of both Ezekiel 18:2ff and Jeremiah 31:29ff. Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah, speak of the suspension of a long-standing proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." This proverb refers to the suffering of children because of the sins of parents. Formerly, God had promised consequences of sin unto the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Deut. 5:9). This promise in the Law was the basis for the proverb that Jeremiah and Ezekiel declared null and void. Instead, personal responsibility and resulting consequences would be experienced by everyone.

The passages in Ezekiel and Jeremiah reflect the same tenor as Isaiah 56:1-8. Foreigners and eunuchs who are faithful to Jehovah, especially in the matter of keeping the Sabbath, are acceptable to Him.

Chapter 56:9 – 57:21 The neglect of duty; the guilt of the nation

Franz Delitzsch wrote, “Israel had prophets and shepherds, who were blind to every coming danger, and therefore failed to give warning of its approach, because they were sunken in selfishness and debauchery.”⁷⁹

56:9 – 57:2 For the benefit of the exiles, the conditions that brought about their captivity are rehearsed.

Verse 12 pictures the fatalism and boredom among those who should have been on the lookout. These are called blind watchmen, dogs unable to bark, dreamers who love to slumber. Greedy dogs – surrounding nations – found the nation easy prey, because those who should have been on the alert (spiritually) were not doing their job. The righteous are swept away while leaders slumber.

57:3-14 Jehovah is pictured as sitting in tribunal, stating the crimes and demonstrating the guilt of the nation.

- The nation is summoned before God. They are addicted to sorcery and consult the oracles of the heathen. Licentiousness seems always to have been an element in the worship of the idols of the region. (verse 3)
- They were guilty of rebellion and mockery of God and His laws (verse 4)
- Idolatry was practiced in every possible place (verses 5-8). This is reminiscent of the indictments in the earliest chapters of Isaiah.

⁷⁹ Keil & Delitzsch, page 365

- They had sought alliance with heathen powers (verse 9)
- They had not feared Jehovah in their prevailing evil and corruption (verse 10)
- Heavy judgment is pronounced upon them. Self-righteousness is not sufficient to deliver them (verses 12-13)
- Those who trust in Jehovah will be safe (verse 13b)
- In spite of all of the past, Jehovah will deliver them and remove every roadblock (verse 14)

57:15-19 The one who is high and holy also dwells with the contrite.

Verses 17 – 19 Even though He entered into controversy with His people, and brought chastisement upon them, this will not continue. Man is so feeble that he cannot endure the continuance of God's displeasure. This passage is reminiscent of Psalm 103:11-17

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.

*For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.
As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
When the wind has passed over it, it is no more; And its place acknowledges it no longer.*

But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children,

Verses 20-21 When salvation comes, Israel will be divided into two groups with totally different fates.

Chapters 58-66 Promises and Warnings

The coming of the Servant in humiliation and rejection passes from view in this final section of the book. This section presents a number of warnings, as well as reference to the Second Advent, in which the Messiah will set up His throne upon the throne of David, and will be the Judge, Avenger, Destroyer, and Redeemer.

Chapter 58

This chapter addresses the same sin as Chapter One, *i.e.*, ceremonialism versus practical righteousness.

Verse 1 Isaiah is commissioned to appear as the preacher of condemnation. He is to cry out with a full voice, to lift up his voice like a bugle.

Verse 2-7 In the light of the rest of the chapter, verse 2 is an ironical statement – a bit of sarcasm. Public worship, and possibly even in their homes, was observed religiously. These verses present a classic picture of works-righteousness. They flaunted their fasting before God, and complained when He did not consider Himself obligated to respond to them.

On the day that they fasted, they carried on their usual business, they oppressed their laborers, they hit people with their clenched fists, they had a quarrelsome spirit. So, even though they were fasting, in God's eyes they were not fasting. The statement, *You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high* (verse 4), sounds much like Paul's comment to the Corinthians that when they came together to partake of the Lord's Supper, they really weren't partaking of the Lord's Supper because of their fleshly attitudes (I Corinthians 11:17ff).

