

Introduction to Isaiah

The book of Isaiah is one of the Bible's richest storehouses of prophetic ministry. Its sixty-six chapters contain many messages of confrontation, exhortation, and warning for the nation of Judah and many of the surrounding nations - messages which made Isaiah an unpopular messenger to many who heard him. On the other hand, it also contains some of the most explicit and encouraging glimpses of God's glorious plan for His people's restoration to favor through the ministry of His long-awaited Messianic Messenger.

Author

The book of Isaiah takes its name from its author - the son of Amoz. The name Isaiah (like the names Joshua and Jesus) means "the LORD saves." Born into an influential upper-class family, the prophet married and had at least two sons - Shear-Jashub ("a remnant shall return," 7:3) and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz ("quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil," 8:3). He began his ministry in 740 B.C., the year that King Uzziah died (6:1). Throughout his ministry he rubbed shoulders with royalty, giving advice concerning the foreign affairs of the nation during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh. He was a contemporary of other Biblical prophets Amos, Hoseah and Micah. He probably spent most of his life in Jerusalem, apparently enjoying his greatest influence during the reign of King Hezekiah (37:1-2). A Jewish tradition (reported in The Ascension of Isaiah) says that he was sawn in two after being placed inside a hollow log (cf. Heb. 11:37) during the reign of Manasseh (696-642 B.C.) He is also credited with writing a history of the reign of King Uzziah (II Chronicles 26:22).

Critical Opinion

Modern historical criticism has challenged the claim that Isaiah wrote the entire book which bears his name. Some have assigned chapters 40-66 to a "Deutero-Isaiah" who supposedly lived around 540 B.C. - two centuries after Isaiah began his ministry. Other critics assert that chapters 56-66 were written

by a “Trito-Isaiah.” And still others see evidence of insertions and editing as late as the first century B.C. (Though the discovery of a copy of Isaiah among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which date back to the second century, has made such speculation moot). The suggestion of critics are based on the observation that the book addresses three different historical time periods (the time of Assyrian invasions - second half of the eighth century); the time of the Babylonian exile (first half of the sixth century); and the time of post-exilic controversies (second half of the sixth century). The prophetic naming of Cyrus (44:28; 45:1) two centuries before that ruler came to power, of course, is more than anti-supernaturalist critics can handle!

Internal evidence in the book supports the ancient tradition of the authorship of Isaiah, son of Amoz (as identified in 1:1; 2:1 and 13:1). The literary style and vocabulary support the unity of authorship (e.g., for example, the appearance of the title “the Holy One of Israel” as a designation for the Lord throughout the book - twelve times in chapters 1-39 and 14 times in chapters 40-66). The New Testament identifies Isaiah as author of quotations taken throughout the book, with the Lord Jesus Himself citing Isaiah as the author of quotations taken from 53:1 and 6:10 in the same passage (John 12:38-41). So there is no convincing reason to question the unity of the authorship of the prophecy of Isaiah.

Date

The first 39 chapters of the book of Isaiah record events which occurred during his ministry (with events mentioned which can be dated in 6:1, 14:28 and 36:1). So Isaiah may well have been recording his prophecies throughout his ministry. Isaiah’s message to the exiles and the post-exilic community of the sixth century B.C., of course, take us well beyond his times (and his prophetic anticipation of the Messianic kingdom takes us beyond our own time), but the book must have been completed before his death around 681 B.C.

Message

Isaiah wrote his prophecy during the years of Assyrian expansion and Israeli declension. The Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.) led his armies from the northeast into Syria (Aram) and Canaan. Around 733 the kings of Syria and Israel tried to get King Ahaz of Judah to join them in an alliance against Tiglath-Pileser. But Ahaz decided to turn to Tiglath-Pileser for help - in spite of Isaiah's opposition (7:1 and following). When Assyria did assist Judah, then conquered the northern kingdom, Judah was left more vulnerable to Assyrian expansion. When King Sennacherib of Assyria threatened Jerusalem in 701 B.C., only the intervention of the Lord (as prophesied by Isaiah in 37:6-7) kept Judah from destruction.

Isaiah presents the Lord as the "Holy One of Israel" who must punish His rebellious people, but who will also redeem them. When Babylonian envoys visited Jerusalem and King Hezekiah showed them his treasures, Isaiah predicted (Isaiah 39) that Judah's sins would bring captivity by the Babylonians. Though the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians did not take place until 586 B.C., Isaiah's prophecy looks beyond that event to anticipate the Babylonian captivity and the eventual restoration of Israel to the land (cf. 43:14 ff.). Isaiah predicted the rise of Cyrus the Persian, who would unite the Medes and Persians and conquer Babylon in 539 (41:2). And he anticipated the rebuilding of the temple (44:28; 45:1) and the restoration of the people of Israel to their land - and their eventual glory under the reign of their Messiah!

Isaiah's descriptions of the Messiah and His Kingdom are among the most encouraging portions of his prophecy. He tells of the virgin birth of the coming Messiah (7:14); of His suffering for the sins of His people (53:1-9); of His recovery from suffering (52:13-15; 53:10-12); of His qualities as Messianic ruler (9:6; 11:1-5; 42:1-4) and of the peace and safety and glory which will mark His world-wide reign (9:7; 11:6-9; 65:17-25).

With its sixty-six chapters, Isaiah's prophecy has been compared to the Bible in its entirety. Its first 39 chapters focus

on Israel and its neighbors, their sins and the judgment to come upon them. It turns a corner at chapter 40 with a message of consolation and salvation and the glory of the coming kingdom. As the name of the prophet states it, the theme of the book might well be “the LORD saves.”

Outline (from the Ryrie Study Bible)

Part I: Denunciation

I. Denunciation of Judah 1:1-12:6

II. Denunciation of Other Nations 13:1-23:18

III. The Future Tribulation and Kingdom 24:1-27:13

IV. Denunciation of Israel and Judah 28:1-35:10

V. Denunciation of Sennacherib 36:1-39:8

Part II: Consolation

I. The Greatness of God 40:1-48:22

II. The Salvation of the Servant-Messiah 49:1-57:21

III. The Program of God for Peace 58:1-66:24

Think About It: The prophecy of Isaiah shows its divine origin by its revelation of the Lord and His plan for His people from Isaiah’s day to the end of the age.

“The Price of Spiritual Rebellion”

Isaiah 1:1-6

Q - What difference would you say it makes whether a person trusts and obeys the Lord or not?

Isaiah's prophecy opens with a sad commentary from the Lord regarding the spiritual condition of the people of Judah and Jerusalem - along with the revelation that their spiritual condition was jeopardizing their physical conditions as well.

I. Introduction to Isaiah's Prophecy 1:1

Q - Who does verse one identify as the subjects of Isaiah's prophecy? It identifies Judah and Jerusalem as the subjects.

Q - What does the mention of the kings who reigned during Isaiah's ministry reveal about the date of his prophecy? It reveals that Isaiah was prophesying between 767-686 B.C.

II. The Lord's Accusation Against His People 1:2-3

A. Israel's Revolt 1:2

Q - What does the Lord's choice of witnesses tell us about the trial being held? It reveals that a trial was being held by the Lord between Judah and Jerusalem on the one hand and the heavens and earth on the other.

Q - What does the Lord identify as the reason for His concern over Israel? The Lord identifies the rebellion against Him of sons (in Judah & Jerusalem) He reared and brought up.

B. Israel's Lack of Understanding 1:3

Q - What was surprising about Israel's lack of understanding? Israel was showing less understanding of their Divine Master than an ox would show toward its master, and less than a donkey would in recognizing its master's manger.

III. The Lord's Woe Against His People 1:4

A. His Description of Israel 1:4a

Q - What was the Lord's fourfold description of His people? 1. Sinful nation; 2. People weighed down with iniquity; 3. Offspring of evildoers; 4. Sons who act corruptly.

B. His Accusation Against Israel 1:4b

Q - What did the Lord identify as the root of Israel's problem? He said that they had abandoned Him, despised Him, and turned away from Him.

IV. The Lord's Assessment of His People's Condition 1:5-6

A. The Future of their Rebellion 1:5a

Q - What did the Lord anticipate as Israel continued in rebellion? He anticipated that they would be stricken again.

B. The Result of their Rebellion 1:5b-6

Q - What was Israel's condition as a result of their rebellion? Their head was sick; their heart was faint; there was no soundness in them from head to foot; but instead untreated bruises, welts and raw wounds were evident.

Think About It: There is a significant price to be paid by those who reject the Lord in favor of their own sinful ways.

“Poor Spiritual Prospects”

Isaiah 1:7-15

Q - What are some of the Lord’s options in judging the sins in His people’s lives?

The Lord’s judgment was already coming against Judah in Isaiah’s day, with the threat of intensifying judgment and divine rejection if the nation did not choose to amend its ways.

I. The Lord’s Judgment of His People’s Sins 1:7-9

A. The Desolation of Judah 1:7

Q - What desolation could Isaiah have been describing in the years preceding the Babylonian conquest of Judah? Foreign enemies were attacking and destroying outlying regions.

B. The Diminution of Judah 1:8

Q - What are the pictures Isaiah uses in this verse intended to convey regarding the condition of Judah in his day? They pictured fragile structures in a vineyard or cucumber field.

C. The Near Extermination of Judah 1:9

Q - What was Isaiah’s comparison of Judah with Sodom and Gomorrah intended to communicate? The desolation which could have happened if the Lord had not left a few survivors.

II. The Lord’s Rejection of His People’s Worship 1:10-15

A. His Identification of their Leaders as Leaders of Sodom and Gomorrah 1:10

Q - What does Isaiah's progression from comparing Judah to Sodom and Gomorrah to then addressing its leaders and people as those of Sodom and Gomorrah communicate? It communicates the Lord's assessment of His people's leaders as sinful as the leaders of those cities were.

B. His Satiation with their Multiplied Sacrifices 1:11-12

Q - What would have surprised the people of Judah about the Lord's dissatisfaction with their sacrifices (v. 11) and their trampling of His temple courts (v. 12)? The people viewed their presence at the temple and their sacrifices as deeds of righteousness in conformity with the law of the Lord.

C. His Rejection of Further Empty Ritual 1:13-14

Q - What was it that caused the Lord to hate His people's offerings and observance of holy days - required of them in the pages of His law as they were? The people's acts of worship had become mere ritualistic formalities with no real meaning.

D. His Determination Not to Hear their Prayers 1:15

Q - What would result, for the people of Judah, from the Lord's decision not to listen any longer to their prayers? The people of Judah would be left to only their own resources - without any hope of help from the Lord in the difficulties they were facing and were going to face.

Think About It: People who persist in sinful behavior, even while claiming to be God's people, should expect to be rejected and judged by the Lord.

“Let’s Get Serious”

Isaiah 1:16-23

Q - What is the most amazing spiritual turnaround you have ever witnessed?

Isaiah offered, from the Lord, the hope of cleansing and redirection to the sinful people of Judah and Jerusalem in his day - which would have been an amazing spiritual turnaround if it had taken place.

I. The Lord’s Remedy for His People’s Condition 1:16-17

A. Their Need of Cleansing from Evil 1:16

Q - What steps might the people of Israel have taken to experience the cleansing the Lord wanted them to experience? They needed to cleanse themselves from their sinful practices by ceasing from evil-doing.

B. Their Need of Practical Goodness 1:17

Q - How did the Lord describe the goodness He was looking for in His people’s lives? He was looking for goodness in their behavior, the practice of justice, the reproof of ruthlessness, the defense of orphans, and pleading for widows.