The implication of verses 6-7 is that instead of abstaining from food, they should abstain from cruelty, hard hearts toward to the downtrodden, and from callousness toward their own families. Instead of doing without food, they should share their food, their homes, their clothing, etc. The fast that Jehovah requires is practical everyday righteousness. This is the fast that God honors, not the depriving one's body of a meal.

Verses 8-12 When they begin to practice self-sacrificing love, their light would break forth as the dawn, vigor would characterize the nation and God's presence would be among them.

Verses 13-14 The Sabbath day was of special importance in the relationship between Jehovah and the captives in Babylon. Almost all of the other expressions of their worship were unavailable, because they were tied to the Temple and Jerusalem. The Sabbath had legal standing in the Mosaic covenant, but it reached back beyond that covenant. The Sabbath reached to the seventh day of creation. It preceded circumcision. Thus, the Sabbath for Israel was a true means of sustaining their faith community. It was designed to be a means of education, a day in which all work ceased. On the Sabbath, the faithful in Israel abstained from those necessary activities of existence, which filled the mind every other day of the week. On the Sabbath, they were idle and were able to experience self-examination, prayer, the Word of God, and quiet fellowship in their homes.

Those who considered the Sabbath a delight, and not an onerous obligation, would be blessed of God.

How does this effect those of us who are a part of the New Covenant? For the Christian, Sabbath keeping is an option, but not something that makes us

acceptable or unacceptable in God's sight. Paul clearly spelled this out in Romans 14.4-6

*Who are you to judge the servant of another?
To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

*One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike.
Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.
He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.*

When accused of Sabbath breaking, Jesus made another important point concerning the Sabbath:

Mark 2:23-28 *And it came about that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain.*

And the Pharisees were saying to Him, "See here, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and became hungry, he and his companions: how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he gave it also to those who were with him?"

And He was saying to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. "Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Thus, for the Christian, two truths are apparent:

- Sabbath keeping is not something required of us, but it is not wrong to observe the Sabbath, if the purpose in doing so is to honor God.
- The Sabbath was created as a blessing to man, in that it produces a time of reflection and also a time of physical recuperation. It seems that there is a seven-day rhythm built into the universe, and we are wise to observe that in our life rhythm.
- For the Christian, the Sabbath need not be the seventh day. The day of worship, for the Christian community, almost immediately after Pentecost became the first day of the week, not the seventh.

Chapter 59

Chapter 58 is a sharp reproof of expecting Divine favor because of external rites, rather than practical righteousness. Chapter 59 enters into more detail.

Verses 1-15 These verses combine literal and metaphoric descriptions of the sins of the people that have separated them from God. These verses are very instructive to any society. Jehovah states that He is not incapable of acting, but that their sins have become a wall between them and Him, so that He is out of earshot of their pleas.

Verses 15b-18 Jehovah is described as taking notice of the fact that there was no one to intercede for the people. There seemed to be some inclination to recognize guilt and make confession. Therefore, since there was no intercessor, He would interpose Himself into the gap and bring salvation and deliverance.

Verses 19-21 The effect of Jehovah's action would be a universal reverence; a display of His glory. A Redeemer will come to those who turn from evil and display fear of His name.

An interesting promise is given in verse 21, *i.e.* that His Spirit would be upon them, and His words would be put into their mouths, and those words would be spoken by all of their descendants.

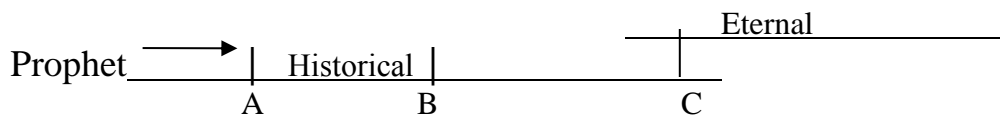
There is much in this passage that metaphorically describes the coming of Christ and the birth of the Church. However, there also are intimations of the Second Advent and the following Messianic Kingdom.

Chapter 60

Unlocking Chapter 60 is quite difficult.

- Is this chapter an hyperbolic metaphor for the Church?
- Is this chapter an ode, filled with poetic praise of the future that the soon to be released exiles will experience in their return to Jerusalem?
- Is this chapter a literal description of a future Jewish state that will exist in a literal Millennium?
- Is this chapter a poetic description of the New Earth and the Messianic Kingdom that will exist after Jehovah's recreation of the universe?
- Does this chapter describe something other than any of the above, something that never has occurred to the mind of man?

Advocates exist for each of the above described "keys." The chapter does contain elements of both historical and eschatological vision. As discussed earlier, prophets who had visions of the future, as well as words concerning the future, often saw things that were separated by great periods of time as if they were concurrent. This is similar to what we experience when from a prairie we view a distant mountain range. The peaks may be miles apart from one another, but when viewed from the steppes, they appear to be touching.



To the prophet, the future looks like ABC, rather than A.....B.....C.

The glory of the near fulfillment (A), is mingled with the glory of the someday fulfillment (B), and the glory of the ultimate fulfillment (C). The ultimate fulfillment is the true content of the prophecy, but the near fulfillment (usually spoken to those who will experience the near fulfillment) and the someday fulfillment (usually spoken concerning future generations) are glimpses of the ultimate fulfillment. Both the near fulfillment and the someday fulfillment have a degree of glory, but they are far less glorious than the ultimate fulfillment. In seeking to find the key to Chapter 60 any honest exegete must either admit to holding a presumption concerning the millennium in his interpretation of this chapter, or see in it the three-fold dynamic just presented.

The distinction between immediate fulfillment and someday fulfillment is made by considering the history of the nation. The description that fits what happened historically, clearly is immediate fulfillment – it happened. That which has not happened is either someday fulfillment or ultimate fulfillment. Whether or not an one makes a distinction between two (someday and ultimate), and how one makes that distinction, will depend upon the individual's eschatological understanding.

Any immediate fulfillment in Isaiah 60 must relate to the captives who a century after Isaiah's time would possess his prophetic writings. Such material is scanty in this chapter. On the one hand, a significant portion of Isaiah 60 seems to describe a someday fulfillment concerning an historical Jerusalem. On the other hand, many portions of Isaiah 60 seem to describe the same city as that described in Revelation 21, which is identified as the Holy City New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:2 *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Revelation 21:10 *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,*

Those who hold traditional pre-millennial views consider Chapter 60 to be a description of the Jewish nation and Israel during the Millennium. For those who do not, I suggest⁸⁰ the following harmony of Isaiah 60 and Revelation 21. It also should be noted that the someday fulfillments could be a prophetic prefiguring of the Church, which was birthed 700 years after Isaiah was written.

⁸⁰ "Suggest," is the operative word. Others may see a better way to distinguish the sections of Isaiah 60.

ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT

Isaiah 60:1-2 *"Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you.*

Revelation 21:3 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them,*

Revelation 21:11 *having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.*

Isaiah 60:3 *"And nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.*

Revelation 21:24-26 *And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;*

SOMEDAY FULFILLMENT

Isaiah 60:4-9 *"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. 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. 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. 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. Who are these who fly like a cloud, And like the doves to their lattices? 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.*

IMMEDIATE FULFILLMENT

Isaiah 60:10 *"And foreigners will build up your walls, And their kings will minister to you; For in My wrath I struck you, And in My favor I have had compassion on you.*

ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT

Isaiah 60:11 *And your gates will be open continually; They will not be closed day or night, So that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, With their kings led in procession.*

Revelation 21:25-26 *And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;*

SOMEDAY FULFILLMENT

Isaiah 60:12-18 *For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, And the nations will be utterly ruined. 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. And the sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you, And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet; And they will call you the city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated With no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, A joy from generation to generation. You will also suck the milk of nations, And will suck the breast of kings; Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. 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. 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.*

ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT

Isaiah 60:19-20 *No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. Your sun will set no more, Neither will your moon wane; For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be finished.*

Revelation 21:22-23 *And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.*

Revelation 22:5 *And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.*

ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT

Isaiah 60:21-22 *Then all your people will be righteous; They will possess the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified. The smallest one will become a clan, And the least one a mighty nation. I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time."*

Revelation 21:27 *and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

Revelation 22:3-4 *And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.*

Chapters 61-62

These two chapters belong together; they describe the glory of the Messiah's office and ministry as well as the glory of Zion. As with Chapter 60, it is difficult to determine whether this section refers to events before or after the Second Advent. As with Chapter 60, one's eschatological views will provide the paradigm for understanding this section.