II. The Lord’s Offer for His People’s Cleansing 1:18-20

A. His Offer of Negotiation 1:18

Q - What was it that the Lord wanted to reason together about with the people of Judah? He wanted to reason with them about their scarlet/red like crimson sins and His offer to make them white as snow/like wool.

B. His Terms of Negotiation 1:19-20

1. The Option of Obedience and Blessing 1:19

Q - How did the Lord intend to bless His people if they chose to consent and obey? He intended to enable them to eat the best of the land.

2. The Option of Rebellion and Judgment 1:20

Q - How did the Lord intend to judge His people if they chose to refuse and rebel? He intended to allow them to be devoured by the sword.

Q - What impact should the final line of verse 20 have had upon Isaiah's hearers? It should have assured them that the Lord was serious about fulfilling His word to them.

III. The Lord's Sorrow Over His People's Regression 1:21-23

A. The Accusation of Harlotry 1:21

Q - What was the nature of the harlotry of which the Lord accused His people? They had become guilty of the harlotry of injustice, unrighteousness and murder.

B. The Devaluation of Judah's Valuables 1:22

Q - What is the point of the symbols the Lord used in verse 22? It was the point that things of value in Israel had become degraded in their value among them.

C. The Corruption of Judah's Leaders 1:23

Q - What corruption charges did the Lord bring against the rulers of Israel? He charged them with rebellion, thievery, bribery, insensitivity to the widows and orphans among them.

Think About It: The Lord is willing to forgive serious sins if His people will turn from them to Him and get practical in their righteousness instead.

“Restoration Assured”

Isaiah 1:24-31

Q - When have you handled something too broken to fix or faced a situation too difficult to straighten out?

A review of the history of the people of Israel might lead one to believe that it would be impossible to restore them to a right relationship with the Lord. But the Lord is not finished with them yet!

I. The Lord’s Prediction of Restoration 1:24-26

A. His Intention to Deal with His Opponents 1:24

Q - What stands out about the Lord’s self-description as verse 24 begins? As “the Lord GOD (*Yahweh*) of Hosts” and “Mighty One of Israel” He is well-able to deal with any foe!

Q - What was the Lord’s determination regarding His adversaries/foes? He was determined to relieve Himself of adversaries and avenge Himself on foes.

B. His Intention to Refine His People 1:25

Q - What would the turning of the Lord’s hand against His people mean for them? His judgment would smelt away their dross as with lye and remove all their alloy.

C. His Intention to Re-establish Righteousness 1:26

Q - To what time of righteous judges and counselors might the Lord have been looking back in His people’s history? He might have been looking back to the time of David’s reign (cf. II Samuel 8:15).

Q - To what time was Isaiah apparently looking when

Jerusalem could be called “the city of righteousness” and “a faithful city”? He was apparently looking to the time of the Messiah’s kingdom (cf. Isaiah 62:1-2).

II. The Lord’s Process of Restoration 1:27-31

A. His Prediction of Redemption for the Repentant 1:27

Q - How could God possibly redeem Zion with justice and her repentant people with righteousness? He will do it by the work of Christ in the Millennial Kingdom (cf. Isaiah 62:12).

B. His Prediction of Judgment Upon the Unrepentant 1:28-31

1. The Crushing of Transgressors 1:28

Q - Who are the transgressors and sinners whose end is in view in verse 28? They are unbelievers judged by God at the end of the age (cf. Isaiah 66:22-24; cf. II Thess. 2:6-8).

2. The Regret Over Past Folly 1:29

Q - To what do the oaks and gardens refer of which Israel would be ashamed and embarrassed? Probably the oaks and gardens used in the pagan worship of Canaan (Cf. 57:5, 65:3).

3. The Destruction of Sinners 1:30-31

Q - What do the figures Isaiah used in verses 30 and 31 communicate concerning the prospects for transgressors and sinners (v. 28)? They will dry up, fade away, and be burned.

Think About It: The sins of Israel’s past will not stop the Lord’s plans to judge and restore His chosen people.

“The Elevation of Zion and Zion’s God”

Isaiah 2:1-4

Q - How hopeful do you feel about the prospect for peace and prosperity among the nations of earth today?

If it were up to mankind to bring about peace and prosperity we would have little reason for encouragement, but the Lord has a plan to bring about what man never could on his own.

I. The Prediction of Isaiah Introduced 2:1

Q - What sets this introduction apart from the first verse of the book? There is no mention of the kings who reigned during Isaiah’s ministry, but both verses feature the same prophet and same subjects (Judah and Jerusalem).

II. The Prediction of the Elevation of Mt. Zion 2:2

A. The Period in Time for the Elevation of Zion 2:2a

Q - What time would Isaiah be referring to by his mention of “the last days”? The last days would be the end of the age when Jesus will reign over His millennial kingdom.

B. The Priority of the Mountain of Zion 2:2b

Q - Why will “the mountain of the house of the LORD” be the chief of the mountains in the last days? It will be the location of the millennial temple and the millennial reign of Christ.

C. The People Who Will Stream to Zion 2:2c

Q - What does the prospect of people from all the nations streaming to Mt. Zion reveal about the kingdom of Christ? It reveals that His kingdom will be one of world-wide impact.

III. The Prediction of the People’s Attention to Mt. Zion 2:3

A. The Ascent of the People to Zion 2:3a

Q - What is the significance of the people's intention to "go up" to the mountain of the Lord? As verse 2 indicated, Mt. Zion will be elevated above the surrounding hills in that day - and their ascent will be both physical and spiritual.

B. The Anticipation of the People at Zion 2:3b

Q - What will be the motivation of the peoples who will ascend to Mt. Zion from many nations? It will be their motivation to be taught concerning the ways of the Lord so they can walk in His ways.

C. The Announcement to the People from Zion 2:3c

Q - What would Isaiah's audience understand by his reference to "the law" which will go forth from Zion in the last days? Their understanding of "the law" would have been the Mosaic Law.

IV. The Prediction of the Lord's Work from Zion 2:4

A. The Rule of the Lord from Zion 4:4a

Q - What will be the Lord's place with respect to the peoples of the nations? The Lord will be in the position to pass judgment upon the nations and render decisions for many peoples.

B. The Response of the People to Zion 4:4b

Q - How will earth's nations respond to the leadership of the Lord from Mt. Zion? The nations will turn to productive activities and turn away from the practice of war.

Think About It: Isaiah predicted the day when nations will stream to Mount Zion to turn from their own warring ways and learn God's ways instead.

“Time for Change”

Isaiah 2:5-11

Q - What do you expect to happen when you see someone walk away from a relationship with the Lord?

Isaiah could see spiritual failings in the life of his people which were alienating them from the Lord and setting them up for divine judgment.

I. The Invitation to Walk in the Light of the Lord 2:5

Q - What does the Lord’s invitation through Isaiah imply about His people’s current walk? It implies that the people of Israel were not walking in the light of the Lord.

II. The Lord’s Abandonment of the House of Jacob 2:6-8

A. The Recognition of the Lord’s Abandonment 2:6a

Q - How might Isaiah have known that the Lord had abandoned His people? Isaiah would have known that Israel’s pagan worship practices would necessitate the Lord’s abandonment of His people.

B. The Reasons for the Lord’s Abandonment 2:6b-8

1. Israel’s Pagan Influences 2:6b

Q - What pagan influences did Isaiah see among the people of Israel? Isaiah saw pagan influences from the east and from the west (Philistines) among Israel’s dealings with foreigners.

2. Israel’s Material Influences 2:7a

Q - Why might material prosperity alienate the Lord from His people? Material prosperity has always inclined people to trust in their material goods rather than trusting in the Lord.

3. Israel's Military Influences 2:7b

Q - What could have made Israel's military preparedness a spiritual problem? Like wealth, military might has often become the source of a people's trust rather than the Lord.

4. Israel's Idol Influences 2:8

Q - Why did the Lord object to the idols among His people? Manmade objects of worship are powerless to make any difference for good in the lives of those who trust in them.

III. The Warning of the Coming Judgment of the Lord 2:9-11

A. The Unforgiveness of Idolaters 2:9

Q - How might idolatry in Israel have caused some people to be humbled and others abased? Because idols are worthless, those who trust in them are humiliated and debased by them.

Q - What was Isaiah's request of the Lord in view of Israel's idolatry and its abuses? He asked the Lord not to forgive His idolatrous people.

B. The Terror of the Lord 2:10

Q - What advice did Isaiah have for his sinning people, and why? He advised them to hide because of the certainty of the Lord's judgement upon their sinful ways.

C. The Exaltation of the Lord 2:11

Q - What did Isaiah anticipate the exaltation of the Lord would bring about among his people? The exaltation of the Lord would abase the proud man and humble the lofty.

Think About It: Israel's walk in spiritual darkness separated her from the Lord's blessing and destined her for the Lord's judgment - as it always does!

“Trouble Ahead”

Isaiah 2:12-22

Q - What is your feeling toward someone who seems to you to be very proud?

Isaiah warned his sinful nation of a coming day when the Lord would settle accounts with all who exalt themselves against Him, sending them scurrying for a place to hide.

I. The Announcement of God’s Reckoning 2:12-16

A. Against the Proud 2:12

Q - Why is the Lord so opposed to people who are proud?
The proud person thinks more highly of himself than he should.

B. Against Lebanon and Bashan 2:13

Q - Why might cedars of Lebanon and oaks of Bashan have been singled out for the Lord’s attention? They both symbolize pride because they are lifted up among the trees.

C. Against the Mountains 2:14

Q - Why might the Lord address Himself to lofty mountains and high hills? High hills and lofty mountains also symbolize pride because of their height on the horizon.

D. Against High Towers 2:15

Q - What could the Lord have against high towers and fortified walls? He actually doesn’t have anything against them, but their heights make man feel unrealistically secure and the height is also symbolic of human pride.

E. Against the Ships of Tarshish 2:16

Q - What might the Lord have against “ships of Tarshish” and other “beautiful craft”? Ocean-going vessels and other noteworthy boats call attention to themselves by their size and cause people to trust in their importance.

II. The Results of God’s Reckoning 2:17-21

A. Humbled Pride 2:17

Q - What did Isaiah envision happening as a result of the humbled pride and abased loftiness of men? He envisioned a time when the Lord would be recognized as He should be.

B. Vanishing Idols 2:18

Q - What would be significant, in the context of this passage, about vanishing idols? Because idols are nothing of worth their absence permits the Lord to be properly honored.

C. Hiding in Caves 2:19-21

Q - What did Isaiah envision would cause people to go into caves in the rocks and holes in the ground - casting aside idols of silver and gold? He envisioned men hiding in the face of the terror of the Lord and splendor of His majesty.

III. The Lesson from God’s Reckoning 2:22

Q - What is the lesson to be learned from the troubling circumstances Isaiah has been describing? The Lord should be esteemed above all the things men might put their trust in.

Q - When might the time be which Isaiah has described in this passage? When Jesus reigns as king over the whole earth.

Think About It: When the Lord settles accounts with sinful people there will be nothing left in which they can place their trust!

“Chaos Coming”

Isaiah 3:1-7

Q - What are the most chaotic conditions you have ever witnessed in your life?

Because of the spiritual apostasy of the southern kingdom of Israel in Isaiah’s day, and because of Judah’s failure to deal with apostasy as they should have dealt with it, Isaiah could prophetically see a coming day of reckoning between the Lord and His people which was going to result in some very chaotic conditions.