61:1-3 The Servant of Jehovah speaks of Himself through the prophet, describing the enablement that He has received through the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 4:16-21 informs us that Jesus began His public ministry in Nazareth by reading Isaiah 61:1-2a, thus identifying for us the subject of these verses.

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

There is an obvious discrepancy between Luke 4:18-19 (the Isaiah quote read by Jesus) and Isaiah 61:1-2a, as rendered in most English versions of the Old Testament.

<p>Luke 4:18-19 <i>The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."</i></p>	<p>Isaiah 61:1-2a <i>The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, Because Jehovah 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; To proclaim the favorable year of Jehovah.</i></p>
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Once again, the explanation is found in the version of Scripture that was read during the era in which Jesus lived. Our English Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew text. The First Century Jews read the Septuagint, rather than the Hebrew. Luke's citation of Isaiah 61:1-2a quotes the Septuagint.^{81 82}

Following his baptism, Jesus itinerated throughout Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and finding favor every place He went. It was not until He returned to His hometown, Nazareth, that He made the bold declaration concerning His identity. By quoting these verses from Isaiah and declaring that the verses were now fulfilled in their presence, Jesus claimed to be the anointed Servant of Jehovah for which they had been waiting. His neighbors in Nazareth were impressed with his speaking ability, but they did not realize the significance of what they had just witnessed. When He made further claims and charged them with not recognizing Him as the Anointed Servant, they sought to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:22-30). Calmly, Jesus walked through the crowd and went on His way.

According to these three verses, the Servant of Jehovah was anointed by the Holy Spirit to do the following things:⁸³

⁸¹ Luke 4:18 in the KJV, based upon the Majority Text, adds the phrase, *He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted*. More recent versions, taking into consideration a broader base of manuscripts, omit this phrase. The aforementioned phrase is found in both the Septuagint and the Hebrew text. Note the following

⁸² Note the perfect conformity of Luke 4:18-19 with the Septuagint. The phrase mentioned in footnote 80 is highlighted.

Luke 4:18-19 πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ οὐ εἶνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, ἀπέσταλκέν με, κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει, κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν.

Isaiah 61:1-2a πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ οὐ εἶνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς ἀπέσταλκέν με ἰάσασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τῇ καρδίᾳ κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν καλέσαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν

⁸³ See Frank M. Boyd, page 225

1. To proclaim the Good News to those who were oppressed by various troubles;
2. To bind up the torn hearts of those deeply afflicted and distressed on whatever account
3. To loose the bonds of sin, sickness, infirmity, and to free people from Satan's dominance;⁸⁴
4. To loose mankind from the oppressive bondage under which many an innocent victim has suffered at the hands of tyrannical oppressors;
5. To proclaim a Jubilee Year (era?);
6. To initiate a day of vengeance and judgment;
7. To bring comfort to all who mourn in Zion (it seems that the day of vengeance will be one of the means of bringing that comfort).

Jesus ended His reading of Isaiah with the phrase, *To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord*. He did not continue on with the passage about vengeance and all that followed. It was fitting that He close His reading at this point, because the ministry that He had come to exercise in the following three years was described by the portion that He read. It was not until the final days of His earthly ministry that He spoke of any vengeance and destruction. That of which He did speak was the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, which was the result of Jerusalem's rejection of Her Messiah.

Consequently you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers.

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?

Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!^{85 86}

61:4-9 These verses describe something that is in the future – either a someday or an ultimate fulfillment. It is very difficult to know whether this describes a condition that will

⁸⁴ Luke 13:16 *This woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?*

⁸⁵ Matthew 23:31-38; Luke 13:34-35

⁸⁶ Matthew 24:1-2 ff. The disciples asked Jesus three questions in verse 3, which they thought was one question. However, throughout Matthew 24, Jesus answered their query as three questions.

exist before or after the Second Advent. On the surface, these verses seem to describe a time when the nation of Israel will be a transformed people, living in a land that has been restored to the luscious state that it enjoyed prior to the devastation of modern history.⁸⁷

Israel is pictured as dwelling in a land in which the long devastated cities that have been rebuilt. Dwelling in the midst of other nations, Israel will be what Jehovah intended from the time of the nation's birth. On Mount Sinai, Jehovah revealed to Moses His plan for Israel's priestly role. Israel was to dwell in the midst of the other nations – all of which belong to Jehovah – as a priestly nation among the nations. Israel was to occupy the same place among the nations of the world that Aaron and his descendants were to occupy in Israel itself.

*Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.*⁸⁸

In the verses before us, Israel is pictured as coming to a time in the future when that original role will be fulfilled.

There is another point of view, however. The figures used in these verses are similar to some of the figures that the New Testament uses for the Church. For that reason, there is a strong possibility that verses 4-9 are prophetic figures for the Church. This probability is heightened by the fact that Jesus assigned to Himself verses 1-3. Peter quoted several Old Testament passages, including passages from Isaiah, to describe Christians. Twice in Revelation, John made the same declaration.

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed."

This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone," and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Deuteronomy 8:7-10; 11:10-15; Numbers 13:23-27

⁸⁸ Exodus 19:5-6

⁸⁹ I Peter 2:5-9

*He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*⁹⁰

*And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.*⁹¹

The prominent Old Testament scholar, Franz Delitzsch, considers Isaiah's prophecy to be a figurative description of the Church. He declares,

*The Old Testament prophet utters New Testament prophecies in Old Testament form. Even when he continues to say, "Ye will eat the riches of the Gentiles and pride yourselves in their glory," i.e. be proud of the glorious things which have passed from their possession into yours, this is merely coloring intended to strike the eye, which admits of explanation on the ground that he saw the future in the mirror of the present, as a complete inversion of the relation in which the two had stood before. The figures present themselves to him in the form of contrasts. The New Testament apostle, on the other hand, says in Romans 11:12 that the conversion of all Israel to Christ will be "the riches of the Gentiles." But if even then the Gentile church should act according to the words of the same apostle in Romans 15:27, and show her gratitude to the people whose spiritual debtor she is, by ministering to them in carnal things, all that the prophet has promised here will be amply fulfilled.*⁹²

Because of the New Testament figures that coincide with Isaiah's language, and given the fact that Jesus assigned verses 1-3 to Himself, and given the fact that verses 4 and following indicate that they are the result of the declaration of verses 1-3, Delitzsch's position is a very strong one.

61:10-11 A glorious song of praise in response to the scene just pictured. Either this is Isaiah's exuberant outburst, or it is the joy of the Servant described in verses 1-3, or it is the praise pouring from the lips of Jehovah's redeemed and glorified people.

62:1-5 The Hebrew term that Isaiah often uses to express Jehovah's abstention from interfering with an existing state is **הִשָּׁתַּח** (*hashah*).⁹³ This is the term rendered, *keep silent*, in verse 1. Because of this, we are led to conclude that the speaker is Jehovah Himself. In this instance, Jehovah declares that He will neither be silent nor give Himself rest, until He has gloriously executed His work of grace.⁹⁴

All that was said concerning the two chapters preceding this one apply here as well, *i.e.*, the strong possibility that the figures and terms are Old Testament language for the New

⁹⁰ Revelation 1:6

⁹¹ Revelation 5:10

⁹² Keil & Delitzsch page 429

⁹³ Isaiah 57:11; 64:12 (64:11 in the Hebrew text) 65:6

⁹⁴ A paraphrase of Franz Delitzsch, Keil & Delitzsch page 434

Testament message. New Testament theology and salvation truth point to this understanding.

For example, the New Testament declares that race is no longer relevant in God's economy. One may still be a Jew or a Gentile, but neither of these bestow special merit in God's Kingdom. The idea that Israel will be given a superior place in the Messianic Kingdom just doesn't fit the picture.