I. The Lord’s Judgment Against Judah 3:1-3

A. His Removal of Supply and Support 3:1

Q - What would the removal of the supply of bread and water result in for Jerusalem and Judah? It would result in famine conditions which would weaken and kill some people.

Q - How would the Lord carry out such a threat against Judah? He would allow foreign troops to besiege the city (cf. II Kings 24:10 ff.).

B. His Removal of Leadership 3:2-3

Q - What would the Lord’s removal of those listed in verses 2 and 3 mean to the nation? It would result in a lack of trained leadership and skilled craftsmen for the nation and its military, as well as the absence of false religious leadership.

II. The Leadership Vacuum in Judah 3:4-7

A. The Elevation of Mere Lads 3:4

Q - What challenges were likely to arise from the elevation of the leaders mentioned in this verse? The absence of trained and experienced leadership would result in destabilizing public policies and the resulting chaos which would ensue.

B. The Oppression Among the People 3:5

Q - What would apparently cause the people to be oppressed as described in verse 5? The combination of the sinful inclinations of human hearts and the inexperience and incompetence of youthful leaders would result in oppression.

C. The Shortage of Leaders 3:6-7

1. The Elevation of Unfit Rulers 3:6

Q - What are the problems you see with the scenario Isaiah describes in verse 6? The appointment of inexperienced leaders for unworthy reasons would result in chaotic conditions for the people.

2. The Objections of Unfit Rulers 3:7

Q - What problems would the protest listed in verse 7 result in for the nation of Judah? The acknowledgment of unfit leaders of their unfitness for leadership and their own impoverished condition would demonstrate the desperate condition of the nation of Judah.

Think About It: The Lord's promised judgment against Jerusalem and Judah was going to leave the nation in chaos - which is what **normally** results (in some measure) from spiritual apostasy.

"From Bad to Worse"

Isaiah 3:8-15

Q - What are some of the troubles which come into people's lives because of their sinful practices, and what are their troubles intended to bring about?

The people of Jerusalem and Judah in Isaiah's day, already under judgment from the Lord, were about to experience intensified judgment against their nation and its leaders.

I. The Fall of Jerusalem and Judah 3:8-11

A. The Rebellion of Jerusalem and Judah 3:8

Q - How had the rebellion of Jerusalem and Judah become evident? Their speech and their actions were aligned against the Lord in rebellion.

B. The Open Sins of Jerusalem and Judah 3:9

Q - What had the unconcealed sinfulness of Jerusalem and Judah brought upon them? Unconcealed sinfulness of Jerusalem and Judah had brought woe and evil upon them, leading to brazen faces and more sinful behavior.

C. The Fates of Jerusalem and Judah 3:10-11

1. The Fates of the Righteous 3:10

Q - What was the Lord's promise to the righteous in Judah? He promised that it would go well with them because they would eat the fruit of their righteous actions.

2. The Fates of the Unrighteous 3:11

Q - What was the Lord's promise to the unrighteous in

Judah? He promised that things would go badly for them when they received what they deserved.

II. The Lament Over Jerusalem and Judah 3:12

A. Jerusalem and Judah's Leaders 3:12a

Q - What did those chosen to lead Jerusalem reveal about the nation's condition? The city was being lead into oppression by young people and women who were not qualified to lead.

B. Jerusalem and Judah's Direction 3:12b

Q - What was Isaiah's concern about the direction his people were going? He was concerned that they were being lead astray into confusion.

III. The Lord's Contention with Jerusalem and Judah 3:13-15

A. His Decision to Act 3:13

Q - What would the Lord's decision to arise mean to His people? The Lord would stand to judge His people.

B. His Accusation Against the Elders and Princes 3:14-15

Q - What were the Lord's complaints against the elders and princes of His people? They had devoured the vineyard, plundered the poor, crushed the people, and ground the faces of the poor.

Think About It: The Lord's judgment against Jerusalem and Judah, already evident by the poor choices they had for leaders (among other shortages, 3:1 ff.), was about to intensify because of their shameless persistence in sin.

“Women Under Judgment”

Isaiah 3:16-26

Q - What are the things which make a woman most beautiful in the eyes of the Lord?

Among the classes of people in Israel who stood out in the Lord's thinking as ripe for judgment were the women of Zion whose pride and ostentatiousness were setting them up for the unfavorable attention of the Lord.

I. The Lord's Complaint Against the Daughters of Zion 3:16-17

A. Their Behavior 3:16

Q - To whom would the designation “daughters of Zion” refer? It would refer to the women of Jerusalem.

Q - What was the Lord's primary complaint against the daughters of Zion? They were proud.

Q - What would be the significance of the Lord's other complaints listed in verse 16?

The seductive eyes? He complained of their immorality.

The mincing steps? He complained of their showiness.

The tinkling bangles? He complained of dressing for attention.

B. The Lord's Response 3:17

Q - In what sense did the Lord's intended response to the daughters of Zion fit their crimes? Their desire to call attention to their beauty would result in scabs on their scalps and foreheads devoid of hair - detracting from their beauty.

II. The Lord's Judgment Against the Daughters of Zion 3:18-24

A. The Ornaments to Be Taken 3:18-23

Q - What significance do you see in the lengthy list of ornaments listed in verses 18-23? The list demonstrates the length to which women dressed to accentuate their beauty.

B. The Problems to Be Faced 3:24

Q - How should we account for the transitions described in verse 24?

From perfume to putrefaction? The city under siege would prevent normal cleanliness and beautification.

From belt to rope? Fine clothing would not be available.

From well-set hair to plucked-out scalp? There would be no time under adverse circumstances for attention to well-kept hair.

From fine clothes to sackcloth? Weeping over loss would be common.

From beauty to branding? Captors would treat women like cattle.

III. The Sorry Outcome for the Daughters of Zion 3:25-26

A. The Death of their Men 3:25

Q - What would the Lord cause to result in the death of the men of Zion? They would be killed in battle or captured and deported.

B. The Lamentation at their Gates 3:26

Q - Why would the lamentation in the gates of Zion be particularly difficult for the women of Zion? Male leaders who normally sat in the gates would be killed or captured.

Think About It: The Lord found Zion's women who were proud and vain offensive, and He promised to bring judgment upon them.

“Joy after Judgment”

Isaiah 4:1-6

Q - Have you ever experienced the fabled “silver lining” on dark clouds of difficulty in your life?

The nation of Israel has experienced many very difficult times and experiences down through the centuries of its history because of its failure to live up to the terms of its covenant with God as the people promised to do (“all that the LORD has said we will do” - Exodus 19:8). There are still some difficult days ahead for Israel, but there are also some very promising days! The Lord’s final judgment of the men and women of Israel will be followed by a time of beauty and glory for the nation unlike any it has ever experienced before - even in the best of times!

I. The Shortage of Men in the Day of the Lord’s Judgment 4:1

Q - What could motivate seven women to want to share one man as their common husband - paying their own expenses? A shortage of men due to the nation’s losses in war (cf. 3:25) and the “reproach” of singleness and childlessness could motivate them.

Q - To what “day” does Isaiah’s prophecy in this verse apparently refer? Isaiah refers to the day of tribulation judgment by the Lord upon the nation of Israel in the last days.

II. The Blessing after the Day of the Lord’s Judgment 4:2-6

A. The Fruitfulness of the Branch of the Lord 4:2

Q - To what does Isaiah’s reference to the “Branch of the LORD “ refer? “Branch of the LORD” is most likely a title for the Messiah (cf. 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12).

Q - What does the depiction of the fruit of the earth as Israel's pride and adornment suggest about the future conditions for the nation? The land will again be very productive - a "land flowing with milk and honey."

B. The Holiness of the Remnant in Zion and Jerusalem 4:3

Q - How can Isaiah's anticipated holiness of the people of Israel be accounted for? The salvation of Israel in the last days, and their conformity with His Law will result of their holiness before the Lord.

C. The Canopy Over Mount Zion in the Day of the Lord 4:4-6

1. The Cleansing of Zion and Jerusalem 4:4

Q - What will the Lord have used to cleanse away the filth of the daughters of Zion and the bloodshed of Jerusalem? The sacrifice of Christ cleanses from all sin those who come to Him for cleansing.

2. The Creation of a Canopy Over Mount Zion 4:5

Q - What do the cloud and fire of this verse indicate regarding the Lord's relationship with His people? They indicate restored fellowship with the Lord, as in the days of the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire during their wilderness wanderings.

Q - What "glory" will the cloud and fire "canopy" cover? The canopy of cloud and fire will cover the glory which will be evident in the Messiah's kingdom - as the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire did over the tabernacle in the wilderness.

3. The Protection of the Canopy Over Mount Zion 4:6

Q - What benefit will the cloud by day and fire by night provide for Israel in the Millennial age? They will provide protection from the heat by day and, in Isaiah's own words,

from storm and rain.

Think About It: Israel's future judgment will be followed by the restoration of the Lord's favor in the beauty and glory of the Messianic age.

“Hoping for a Healthy Harvest”

Isaiah 5:1-7

Q - What has been your most frustrating experience as a gardener?

The Lord used the story of a farmer’s experience with his vineyard as material for a song about His own dealings with the nation of Israel.

I. The Lord’s Song Concerning His Vineyard 5:1-2

A. The Song Introduced 5:1a

Q - Who is singing about whom in the song introduced in verse one? The Lord is singing about His people Israel.

B. The Song Presented 5:1b-2

Q - What five things does the song enumerate as the farmer’s preparation for a fruitful harvest? He dug around it; removed its stones; planted choice vines; built a tower; and hewed out a wine vat in it.

Q - What was the farmer’s reward for the time and resources and effort invested in his vineyard? He received only worthless or wild grapes for all of his investment and effort.

II. The Lord’s Question Concerning His Vineyard 5:3-4

A. The Lord’s Call for a Judgment 5:3

Q - What is significant about the Lord’s call to the people of Jerusalem and Judah to serve as judges in His case against His vineyard? As it turns out, Jerusalem and Judah are being

asked to serve as judges against themselves!

B. The Lord's Question Concerning the Vineyard 5:4

Q - How would you answer the Lord's two questions in verse 4?

- #1. There was nothing more he could/should have done.
- #2. It produced worthless grapes because it was a troubled vineyard.

III. The Lord's Decision Concerning His Vineyard 5:5-6

A. His Decision to Remove Its Protection 5:5

Q - What would the removal of a hedge and a wall mean to the well-being of a vineyard? Removing its hedge and wall would result in it being consumed for lack of protection from intruders; breaking down its wall would result in it becoming trampled ground (Cf. Psalm 80:12-13).

Q - What would the removal of a hedge and a wall mean to the well-being of the people of Israel? Israel would be open to attack by enemies and to its land being trampled by foreigners.

IV. The Lord's Explanation Concerning His Vineyard 5:7

Q - What was the bad fruit which particularly disturbed the Lord in His dealings with Israel? The bad fruit of bloodshed instead of justice and a cry of distress instead of righteousness.

Think About It: The Lord decided to judge Israel after His significant investment in the nation produced bad fruit instead of the good fruit He desired.

“Abusing Land and Liquor”

Isaiah 5:8-12

Q - Why should it make any difference to the Lord where His people chose to live and what they choose to drink?

The Lord used Isaiah to assure the people of Judah that He cares about such practical matters as His people's real estate dealings and their use of alcoholic drinks.

I. The Lord's Woe Upon Judah's Greediness 5:8-10

A. The Sins of Land-grabbers 5:8

Q - What would be the problem with adding house to house and field to field for the ancient people of Judah? Because the land of Israel could not be sold permanently the addition of fields and houses on the land was likely to result from injustice.