Galatians 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 2:12-16 *remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.*

The Church, consisting of all races, was purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary. Thus it is the Church, not Israel, for whom Christ died.

Acts 20:28 *"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

Only those who have received salvation through Jesus Christ have received salvation. There is no other way or means. Being a Jew, relying on one's ancestry of Abraham, Moses, or David, will not result in removal of sin, and being included in Christ's Kingdom.

Acts 4:12 *"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."*

Christ Jesus is the only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, under whom all of these things are reality.

1 Timothy 6:13-15 *I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time-- He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords;*

These and many other considerations, including the fact that the Church, not Israel, is the focus of the New and final covenant, push us toward understanding the prophetic figures in this section as referring to the Church, and in some instances, God's Kingdom in its ultimate fulfillment. It is difficult to move from the New Testament picture to a different one, *i.e.*, that the Jews as a race will be special in the new heavens and the new earth.

Paul makes a strong argument in this direction in Romans 9-11. For example, early in Romans 9, Paul declares that *they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel* (Romans 9:6). All who truly are Israel, will be saved (Romans 11:26). The difference between those of the Jewish race who are saved and those who are not is determined by whether or not an individual accepts salvation by grace, through faith, trusting in the atoning work of Jesus Christ (proving this is the purpose of these three chapters in Romans) .

Furthermore, the figure of the olive tree (Romans 11:17-21) teaches that the natural branches (Jews) and the grafted in branches (Gentiles) both partake of the root and are a part of the same tree, either naturally or by grafting.

Neither deductive nor inductive reasoning resolve the issue of interpretation of this section. Because of the New Testament paradigm, abductive reasoning (*i.e.* inference to the best explanation) points to the Church as being the fulfillment of the picture presented in these chapters.

However, because of the uncertainty as to whether these verses describe a literal future condition of physical Israel, or are a figurative description of the Church, we should be shy about declaring with certainty the events to which these verses refer.⁹⁵ Ed Harkins has illustrated understanding prophecy by relating it to putting together something that has to be assembled before it can be used. An instruction booklet arrives with the "to be assembled" item. However, the instruction booklet is difficult to understand. So, one goes ahead and with great effort (including some mistakes) puts the item together. After assembly is complete, the assembler re-reads the instruction booklet – now, in retrospect, the booklet makes sense.

All of this being said, Chapter 61 does present very interesting material. The *new name* of verse 2 has been the subject of much discussion. Six names are given by Jehovah:

1. My delight is in her (Verse 4)
2. Married (Verse 4)
3. The Holy People (Verse 12)
4. The Redeemed of the Lord (Verse 12)
5. Sought out (Verse 12)
6. A city not forsaken (Verse 12)

⁹⁵ My personal view on such things is that no position arrived at by inference can be declared to be absolute. Only those matters which Scripture declares with such definiteness that no interpretation or inference is required can be made tests of fellowship and orthodoxy.

Many who view this section as a prophecy of the Church, consider the new name to be, *Christian*. When the Church was nine or ten years old, not long after the establishment of the church in Antioch, *Christian* came to be the universal term for followers of the Messiah. Paul sought to persuade people to become *Christians*, and for that name believers were martyred.

Acts 11:26 *and when he [Barnabas] had found him, he brought him [Saul] to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*

Acts 26:28 *And Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."*

1 Peter 4:16 *but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.*

The important thing is not just the name but the prophesied new condition indicated by the name. Certainly, the name, *Christian*, does meet all of the conditions of Isaiah's prediction.

Verse 6a Who are the watchmen? Earlier, in Isaiah 52:8, the term is used poetically, without any actual fulfillment implied. The term is applied to Ezekiel, who was charged with hearing God's warning to Israel and delivering it to the people (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:2-7). Some see angels in this verse.

Franz Delitzsch, commenting on the Hebrew of this verse, states,

As the phrase *hiphqid'al* signifies to make a person an overseer (president) over anything, it seems as though we ought to render the sentence before us, "I have set watchmen over thy walls." ...not, however, as persons whose exclusive duty it is to keep the walls, but as those who have committed to them the guarding of the city both within and without.

If this section refers to the Church, then Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders is an exact fit with Jehovah's promise in verse 6.

Acts 20:28 *"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

Verses 6b-7 have been the subject of much speculation. The ministry of intercession certainly fits these verses, even though the identity of the intercessors may remain in doubt.

Chapter 63:1-6

In this prophecy, Jehovah declares judgment upon Edom. He declares that He alone, without any help, has been the Avenger. We are reminded of the picture of the Son in Revelation 19:11-16.

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

In keeping with this passage in Revelation is the statement of Jesus recorded in John 5:19-23, which states that the Father has given all judgment to the Son.

Edom was a brother-nation to Israel, having Esau as the nation's progenitor. From time immemorial, Edom had expressed extreme hatred toward Israel. When Israel was surrounded by danger from heathen nations, the Edomites watched for an opportunity to take advantage of Israel's wounds – much like dogs on a wounded deer. The prophecy of Obadiah is directed against Edom for just such an action. Obadiah's prophecy probably refers to the event depicted in II Chronicles 21:16-17, which ultimately resulted in Edom's involvement in a large number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem's being sold into slavery to Phoenicians and Greeks (Obadiah 20; Joel 3:1-8).

Chapter 63:7-64:12

Again, we find an unfortunate chapter division. Verse 7 of Chapter 63 begins the first of three closing prophecies.

63:7-14 In these verses, Isaiah becomes the leader of prayers for his people. Isaiah begins with thanksgiving for the mercy and faithfulness that Jehovah has shown to His people. Jehovah is pictured as suffering with His people. However, the rebellious tendencies caused Jehovah to chastise them. The result was a longing on the part of the people for the former intimate relationship that they had with their God.

63:15-64:12 Israel is pictured in earnest pleading to Jehovah to remember them. In this prayer, they are pictured as saying that even though their noble ancestors might forget them, they declare that Jehovah is their father.

In prayer, Israel acknowledges that they have not deserved any of Jehovah's mercies. In the past He acted on their behalf with such wondrous deeds that no one could claim to be a god like Jehovah.

The prayer concludes with a plea for Jehovah to see their plight and the state of the holy land where their forefathers worshipped the true God. They ask in anguish if Jehovah will relent of His punishment and act in their behalf, as they repent and wait upon Him.

Chapter 65

Verses 1-7 Jehovah responds, not with a promise, but begins His response with reproach and threatening. Strong reproof is given to Israel for the cavalier fashion in which the nation has treated Jehovah. The scene pictured here is reflected in the sermon of Stephen (Acts 7:39ff). Harsh retribution is promised.

Verses 8-16 Jehovah declares that He will make a distinction between those who are His servants and those who have provoked Him by their idolatry, fortune telling, etc. The servants (the oft mentioned remnant) will be given great blessing. The others are a stench in His nostrils, an unpleasant smell of smoke, whom He will punish severely. These verses are in harmony with Peter's declaration,

***2 Peter 2:4-9** For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter; and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,*

Verses 17-25 In the Messianic Kingdom, former troubles will be forgotten in a new heavens and a new earth. In this section, filled with poetic hyperbole, Isaiah pictures an idyllic peace that will be ushered in when God makes all things new. Jehovah will be so intimate with the citizens in this Kingdom, that He will respond to their hearts, before prayer is spoken.

Chapter 66

Verses 1-2 These verses echo Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple, in which he acknowledged that it was impossible for the God of the Universe to dwell in a manmade building... yet, he pled with Jehovah to hear the prayers that were offered as if Jehovah did dwell in the Temple.

1 Kings 8:27-30 *"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built! "Yet have regard to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Thy servant prays before Thee today; that Thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which Thou hast said, 'My name shall be there,' to listen to the prayer which Thy servant shall pray toward this place. "And listen to the supplication of Thy servant and of Thy people Israel, when they pray toward this place; hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place; hear and forgive.*

Jehovah is not looking for those who can build great monuments to Him. He does not need these. What He does honor and look for are those who are humble, contrite, and god-fearing, those who tremble at His word.