B. The Judgment of Land-Grabbers 5:9-10

1. Houses Without Occupants 5:9

Q - What would desolate houses - including “great and fine ones” - signify to the people of Judah? Desolate houses would signify defeat of Israel by enemies, driving people from their homes (by deportation) - without regard to their social status.

2. Harvests Without Abundance 5:10

Q - What do the yields of vines and grains mentioned in verse ten indicate? The shortage of crops would result from either famine or the devastation of crops by enemies.

II. The Lord's Woe Upon Judah's Drunkenness 5:11-12

A. The Folly of Judah's Drinkers 5:11

Q - What is the problem for those who drink alcoholic beverages early and late in the day? Early and late drinking of alcoholic beverages is an indication of the overuse of alcohol, with the likely outcome of drunkenness and debauchery.

B. The Failures of Judah's Drinkers 5:12

1. Their Attention to Pleasure 5:12a

Q - What does Isaiah's description of Judah's banquets reveal about the people and their pursuits? His description reveals an unhealthy focus on pleasure seeking.

2. Their Inattention to the Lord 5:12b

Q - What did the Lord desire from the people of Judah that He wasn't receiving in Isaiah's day? The Lord wanted His people to pay attention of His works (in the world generally and on their behalf specifically).

Q - What are some of the "deeds of the LORD" and the "work of His hands" Israel should have been considering? They should have been considering His works in the world generally and on their behalf specifically

Think About It: The Lord pronounced woe and promised judgment upon His people for their abuses of property rights and strong drink and their inattention to His word and His works.

“Exalted in Judgment”

Isaiah 5:13-17

Q - How could the Lord be exalted in bringing judgment upon the people He chose to be His own nation?

Though there are people who argue that it would make the Lord look bad to bring judgment upon sinners, their error is evident in the fact that the Lord Himself warned the people of Judah, by His prophet Isaiah, that He was going to be exalted and shown holy in bringing various forms of judgment upon them.

I. The Warning from the Lord 5:13-15

A. His Warning of Exile 5:13

Q - What does the “therefore” which begins verse thirteen refer back to? The “therefore” refers back to the sins of Judah - greed, land-abuses, pleasure seeking and inattention to the Lord.

Q - What is it about the people of Judah which was going to result in their exile? The lack of knowledge (of the things of the Lord) was going to result in their exile.

Q - What is noteworthy about honorable people being famished and multitudes thirsting? It is a revelation of desperation on the part of the honorable and famine conditions among the people generally.

B. His Warning of Death 5:14

Q - What was Sheol about to swallow down its wide-opened throat? Jerusalem’s splendor, multitudes, revelry and

the jubilant among her population were about to be swallowed up by death.

C. His Warning of Humiliation 5:15

Q - What kinds of people would be affected by the impending doom of Judah? The people in general (both the lowly and the lofty - including the proud) would be abased.

II. The Exoneration of the Lord 5:16-17

A. His Judgment and Righteousness 5:16

Q - How might the Lord be exalted by means of judgment? The righteousness of the Lord would be accentuated and exonerated by His judgment of sinful people.

Q - How might righteousness show the holy God to be holy? His judgment of unrighteousness would demonstrate His commitment to holiness.

B. His People Under Judgment 5:17

Q - What is apparently amiss when lambs graze “as in their pasture”? If the lambs are grazing outside the bounds of their proper pasture their shepherds are missing or inattentive and the sheep are in danger.

Q - What is the significance of strangers eating “in the waste places of the wealthy”? It is evidence that strangers have destroyed the homes of the wealthy and occupied their territory.

Think About It: The Lord warned His people through Isaiah that He would be exalted and shown holy through their exile, their death, and their humiliation.

“Withering Anger”

Isaiah 5:18-25

Q - What display of the anger of the Lord, either in Scripture or in your own experience, stands out largest in your thinking?

Through His prophet Isaiah, the Lord spoke words of woe to His sinning people of Judah and told of the punishment they should expect if they didn't amend their sinful ways.

I. The Lord's Woes Upon His people 5:18-23

A. His First Word of Woe 5:18-19

Q - What does the Lord's word picture in verse 18 tell us about the sinfulness of His people? They were laboring under the load of their sinful behavior.

Q - What did the people's words in verse 19 reveal about their understanding of the Lord's dealings? They were apparently sarcastic of Isaiah's warning that judgment upon their sinful ways was coming from the Lord.

B. His Second Word of Woe 5:20

Q - What do the charges of this verse reveal about the spiritual perception of the people of Judah? Their spiritual values were reversed from reality.

C. His Third Word of Woe 5:21

Q - What problem did the Lord see in the self-evaluation of the people of Judah? They considered themselves wise and clever in their sinful behavior and outlook.

D. His Fourth Word of Woe 5:22-23

Q - What does verse 22 reveal about the heroism and valor of the people of Judah in Isaiah's day? They were heroes with respect to drinking wine and valiant in mixing strong drinks.

Q - What was the cause of Judah's deplorable condition? They justified the wicked for a bribe and took away the rights of those who were in the right.

II. The Lord's Work of Judgment Against His People 5:24-25

A. The Withering of Judah 5:24

Q - What do the word pictures of the opening lines of verse 24 reveal concerning the people of Judah? They reveal that the Lord saw destructive forces like fire and rot and wind coming upon Judah.

Q - What was the cause of Judah's deplorable condition? They rejected the Law of the Lord and despised His word.

B. The Burning Anger of the Lord 5:25

Q - What did Isaiah see the burning anger of the Lord bringing upon His people? He saw the Lord's hand striking down His people with power like an earthquake, leaving corpses strewn in the streets.

Q - What were the people to expect next from the outstretched hand of the Lord? They were to expect more trouble as His hand remained outstretched.

Think About It: The sins of the people of Judah provoked the Lord to burn in anger against them with withering heat.

Apply It: The wages of sin is, and always has been, what the Apostle Paul said it is (Romans 6:23) - "death."

“Trouble from Afar”

Isaiah 5:26-30

Q - What are some of the instruments the Lord has at His disposal to bring judgment upon sinners if He chooses?

Because His ancient people of Judah were rejecting His Law and despising His word (5:24), the Lord spoke through the Prophet Isaiah of His decision to bring judgment against them by the hands of a fierce foreign nation.

I. The Lord’s Call to a Distant Nation 5:26

Q - What did the Lord’s decision to lift up a standard to distant nations mean for His people? It meant that distant nations would be used by the Lord to judge His people.

Q - What is ironic about the response of foreign nations to the Lord’s whistle? It is ironic that foreign nations would respond to the Lord’s call while His own people would not.

II. The Lord’s Description of the Distant Nation 5:27-29

A. Its Alertness 5:27

Q - What would the absence of weariness and stumbling and sleep among God’s chosen army signify? The distant nation would be wide awake and alert to the Lord’s call.

Q - What would a belt undone mean to an ancient soldier? A belt undone would mean his steps would be impeded by ungirded garments.

Q - What would the absence of even a broken sandal strap among foreign soldiers signify? It would signify their readiness to move forward unhindered in their attack on Judah.

B. Its Armaments 5:28

Q - What would the bent bows and sharp arrows of distant

nations signify to the people of Israel? Bent bows and sharp arrows would signify preparedness for engagement in battle with well-prepared weaponry.

Q - What would be the value of hooves of flint to an army's mounts? Hooves of flint would be the equivalent of horses with sturdy horseshoes for the protection of the horses used in battle.

Q - What do chariot wheels like a whirlwind indicate? They indicate chariot wheels which are turning rapidly, as a whirlwind does, as they advance against their enemy - in this case, against the people of Israel.

C. Its Fierceness 5:29

Q - What does the roaring of a lioness or young lion indicate? Roaring is a sign of an animal on the attack against prey with an intimidating sound intended to frighten and freeze.

Q - What did the Lord intend to use distant armies to accomplish concerning the people of Judah? He intended to use distant armies to carry Judah off as captives with no one coming to their rescue.

III. The Lord's Use of the Distant Nation 5:30

Q - What is there about the sea's roaring which would make it a frightening symbol to God's people? Roaring seas are indicative of storm-driven ocean waters with their destructive force.

Q - What did the Lord intend to bring to Judah through foreign nations? He intended to bring darkness and distress of national defeat and deportation to Judah from Babylon.

Think About It: The Lord can use foreign nations to bring judgment upon His sinning people - as He predicted through

Isaiah that He would do to the ancient people of Judah.

“Isaiah’s Throne Room Vision”

Isaiah 6:1-5

Q - What is the most awe-inspiring encounter you can ever recall experiencing with any person?

The Lord prepared His prophet Isaiah to respond to God’s challenging call upon his life by giving Him a personal encounter with Himself in the glorious setting of His throne room through an awe-inspiring vision.

I. The Lord’s Appearance 6:1

Q - Where does the date of Isaiah’s vision place it in terms of his overall prophetic ministry (cf. 1:1)? It places his vision at the end of the reign of the first of the four kings who reigned in his time.

Q - Who does this verse indicate it was that Isaiah saw in his vision? It says he saw the LORD

Q - In view of the fact that God is a spirit - not normally visible to human vision - who, according to John 12:41, was the person who Isaiah was seeing? John reveals, in John 12:41, that Isaiah was seeing the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Lord.

Q - What do Isaiah’s references to the Lord’s appearance reveal about Him? They indicate that He is royalty, exalted on His elevated throne, dressed in royal splendor.

II. The Lord’s Attendants 6:2-3

A. The Description of the Seraphim 6:2

Q - What does Isaiah’s description of the seraphim lead you to understand and assume about them? It leads to the understanding that they were six-winged hovering angelic beings.

B. The Message of the Seraphim 6:3

Q - What is noteworthy in your thinking about the message of the seraphim? The message that the Lord is “Holy, holy, holy” indicates that He is the holiest of all beings.

Q - In what sense would you say that “the whole earth is full of [God’s] glory”? As Paul tells us (Romans 1:20), all of creation reveals that God exists and that He is very powerful.

III. The Lord’s Awesomeness 6:4-5

A. The Shaking and Smoke in His Presence 6:4

Q - What do the shaking and smoke described in verse 4 add to the scene Isaiah witnessed in your own mind? They recall the awesome scene Israel witnessed at Mt. Sinai.

B. The Response of Isaiah to His Presence 6:5

Q - Why did Isaiah respond to the vision he saw in the way he did? He may have expected to die when he realized his sinful condition in the presence of the glory of the Lord of Hosts.

Q - What did Isaiah’s concern about his own lips and the lips of his people indicate? His concern indicated his realization of the sinfulness and unworthiness of both himself and Israel before a powerful and sinless God.

Q - What does Isaiah’s description of the King he saw as “the LORD of hosts” add to our understanding of His identity and nature? The sinless God of heaven is the ultimate and divine King, with a powerful army at His command.

Think About It: The Lord revealed Himself to Isaiah as the holy Lord of Hosts in an overwhelming display of His glory and holiness by means of a unique vision of His throne room.

“God’s Persistent Call”

Isaiah 6:6-13

Q - How many times would you be inclined to call someone who refused to respond to your call?

Though His ancient people of Judah were rejecting His Law (5:24) and destined for judgment (5:25), the Lord commissioned the prophet Isaiah to take His message to them - knowing, as he did, that most would not respond and only a few would be preserved.

I. The Cleansing of Isaiah 6:6-7

Q - Why might the seraph have chosen to cleanse Isaiah by touching his lips? Isaiah had become keenly aware that both he and his people were people of unclean lips.

II. The Calling of Isaiah 6:8

A. The Lord’s Call 6:8a

Q - What strikes you as most significant about the Lord’s questions? The triune God (“Us”) is seeking a man to represent Him to a sinful people - knowing that Isaiah will go.

B. Isaiah’s Response 6:8b

Q - What can we learn from Isaiah’s response to the Lord’s question? We see an example of a submissive servant, willing to do what his master wants done.

III. The Commission of Isaiah 6:9-10

A. His Audience 6:9-10

Q - What strikes you as most unusual about the message the Lord gave Isaiah to declare to His people? The Lord was well-aware that the people of Israel would be insensitive to the

message He was asking Isaiah to announce to them.

B. His Term of Service 6:11-13

1. The Devastation of Cities 6:11

Q - What could bring about the conditions which the Lord described to Isaiah in verse eleven in answer to his question “Lord, how long?” The overwhelming force of a destructive enemy would be required to bring about such conditions.

2. The Deportation of the People 6:12

Q - What would happen to Israel to cause many forsaken places in the midst of the land? The people would be taken from their land by their powerful enemy.

3. The Preservation of a Remnant 6:13

Q - What strikes you about the size of the remnant the Lord predicted would be preserved? A remnant of only a tenth would mean that the vast majority of the people would be taken into captivity.

Q - What would be challenging about the fate of even the remnant? They would remain subject to attack from enemies in their vulnerable condition.

Q - What part of the nation did the Lord commit Himself to preserve? He committed Himself to preserve the “holy seed.”

Think About It: The Lord used a powerful vision to call Isaiah to take His message to his unresponsive nation, destined for judgment but promised preservation.

“Who to Fear in Troubling Times”

Isaiah 7:1-9

Q - What sometimes makes it difficult to fear the Lord rather than people?

The Lord sent His prophet Isaiah to Judah’s king Ahaz at a time when Syria and Israel were attempting to force Judah into an alliance with them against Assyria (II Kings 16:5-18 / II Chronicles 28:5-21). His message made it clear that Ahaz ought to fear the Lord rather than Judah’s enemies.

I. The Attack of Judah’s Enemies 7:1-2

A. The Attack Against Jerusalem 7:1

Q - Why might Judah have easily been defeated in the contest described in this verse (see II Chronicles 28:5-8)? Both Syria and Ephraim (northern Israel) had attacked and defeated portions of Judah - taking many captives.

B. The Response of the King at Jerusalem 7:2

Q - What did the response of Ahaz to his circumstances reveal about him? It revealed that he was trusting in his inadequate resources rather than trusting in the Lord for His help.

II. The Announcement of Judah’s Deliverance 7:3-9

A. The Lord’s Instruction to Isaiah 7:3

Q - What do you see as significant about the meeting the Lord arranged between Isaiah, with his son, and King Ahaz? It is significant that God would send a significant prophet to speak with an unworthy king, and that his son (whose name means “a remnant shall return”) would accompany him - foreshadowing Judah’s captivity, deportation, and return.

B. The Lord's Message through Isaiah 7:4-9

1. The Word of Encouragement for Judah 7:4-7

a. The Challenge to Be Calm 7:4

Q - What did the Lord's counsel to Ahaz in verse four reveal about His outlook toward Rezin and Pekah? It revealed that God considered them to be insignificant "smoldering firebrands."

b. The Revelation of Enemy Intentions 7:5-6

Q - What intentions of Rezin and Pekah seemed to justify the fear of Ahaz? It was their intention to join their armies against Judah, breaching protective walls, and enthroning a king of their own choosing on Judah's throne.

c. The Prediction of Failure 7:7

Q - What reason for encouragement did Isaiah give to Ahaz? Isaiah predicted the failure of their intentions.

2. The Prospect of Defeat for Judah's Enemies 7:8-9a

Q - Why do you suppose the Lord reminded Ahaz of the headship of Syria and Ephraim as He did? He wanted Ahaz to be reminded that his enemies were only limited human beings.

Q - Why was Ephraim not to be feared? Ephraim was soon to be destroyed as a nation (within 65 years).

3. The Word of Warning to Ahaz 7:9b

Q - What was the Lord using Isaiah to try to get Ahaz to do by his message? He was trying to get Ahaz to believe the word of the Lord instead of his own human instincts.

Think About It: The Lord assured Judah's King Ahaz that the attack of Syria and Israel against Jerusalem would not succeed and that he ought to be trusting the Lord.

“God’s Supernatural Sign”

Isaiah 7:10-19

Q - If the Lord offered to confirm His word to you by some kind of a sign, what might you ask Him to do?

The Lord has provided many signs down through the centuries which have confirmed His existence and His power and His amazing love for His creatures. The public ministry of the Lord Jesus, for example, was marked by many authenticating signs and miracles which attested to His divine nature and Messianic calling - signs and miracles which most people in His day failed to read correctly. But long before the public ministry of Jesus, Judah’s wicked King Ahaz was offered the opportunity to choose a sign from the Lord to bolster his faith in the Lord’s ability to help him and his nation in a time of great need. The Lord offered, through the Prophet Isaiah, to confirm His word about Judah’s immediate security in a very unusual display of not only His power but Himself - an offer which King Ahaz arrogantly and foolishly declined!

I. The Lord’s Offer of a Sign 7:10-12

A. The Offer Made 7:10-11

Q - Why was the Lord offering a sign to Judah’s King Ahaz? The Lord was seeking to encourage Ahaz to place his faith in Him rather than himself or his armies or foreign aid.

Q - What stands out in your thinking about the Lord’s offer of a sign to King Ahaz? It was an amazingly generous offer - “as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven.”

B. The Offer Declined 7:12

Q - What is significant about King Ahaz’ response to the Lord’s offer of a sign? He was testing the patience of the Lord while claiming he would not test the Lord by asking for the

sign the Lord was offering to provide.

II. The Lord's Promise of a Sign 7:13-16

A. His Response to Ahaz 7:13

Q - How does verse 13 indicate the Lord felt about King Ahaz' response? It clearly shows that Ahaz, representing the "house of David," was trying the patience of the Lord.

B. His Sign to Judah 7:14-15

Q - What would be particularly noteworthy about the sign the Lord promised Ahaz in verse 14? It would be a miraculous birth and the promise of the presence of God among men.

Q - What does verse 15 reveal about the child promised as a sign to the people of Judah? He would be living on a simple diet - off the land - by the time he was a young man.

Q - Why is it not problematic that King Ahaz would not live to see the fulfillment of the sign which the Lord offered to him? It is not problematic because King Ahaz refused to ask for a sign from the Lord so it doesn't matter that the Lord chose to offer a sign which would be realized centuries later.

C. His Deliverance of Judah 7:16

Q - What did the Lord's promised sign have to do with the situation King Ahaz and the people of Judah were facing at the time of God's promise? It promised the destruction of the two countries Ahaz was so fearful were going to attack his country.

III. The Lord's Promise of Judgment 7:17-19

A. The Prospect of Judgment 7:17

Q - Though the Lord would deliver Judah from Israel and Syria, what were Judah's more distant prospects? Judah was going to experience serious problems in coming years.

B. The Instrument of Judgment 7:18

Q - What did the Lord reveal would be the source of Judah's more distant troubles? Their troubles would come from the regions of Egypt and Assyria.

C. The Nature of Judgment 7:19

Q - What does verse 19 reveal about the nature of Judah's future troubles? Israel's enemies would come to settle in every part of the land of Judah.

Think About It: Though Ahaz declined the Lord's offer of a sign confirming His word, the Lord promised a supernatural sign to Judah in spite of the king's rejection - predicting judgment upon Judah as well.

Apply It: Rejecting God's supernatural sign in the miraculous birth of His Son Jesus was, for Ahaz, and still is for all others who reject Him, a foolish and destructive rejection!

“God’s Instrument of Judgment”

Isaiah 7:20-25

Q - What would be some of the complications of living under the hostile domination of a foreign power?

The Lord warned His people through Isaiah of His plans to use foreign powers to bring humiliating judgment upon His people and to reduce their formerly prosperous land to conditions of poverty and desolation.

I. The Lord’s Prediction of Assyrian Dominance 7:20

Q - What was the significance of the Lord’s mention of the shaving of the head and legs of His people? Forced shaving of the face and legs was used to humiliate subjected people.

Cf. II Samuel 10:4-5

Q - How did the Lord intend to bring about this shaving of His people? He intended to use the Assyrians to humiliate His people by their defeat and deportation.

Q - Can you think of a time when this prophecy might have been fulfilled in the experience of the people of Judah - when someone might have been “hired” to do what Isaiah predicted? When King Ahaz was forced to seek Assyrian help against the northern kingdom and Syrians, and when Hezekiah had to submit to Assyria after they seized his fortified cities.

Cf. II Kings 16:5-9; 18:13-16

II. The Lord’s Prediction of Remnant Conditions 7:21-25

A. The Remnant Animals 7:21

Q - What is the warning contained in verse 21? The warning that the people of Judah would be reduced to only a few animals to provide for their needs.

B. The Remnant’s Diet 7:2

Q - What would be significant about the predicted diet of God's people? A diet of curds and honey would reflect the absence of agricultural products due to disruption of normal lifestyles of the people.

C. The Remnant's Fields 7:23-25

1. Briars and Thorns in Place of Vines 7:23-24

Q - What did the Prophet Isaiah envision being replaced by briars and thorns? He envisioned fruitful fields (e.g. vineyards) being replaced by briars and thorns.

Q - What was going to turn Judah's fields into fields of briars and thorns? The fields of farmers would be turned to briars and thorns because of enemy domination over the land and the Lord's withdrawal of His blessing on His people.

Cf. 5:5-6

Q - What would be the significance of the people coming out to the fields with bows and arrows? The people would be hunting for game in their fields which had previously been the site of healthy crops.

2. Pasture in Place of Cultivated Land 7:25

Q - What is the significance of pasturing oxen and sheep on formerly cultivated land? Pasturing oxen and sheep on land now filled with thorns and briars instead of the crops formerly raised there reveal a people whose lives have been disrupted by enemies and abandoned by the Lord.

Think About It: The Lord predicted through Isaiah that He would use the Assyrians to judge His people for their rejection of Him and His word.

“Sign of Coming Trouble”

Isaiah 8:1-8

Q - What is the most unusual name you have ever come across in your experience?

The Lord prepared Isaiah for the assignment of a very unusual name for his second son by having him display it on a large tablet - then gave him a son to bear the name and a message to explain its fuller significance to the people of both Northern Israel and Judah.

I. The Birth of Isaiah's Son 8:1-4

A. The Revelation of His Name 8:1

Q - Why might the Lord have wanted Isaiah to write as he was instructed to do on a tablet? He wanted His message to be seen by those for whom it was intended.

B. The Witnesses of His Coming 8:2

Q - What were the Lord's two witnesses apparently going to bear witness about? They were apparently to witness about God's message concerning the threat posed by Israel and Syria.

C. The Arrival of Isaiah's Son 8:3a

Q - What is significant about the name given to the son born to Isaiah by his wife? The name of the child was the same as the message Isaiah was to write on a tablet (v. 1) - warning of the impending defeat of both Northern Israel and Syria by the Assyrians.

D. The Prophetic Significance of Isaiah's Son 8:3b-4

Q - Why were the predicted fates of Damascus and Samaria particularly noteworthy at this time? They were the capitals of the two nations pressuring Ahaz to join them against Assyria.