Verses 3-4 The time has come when Jehovah will not tolerate sacrifices from the hypocrite. Worship that is merely external is as abominable as murder, idolatry, or the blasphemy of sacrificing a dog or a pig on the Holy altar.

Verse 5-6 speaks to those who tremble at God's word. Some of these have been excluded from various places because the true believers have challenged them. Immediately comes to mind Saul of Tarsus, before he became Paul (Acts 9:1ff); the response of the priest and king of Israel when Amos confronted the folly of their worship (Amos 7:10-13); in the history of the modern Church are sad episodes in which the establishment has persecuted and killed those who called for reform.

A day of retribution is coming for those who have perpetrated evil on those who have trembled before Jehovah.

Verses 7-24 These verses clearly picture the scene after the new heavens and the new earth (verse 22). Those who have a particular view concerning Jerusalem, see in these verses the condition of the new earth, in which Jerusalem is the center, the special dwelling place of God, and the place of worship, in which the Temple rites will be restored, forever.

These verses also can be understood as a poetic picture of that glorious existence, in which everything depicted in Revelation 21-22 is reality. Permanence is a leading theme of this section (verse 22), both the permanence of blessing and retribution (verse 24).

It is quite painful to consider that not long after he penned these prophetic visions, the spiritually sensitive prophet was killed by being sawn in half. At the time of his martyrdom, Isaiah was an old man, who had served God all of his days. One can only imagine the thrill of Isaiah's spirit, when through excruciating pain he was delivered from the bondage of a temporary human body, and entered into the realm where the redeemed await the final consummation of God's Kingdom.

Henry Halley has listed a summary of Isaiah's predictions:⁹⁶

Fulfilled in Isaiah's Lifetime

Judah to be delivered from Syria and Israel (7:4-7, 16)
 Syria and Israel to be destroyed by Assyria (8:4; 17:1-4)
 Assyria to invade Judah (8:7-8)
 Philistines to be subjugated (14:28-32)
 Moab to be plundered (15 and 16)
 Egypt and Ethiopia to be conquered by Assyria (20:4)
 Arabia to be pillaged (21:13-17)
 Tyre to be subdued (23:1-12)
 Jerusalem to be delivered from Assyria (see under 36)
 Hezekiah's life to be extended 15 years (38:5)

Fulfilled after Isaiah's Time

Babylonian Captivity (39:5-7)
 Babylon to be overthrown by Cyrus (46:11)
 Medes and Elamites in Cyrus' army (13:17; 21:2; 48:14)
 Babylon's perpetual desolation (13:20-22)
 Cyrus called by name (44:28; 45:1, 4)
 Cyrus' conquest of the world (41:2-3)
 Cyrus to liberate the captives (45:13)
 Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem (44:28; 45:13)
 Israel to be restored (27:12-13; 48:20; 51:14)
 Israel's religion to permeate Egypt and Assyria (19:18-25)
 Israel's religion to spread over the whole world (27:2-6)
 Tyre's captivity and restoration (23:13-18)
 Edom's perpetual desolation (34:5-17)

About the Messiah

His Advent (40:3-5)
 His Virgin Birth (7:14)
 Galilee to be the scene of His ministry (9:1-2)
 His Deity and the Eternity of His throne (9:6-7)
 His sufferings (53)
 To die with the wicked (53:9)
 To be buried with the rich (53:9)
 Might and gentleness of His reign (40:10-11)
 Righteousness and beneficence of His reign (32:1-8; 61:1-3)
 His justice and kindness (42:3-4, 7)
 His rule over the Gentiles (2:2-3; 42:1, 6; 49:6; 55:4-5; 56:6; 60:3-5)
 His vast influence (49:7, 23)
 Idols to disappear (2:18)
 A warless world to be brought into being (2:4; 65:25)
 The earth to be destroyed (24; 26:21; 34:1-4)
 Death to be destroyed (25:8; 26:19)
 God's people to be called by a new name (62:2; 65:15)
 A new heaven and a new earth to be created (65:17; 66:22)
 Righteous and wicked to be eternally separated (66:15, 22-24)

⁹⁶ Halley, page 305

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