II. The Coming of Israel's Judgment 8:5-8

A. The Reason for Judgment 8:5-6

Q - What was the significance of the "gently flowing waters of Shiloah"? They apparently referred to the Lord's supply of water for His people in Jerusalem - not large but adequate.

B. The Coming of Judgment 8:7-8

1. Judgment Upon Israel 8:7

Q - What did the Lord's description of coming flood waters indicate for the Northern kingdom of Israel? It spoke of the overpowering military flood coming against northern Israel from Assyria.

2. Judgment Upon Judah 8:8

Q - What were the Euphrates' waters reaching even to the neck of Judah to signify? The people of Judah would also be affected by the Assyrians - up to the neck - but not drowned.

Q - How would you explain the re-occurrence (from 7:14) of the name Immanuel? It provides encouragement that, though Judah would be threatened by Assyria, it was still God's land - ultimately under His control.

Think About It: Isaiah's son was given his unusual name as a prediction of the impending fates of both Israel and Judah because of their rejection of the Lord.

“The Proper Focus of Fear”

Isaiah 8:9-15

Q - What are some of the things people most commonly fear in life?

Isaiah spoke for the Lord both to foreign nations as well as northern and southern Israel about the propriety of fearing the Lord, though He predicted that the nations would be shattered by the Lord and the people of Israel would stumble over Him.

I. Isaiah's Challenge to the Nations 8:9-10

A. Instruction to Be Broken and Shattered 8:9

Q - Why would Isaiah instruct the nations to be broken and shattered? The nations, like Aram and northern Israel, would be subjected to the judgment of the Lord.

Q - Why did Isaiah challenge the nations to gird themselves in view of their being shattered? He anticipated the resistance of the nations to the judgment of the Lord.

B. Warning About Failed Plans 8:10

Q - Why did Isaiah instruct the nations to devise plans only to see them thwarted? The Lord made him aware that the nations would refuse to submit to His ways.

Q - What was it that assured the failure of the nations to see their plans fulfilled? The Lord's presence with His own people assured the failure of the nations to succeed with their plans.

II. Isaiah's Message Concerning the Proper Fear 8:11-13

A. His Challenge Not to Regard People and their Plans 8:11-12

Q - What was supposed to be Isaiah's response to the ways of his own people? Isaiah was not to permit himself to become conformed to the thoughts and ways of his own people.

Q - What might have been the basis for the people's charge of "conspiracy"? The Lord's message through Isaiah not to fear or conform with Aram and Israel seemed conspiratorial.

Q - Why was Isaiah not to fear what the people feared as a "conspiracy"? Isaiah's message (to fear only the Lord), viewed by the people as a conspiracy was not conspiracy but reality.

B. His Challenge to Fear Only the Lord 8:13

Q - Why was and is the Lord to be feared and dreaded? Every person and nation will answer to the Lord, their judge.

III. Isaiah's Prediction of Israel's Response to the Lord 8:14-15

A. The Lord as a Sanctuary 8:14a

Q - In what sense could the Lord have been viewed as a "sanctuary"? He should have been trusted as a source of safety for those trusting Him in the face of unbelieving people.

B. The Lord as a Stone of Stumbling 8:14b-15

Q - In what sense did the Lord become a "stone to strike and a rock to stumble over" to both the houses of Israel? The plans of the Lord, personified ultimately in Jesus - but rejected by unbelievers - would cause many unbelievers to stumble.

(Cf. Romans 9:30-33; I Peter 2:6-8)

Think About It: Isaiah warned foreign nations of coming judgment from the Lord even as he predicted his own people's stumbling over the Lord because of their failure to fear only Him.

“Beyond God’s Help”

Isaiah 8:16-22

Q - Can you think of any condition a person might get to which would place them beyond the help of even the Lord?

The Lord spoke through various prophets (including Isaiah) to His people about their need to return to Him. But the day finally came when He was no longer willing to withhold the judgment they had coming because of their failure to respond to Him and to His messengers.

I. Waiting for the Lord 8:16-18

A. Challenge to Bind Up the Testimony 8:16

Q - Why do you suppose Isaiah instructed that the testimony be bound up and the law sealed among his disciples? It was probably intended to confirm Isaiah’s prediction when it came to fruition.

B. Looking Eagerly for the Lord 8:17

Q - In what sense was the Lord hiding His face from the house of Jacob? The Lord was hiding His face in the sense that He had entrusted Isaiah with predictions regarding events to be realized at a later time.

C. Signs from the Lord 8:18

Q - In what sense was the Lord NOT hiding His face from the house of Jacob? Isaiah and his sons were signs (by virtue of their names) of the Lord’s intentions regarding the future of His people.

Isaiah = “the LORD saves”
Shear-jashub = “a remnant shall return”
Maher-shalal-hash-baz = “swift is the booty,
speedy is the prey”

II. Consulting the Lord 8:19-22

A. The Challenge of Improper Consultation 8:19a

Q - Who would have been advising the people to consult mediums and spiritists? Animists from among surrounding pagan peoples, and Jews who were following their lead, would have challenged the people of Israel to do as they were doing.

B. The Standard of Proper Consultation 8:19b-20

Q - How were the people to know that mediums and spiritists were not reliable spiritual guides? They should have been taught by their spiritual leaders that they were to turn to God’s revealed word rather than consulting the dead!

C. The Prediction of Difficult Times 8:21-22

1. A People Adrift 8:21

Q - What was going to cause the people to do what Isaiah described in verse 21? They were going to pass through the land hard-pressed and famished on their way into captivity.

2. A People in Darkness 8:22

Q - What did Isaiah predict the people would see when they looked to the earth? They would see distress and darkness and the gloom of anguish as they were driven away into darkness.

Think About It: The people of Israel had reached a point in their rejection of the Lord at which He was going to turn from them in rejection and let them face the consequences.

“The Promised King”

Isaiah 9:1-7

Q - What were the immediate prospects for the people of northern Israel in the early days of Isaiah’s ministry?

Though Israel was destined for some gloomy times in Isaiah’s day, the Lord anticipated a day when the prospects would become much brighter - particularly for the northern regions of the land.

I. The Deliverance of Galilee 9:1-5

A. The Change of Conditions 9:1

Q - What was the cause of the gloom from which Isaiah now anticipated some of his people would be delivered? The nation of Israel was being threatened by the Assyrians.

Q - In what sense did the Lord once treat the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali with contempt? They were among the first regions to face defeat from Assyria.

Q - How was that going to change? The Lord was going to make the region glorious.

B. The Coming of Light 9:2

Q - In what sense did the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali once “walk in darkness”? They had walked away from the light of the Lord into pagan darkness of Canaanite idolatry.

Q - What great light were the people who walked in darkness going to see? They were going to see the Light of the Lord in the person of the Messiah, living in their region.

Cf. Matthew 4:12-17

C. The Increase of Gladness 9:3

Q - What future cause for encouragement did Isaiah have for his soon-to-be judged people? The Lord was going to multiply the people and increase their gladness - as in harvest.

D. The Removal of Oppression 9:4-5

Q - What did Isaiah predict would take place to reverse Israel's soon-coming oppression? The Lord was going to remove the yoke of their servitude under oppressors.

Q - Why would mention of the "battle of Midian" encourage Isaiah's audience? It would remind them of the amazing victory over Midian under Gideon's leadership - beginning with only his 300-man army armed with pitchers, torches, and trumpets

Q - How does verse five predict the Lord would cleanse His battle-scarred land? He would enable His people to burn away the evidence of enemy attacks against them.

II. The Deliverer of Galilee 9:6-7

A. The Description of the Deliverer 9:6

Q - What did Isaiah predict would be the reason for Israel's deliverance? A child would be born - a son would be given - who would shoulder their government as their ruler.

Q - What do the names assigned to the coming "son" of Israel reveal about the one Isaiah anticipated? He would be almighty God, living among men as their wonderful counselor.

B. The Dominion of the Deliverer 9:7

Q - What would characterize the reign of the "child" Israel was to expect? His reign would be characterized by increase and peace and justice and righteousness.

Q - How could such a reversal of fortunes take place? The zeal

of the LORD of Hosts would bring it to reality.

Think About It: The region of Galilee will be delivered from gloom by the zeal of God through His deliverer Christ in His earthly millennial kingdom.

Apply It: The child born as Israel's future king was born some two thousand years ahead of His accession to the throne of the millennial kingdom in the city of Bethlehem on the first Christmas day.

“Judgment on Samaria”

Isaiah 9:8-12

Q - What hope is there for people whom the Lord has turned against in judgment?

Though the people of the northern kingdom realized that the Lord had harsh words for their nation in its sinful state, they imagined that they could recover from the Lord’s judgment by their own diligent efforts.

I. The Destination of God’s Message 9:8

Q - To whom was this portion of Isaiah’s message addressed (compare verses eight and nine)? It was addressed to Jacob (Israel) - especially Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria.

II. The Determination of Ephraim and Samaria 9:9-10

A. The Understanding of the People 9:9a

Q - What was it that the people of Jacob/Israel knew? The people knew they were under damaging attack from enemies.

B. The Response of the People 9:9b

Q - What was it that characterized the attitude of the people in view of the Lord’s message to their nation? Their attitude was one of pride and arrogance in their own ability to recover.

C. The Assertion of the People 9:10

Q - What did the people of Israel propose to do in response to the Lord’s judgment upon their nation? They proposed to rebuild cities and replant forests.

III. The Destruction of Ephraim and Samaria 9:11-12

A. The Lord's Instruments of Judgment 9:11-12a

Q - Who does verse eleven tell us the Lord intended to use in judgment against His people? He intended to use King Rezin of Syria.

Q - Who was going to join Israel's enemies of verse eleven in putting the divine "squeeze" on the nation of Israel (verse twelve)? The Philistines to the west of Israel and Judah.

B. The Lord's Intentions in Judgment 9:12b

1. His Intention to Devour

Q - In what sense might the nation of Israel expect to be "devoured"? They were going to be "devoured" by defeat and deportation by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

2. His Intention to Continue

Q - What would the people of Israel expect as a follow-up on the Lord's judgment at the hands of Syria and Philistia? They were to expect additional judgment for their sins.

Think About It: The Lord announced His intention to use surrounding nations to bring judgment upon Israel's northern kingdom - assuring them that they would not be able to recover, and that He was not finished yet.

“Further Judgment on Samaria”

Isaiah 9:13-17

Q - What should we expect when people under the Lord’s judgment refuse to turn from their sins?

When the Lord brought judgment upon the people of the northern kingdom of Israel, it was intended to bring reform. But the people still failed to turn to the Lord - further complicating their relationship with the only one capable of helping them.

I. The Obstinacy of Samaria 9:13

Q - What could and should have been Samaria’s response to the Lord’s initial judgment upon their land? They should have turned back in repentance and sought the Lord’s mercy.

Q - What **was** Samaria’s response to the Lord’s judgment? They did not turn back to the Lord or seek Him in their self-reliance.

II. The Judgment of Samaria 9:14-17

A. The Lord’s Cutting Off of Samaria 9:14-16

1. The Suddenness of His Judgment 9:14

Q - How did the Lord go about cutting off “head and tail, palm branch and bulrush” from Israel “in a single day”? Judgment came suddenly with the invasion of the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

2. The Subjects of His Judgment 9:15

Q - How did Isaiah identify the “head and tail” subjected to the Lord’s judgment of Samaria? The “head” referred to the elder and honorable man, and the “tail” to false prophets.

3. The Reasons for His Judgment 9:16

Q - What was the Lord's problem with the elders and prophets of Israel which required judgment? They had failed the people by leading them astray spiritually.

B. The Lord's Displeasure with Samaria 9:17

1. The Subjects of His Displeasure 9:17a

Q - What is surprising about the subjects of the Lord's displeasure? Moral decline was so extensive that not just the "head and tail" (v. 15) but the more fragile members of the kingdom boften defended by the Lord were caught up in the judgment of foreign invasion.

2. The Reasons for His Displeasure 9:17b

Q - What three sins did Isaiah single out as cause for God's judgment? The Lord accused them of godlessness, evildoing and foolish speech.

3. The Persistence of His Displeasure 9:17c

Q - What were the prospects for Israel's future at the hands of the Lord? The prospects were bleak as the Lord's anger remained and His hand of judgment remained outstretched.

Think About It: When the northern kingdom of Israel refused to humble themselves under the judgment of the Lord, they assured themselves of even greater difficulties.

“The Wages of Wickedness”

Isaiah 9:18-21

Q - What impact should we expect a people's commitment to wickedness will have upon them, and why?

As it does in every situation, the wickedness which characterized the people of Israel (both the northern and southern kingdoms) in Isaiah's day was systematically destroying the nation. But it wasn't only the folly of men, as destructive as that already is, doing the damage. It was also the hand of the Lord, using the folly of men, to bring His judgment upon the sins of His people.

I. The Destructiveness of Wickedness 9:18

Q - How did the Lord illustrate the impact of wickedness upon His sinning people in Isaiah's day? He illustrated their wickedness in terms of the burning destruction of a fire.

Q - How did His illustration fit the occasion? Like the destructive force of a prairie fire or forest fire, the Assyrian armies would be pillaging and burning many of their cities.

II. The Destructiveness of Judgment 9:19-21

A. The Destructiveness of Judgment 9:19

Q - What was the driving force behind the destructive “fires” devouring the land of Israel? The fury of the Lord was the driving force behind the destructive power of enemies.

Q - Whose hand was the Lord using to spread the fire of His judgment among the people of Israel? He was using enemy nations like the Assyrians and Babylonians, and he was using the people of Israel to turn on one another because Isaiah wrote that “no man spares his brother.”

B. The Dissatisfaction of the People 9:20

Q - How did the Lord illustrate the people of Israel's failure to find satisfaction in their lives? He pictured His people as still hungry after eating what was on their right and left - even resorting to eating the flesh of their own arms.

Q - What was the point the Lord was making by Isaiah's reference to the eating of one's own arm? Wicked behavior is always self-destructive.

C. The Disunity of the Tribes 9:21a

Q - In what sense might the tribes of Israel have been devouring each other in Isaiah's day? The northern kingdom was not only threatened by Judah but was characterized by inter-tribal hostilities and rebellion against their kings on the part of others who sought to rule the people.

Cf. II Kings 15:13-16, 23-26, 29-30

D. The Determination of the Lord to Continue 9:21b

Q - What was the Lord's commitment in the face of His people's self-destructive behavior? The Lord was not finished judging His sinful people. There was more judgment to come.

Think About It: The sins of the people of Israel and Judah were destroying the nation as the Lord used their wickedness to carry out His judgment upon them.

“Justice Served”

Isaiah 10:1-4

Q - Where might people under God’s judgment try to turn in an attempt to protect themselves?

The Lord warned the leaders of His people Israel through Isaiah that they would not escape His judgment upon their evil and unjust behavior toward the needy people of their land.

I. The Lord’s Warning to His People’s Leaders 10:1-2

A. The Word of Warning 10:1a

Q - What is the word “woe,” coming from the Lord, intended to communicate to its audience? It is intended to communicate trouble ahead for Israel’s leaders.

B. The Reason for Warning 10:1b

Q - What two reasons did the Lord give for speaking woe to the leaders of Israel?

1. They enacted evil statutes.
2. They constantly recorded unjust decisions.

II. The Lord’s Accusations Against His People’s Leaders 10:2

Q - What four specific examples of the leaders’ evils and injustice did the Lord cite in verse 2?

1. They deprived the needy of justice.
2. They robbed the poor in Israel of their rights.
3. They made “spoil” of widows.
4. They “plundered” orphans.

III. The Lord’s Questions for His People’s Leaders 10:3

A. Concerning their Activities 10:3a

Q - What was the implication of the Lord's question concerning His hearer's actions in the coming difficult day? The implication was that the leaders would be hard-pressed to know what to do in days of devastation from afar which were ahead for them.

B. Concerning their Options 10:3b

Q - To whom might the leaders of Israel think they might flee for help in difficult days? They may have thought they could flee to the very nations which were going to judge them.

C. Concerning their Wealth 10:3c

Q - What would become of the "wealth" of these people in difficult days? Their wealth would be lost to them.

IV. The Lord's Prospects for His People's Leaders 10:4

A. The Short-Term Prospects 10:4a

Q - What two unhappy alternatives were facing the leaders of Israel short-term?

1. Crouching among those taken as captives.
2. Falling among those slain in battle.

B. The Long-Term Prospects 10:4b

Q - What were the long-term prospects for the leaders of Israel? Additional anger and judgment from the Lord.

Think About It: The evil and unjust activities of the leaders of Israel assured them of serious, inescapable and ongoing judgment from the Lord.

“Assyria Beware”

Isaiah 10:5-14

Q - When have you ever enjoyed seeing a bully get “a dose of his own medicine”?

The nation of Assyria and its leaders enjoyed too much the role assigned them by the Lord in bringing judgment upon His own people of Israel. So He spoke through Isaiah of the day when the “rod of [His] anger” (the Assyrian Empire) would receive a beating of its own.

I. The Lord’s Plan for Assyria 10:5-11

A. The Lord’s Warning for Assyria 10:5

Q - Why might Assyria have been surprised at the Lord’s warning? The Lord was using Assyria to judge His people Israel, so they might have felt invincible and fully justified in what they were doing.

B. The Lord’s Intention for Assyria 10:6

Q - What does the Lord’s reference to a “godless nation” indicate about His own people of Israel? The people of Israel had strayed far from the God they claimed to love and serve.

Q - What did the Lord intend the Assyrians should do for Him? He was commissioning them to carry out His fury against Israel by capturing booty and seizing plunder and trampling Israel down like mud in the streets.

C. The Lord’s Awareness of Assyria’s Intention 10:7-11

Q - What was the difference between the plan the Lord had and the plan the Assyrians had (verse 7)? It was Assyria’s purpose to destroy Israel, but God’s purpose only to judge.

Q - What was the point of Assyria's boast in verses 8 and 9? The Assyrians were confident they could conquer Israel. The cities they mentioned were distant cities they had conquered or were confident they would conquer.

Note: Calno (also Calneh) was a region in northern Syria; Carchemish for a fortress on the Euphrates River northeast of Calno; Hamath was a city marking the northern extent of Solomon's rule, located on the Orontes River about half way between Calno and Damascus; Arpad was a city near Hamath and just south of Calno. All of these areas had come under Assyrian control by 717 B.C.

Q - What miscalculation of Assyria is revealed in verses 10 and 11? They assumed that Jerusalem was a city committed to idol worship - idols they were able to defeat (as they did those of Samaria). But they were leaving the Lord out of the picture.

II. The Lord's Punishment of Assyria 10:12-14

A. The Lord's Announcement of Punishment 10:12

Q - What was the Lord's plan for Assyria? After using them to discipline others, they would themselves be disciplined.

B. The Lord's Awareness of Assyria's Arrogance 10:13-14

Q - What Assyrian miscalculation is revealed in verses 13 and 14? It was their miscalculation to assume that their record of conquest would continue unhindered, though in reality their kingdom would itself soon be conquered.

Think About It: Though the Assyrians intended to destroy Jerusalem and Judah, the Lord had plans to use Assyria only to punish Jerusalem and Judah before Himself bringing punishment on Assyria.

“Double Trouble Ahead”

Isaiah 10:15-23

Q - What are some of the nations the Lord has used to work His judgment before experiencing judgment of their own?

The pride of Assyria and its leaders in Isaiah's day would soon be brought into perspective as the Lord used little Israel to judge Assyria before using others to judge Israel.

I. The Lord's Question of Assyria 10:15

Q - What was the error in the boast of the king of Assyria recorded in verses 12-14? The king mistakenly assumed that he was in control over things the Lord actually controls.

II. The Lord's Warning to Assyria 10:16-19

A. Impending Trouble for Assyria 10:16

Q - What was the Lord going to use to bring judgment upon the Assyrians? The Lord was going to send a “wasting disease” among the members of his army.

B. Impending Glory for Israel 10:17

Q - How was the Lord going to use the fire of His “Holy One” to burn the Assyrians “in a single day”? Perhaps the deaths of 185,000 soldiers in one night during the reign of Hezekiah, or the fall of its capital city of Nineveh in 612 B.C. to the king of Akkad.

C. Impending Judgment by the Lord 10:18-19

Q - What forest was the Lord going to destroy like a sick man wasting away? He was going to destroy the glory of the forest and of the fruitful garden of the king of Assyria.

Q - What would the ability of a child to write down the remaining trees of the forest signify? It would signify that there would not be very many trees remaining (probably fulfilled between 612 B.C., when Nineveh fell, and 605, the battle of Carchemish - NIV Study Bible).

III. The Lord's Lesson for Israel 10:20-23

A. Israel's Future Reliance on the Lord 10:20

Q - What would be significant about Israel's decision not to trust in Assyria? Assyria would no longer exist as a nation, but the Lord always remains!

B. Israel's Future Returned Remnant 10:21-22

1. The Prediction of a Remnant 10:21

Q - Would the return of the remnant of Jacob to the Lord be good news or bad news? It would be good news in that a remnant would return, but bad news in that they would be only a remnant.

2. The Size of the Remnant 10:22

Q - How do the mentions of the remnant and of righteousness fit together in verse 22? Only a remnant would remain to return because of the Lord's righteous judgment against the sin of the nation.

C. Israel's Future Judgment by the Lord 10:23

Q - How do the messages of the remnant and the complete destruction of the whole land fit together? It would be the complete destruction of Israel - out of business as a nation, its people deported in large numbers to foreign lands - which would lead to the return of only a remnant.

Think About It: The folly of Assyria's boast would become

evident as the Lord used Israel to judge the Assyrians before
Himself severely judging Israel.

“Last-Minute Rescue”

Isaiah 10:24-34

Q - When have you ever witnessed a rescue which came about just in time to avert some disaster?

The Lord predicted through Isaiah that His people were going to be rescued from the approaching Assyrian enemy just short of disaster, then that they would be blessed to see the Lord bring judgment against their dreaded enemies.

I. The Lord’s Reassurance of His People 10:24-27

A. His Challenge Not to Fear the Assyrian 10:24

Q - What reason did the people of Judah have to fear the Assyrians? Not to fear the Assyrians? The Lord said not to fear them, but the Assyrians were close enough to strike them with a rod and lift up their staff against them.

B. His Assurance of Assyria’s Destruction 10:25-26

Q - What would the re-direction of God’s anger mean for Israel and Assyria? Because Assyria would become the object of the Lord’s anger, the people of Israel could expect to be rescued.

C. His Prediction of Relief for Israel 10:27

Q - What are we to understand by the Lord’s reference to Israel’s “fatness”? The nation would become large and strong enough to break the yoke imposed by the Assyrians.

II. The Lord’s Rehearsal of Assyrian’s Advance 10:28-32

Q - What would the movement of Assyrian troops from Aiath through Migron to Michmash mean (v. 28)? The Assy-

ian troops were moving closer and closer to Jerusalem.

Q - What would the movement of Assyrian troops to Ramah and Gibeah mean (v. 29)? With Ramah five miles from Jerusalem, and Gibeah three miles away, the troops of Assyria were closing in on the Jewish capital.

Q - What would the raised voices of the people of Gallim and Laishah and Anathoth signal (v. 30)? They would signal the distress of people threatened with destruction by Assyria.

Q - What would the flight of citizens of Madmenah and Gibem indicate (v. 31)? The flight of citizens from small cities just north of Jerusalem probably indicated that they were fleeing into the city of Jerusalem for protection.

Q - When did Assyrian forces, halted at Nob, ever shake their fist (v. 32) at the daughter of Zion? When Rabshakeh sent messengers to mock King Hezekiah and warn the Jewish citizens of Jerusalem not to place their trust in their king or the Lord in whom he was trusting (II Kings 19:8-13).

III. The Lord's Rejection of Assyria 10:33-34

A. His Plan to Trim Assyria's Boughs 10:33

Q What would God's plan to lop off the boughs of Assyria ("tall in stature" and "lofty") suggest about His intentions? He would judge the Assyrians, mighty as they (thought) they were.

B. His Plan to Cut Down Assyria's Thickets 10:34

Q - What would the Lord's cutting down of the thickets of the forests and of Lebanon itself suggest about His intentions? It anticipated His intention to bring defeat on the Assyrians.

Think About It: The Lord encouraged His people with the assurance that He was going to bring last-moment relief for

their nation through His judgment of the Assyrians.

“Better Times to Come”

Isaiah 11:1-10

Q - Whose leadership during your lifetime and experience has brought about the greatest changes for good?

Though Isaiah's people faced great difficulties in his day, with even greater difficulties to come, Isaiah could see ahead to a time when God would send a leader to make everything better - not only for Israel but for the whole world.

I. The Prediction of the Coming Branch 11:1-5

A - The Lineage of the Branch 11:1

Q - What would the shoot from Jesse's stem and branch from his roots signify? The would signify the rising up of someone from the line of Jesse, the line predicted for the Messiah, to rule over the people of God.

Q - What surprising result did Isaiah anticipate from this branch (cf. 6:13)? He anticipated that the branch which would rise from Jesse's root would bear fruit.

B. The Empowerment of the Branch 11:2

Q - What was to set this branch apart from any previous branch in Israel's experience? The Spirit of the Lord would rest upon Him for wisdom and understanding and counsel and strength and knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

C. The Righteousness of the Branch 11:3-5

1. His Delight in the Fear of the Lord 11:3

Q - Why would the branch's delight in the fear of the Lord better equip Him as a ruler? Delight in the fear of the Lord would result in righteous living and leadership because “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10).

2. His Enforcement of Righteousness 11:4-5

Q - Why is righteousness a desirable standard of judgment for those who are poor and afflicted? Righteousness is conformity with the will and word of God which brings about the best possible results for all for all concerned.

Q - In what way will the speech of the Branch improve conditions on earth? Striking the earth with the rod of His mouth will result in righteous behavior in response to His command.

II. The Prediction of Coming Peaceful Conditions 11:6-9

A. The Harmony to Come Among Disparate Creatures 11:6-8

Q - What would have to happen for the conditions described in these verses to come to pass? The curse of sin would have to be successfully addressed and reversed.

B. The Changes to Be Brought by the Knowledge of the Lord 11:9

Q - How could the knowledge of the Lord bring about the predicted results? Truly knowing the Lord would result in salvation from sin and conformity with His will and word.

III. The Attention of the Nations to the Root of Jesse 11:10

Q - What surprises does this verse reveal about this “root of Jesse”? He will have the attention of the nations and will bring glory about as a result of the rest which will characterize His place as a ruler.

Think About It: The coming of the Messiah to reign over the earth will bring about conditions entirely different than anything we know today or have ever known in human history.

“Better Days for Israel”

Isaiah 11:11-16

Q - Which peoples of earth would you judge to be among the least likely to settle their differences and live in harmony?

The peace which the Lord’s Messianic King will bring to earth will affect not only the individuals and animals of the earth (as described in 11:6-8) but also the former divisions of the people of Israel and the nations of the earth.

I. The Prediction of the Re-gathering of Israel 11:11-12

A. The Re-gathering of the Remnant 11:11

Q - To what time does Isaiah refer us with his mention of “that day”? The day in which the Messiah reigns (as in vv. 1-10).

Q - What two times of the re-gathering of Israel’s remnant might Isaiah have in mind? The re-gathering following the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and the re-gathering taking place in our day following the two-thousand year dispersion of Israel as a result of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

B. The Lifting of a Standard 11:12

Q - What might be the “standard” to which the nations as well as the people of Israel will be gathered? The standard of the reestablished nation of Israel under the leadership of their Messiah.

II. The Prediction of the Reuniting of Israel 11:13-14

A. The Reunion of Ephraim and Judah 11:13

Q - What have been the causes of the jealousy of Ephraim and the harassments of both Judah and Ephraim referred to in this verse? The geographical and spiritual differences which began to divide Israel north and south in the days of Kings Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

B. The Restoration of Ephraim and Judah to Power and Influence 11:14

Q - What will Ephraim and Judah accomplish together? They will expand their territory by military defeat of surrounding enemies.

Q - What is significant about the territory Isaiah mentions which Ephraim and Judah will control in that day? They are the territories originally promised to Israel by the Lord.

III. The Prediction of the Removal of Obstacles 11:15-16

A. The Rearrangement of the Red Sea and Euphrates River 11:15

Q - Why would God's destruction of "the tongue of the sea of Egypt" be significant to Jews returning to Israel? Though the Red Sea was an obstacle at the time of the exodus, it will not be an obstacle in Isaiah's predicted time.

Q - What would God's diffusion of the Euphrates River into small, easily forded streams mean to Israel? It would mean easy crossing for Jews returning from foreign lands to their own land.

B. The Highway from Assyria 11:16

Q - To what ancient miracle will Israel's future arrival in their land be comparable? It will be comparable to the miracle of Israel's departure from Egypt at the time of the exodus.

Think About It: The reign of Messiah will bring about the realignment of the peoples of Israel and of the Middle East as Israel returns to her homeland.

“Isaiah’s Hymn of Praise”

Isaiah 12:1-6

Q - Who stands out in your thinking among the many people you have encountered during your life who is most appreciative of the Lord?

The people of Israel have had their moments of deep appreciation for the Lord, though they have been far fewer than they should have been. But the day is coming, as the Prophet Isaiah reveals, when the Lord will finally receive the praise and appreciation He is due from His often ungrateful people of Israel.

I. Grateful Recognition of the Lord 12:1-3

A. Gratitude for the Lord’s Restrained Anger 12:1

Q - When does Isaiah’s reference to the time he has in mind place the praise of this passage? Isaiah’s reference to “in that day” places the fulfillment of this passage in the last days.

Q - Which moments of the Lord’s anger and turning from anger to comfort might future Israel be referring to in verse 1? They might be referring to the Lord’s anger in dispersing His people among the nations at the hands of Assyria, Babylon, and Rome - and other times of suffering like the Nazi holocaust.

B. Recognition of the Lord’s Salvation 12:2

Q - In what sense is the Lord the salvation of Israel? He is their salvation in having delivered them from various defeats and oppressions and, particularly, delivering those who trust Him from the wages of sin by the sacrifice of Christ.

Q - In what sense is the Lord God the strength and song of Israel? The Lord has exerted divine strength on their behalf in every rescue from enemies, human and spiritual, and has given

the nation many reasons to burst out in songs of appreciation.

C. Recognition of the People's Joy in Salvation 12:3

Q - What will be different in Israel's future experience, as described in this verse, from its past experience? Many Jews will find salvation in Christ - including ALL who enter the millennial kingdom.

II. Determined Recognition of the Lord 12:4-6

A. Determination to Make the Lord's Deeds Known 12:4

Q - What are likely to be among the most mentioned "deeds" of the Lord from the future perspective of this passage? The Lord's work in preserving and delivering Israel throughout its history and His work of saving them in Christ are the most likely deeds to be mentioned.

B. Recognition of the Lord's Excellent Deeds 12:5

Q - What are some of "the excellent things" which ought to be made known throughout the earth from this psalm's perspective in the future? The Lord's choosing the nation of Israel as His "chosen people;" preserving them; giving them their land; delivering them from powerful enemies and foreign dispersions; and providing salvation through Christ.

C. Recognition of the Lord's Greatness 12:6

Q - In what sense will the Lord be "great" and "in the midst of" the future inhabitants of Zion? The Lord, in Christ, will be messianic ruler of the world from His throne in the ancient city of Jerusalem.

Think About It: Isaiah anticipated the day when the people of Israel will recognize the Lord as their Savior - appreciating His deeds and His greatness as they should.

“Ruler of Nations”

Isaiah 13:1–5

Q - What modern nations would it seem to you the Lord should judge because of their sinful disregard for His ways and His people?

The Lord already had plans in the days of the Prophet Isaiah to act in judgment against foreign nations surrounding Israel - some of which were only beginning to come on the horizon of history as enemies of Israel which God would use to bring judgment upon His sinful people?

I. Introduction to Isaiah’s Oracle Concerning Babylon 13:1

Q - What made the nation of Babylon an appropriate subject for an oracle in Isaiah’s prophecy? Babylon was going to be significant in defeating and deporting the people of Israel.

II. Call to the Lord’s Chosen Warriors 12:2-3

A. The Call Extended 13:2

Q - What would be the significance of a “standard” raised up on a bare hill? The standard (flag) would serve as a signal to oncoming enemy warriors that the hill was under their control.

Q - Why did the Lord challenge through Isaiah to shout to the troops envisioned and to use hand signals to send them through the doors of the nobles? Isaiah was warning of enemy invasion in close quarters which would bring them into the very houses of the nobility of the nation of Babylon.

B. The Call Explained 13:3

Q - What do we learn from the Lord’s designation of future enemies of Babylon as His “consecrated ones”? The Lord sets

apart whomever He chooses to accomplish His purposes of judgment in the lives of sinning people.

Q - What did the people of Babylon have to fear from the Lord's "consecrated ones"? The Lord's "consecrated ones" were going to be used in executing God's anger against the sinful people of Babylon - after using Babylon to judge Israel.

III. Anticipation of the Lord's Judgment 13:4-5

A - The Sound of Gathering Armies 13:4

Q - What did the sound Isaiah described coming from the mountains indicate for Babylon? The sound of tumult was an ominous indication of hostilities which were going to take place in the mountains against the powerful Babylonians.

Q - What did the Lord's involvement in the process Isaiah described reveal? The Lord's involvement revealed His control over the affairs of even the most powerful nations.

B. The Source and Assignment of Gathering Armies 13:5

Q - From what "far country" was the Lord mustering His army - from which farthest horizons? He was mustering His army from among the Medes (and the Persians).

(Cf. 13:17)

Q - What was the Lord planning to accomplish through the foreign army which He consecrated to the fulfillment of His purposes? He was going to accomplish the destruction of the whole land of Babylon.

Think About It: The Lord rules in the affairs of nations to vent His anger and work His judgment against those who do not honor Him and His people.

“Bad News for Babylon - and Beyond!”

Isaiah 13:6-16

Q - Why is Babylon a likely choice to top Isaiah’s list of the nations destined to endure the “day of the LORD”?

Isaiah predicted a day when Babylon would be severely judged for her abuses, as an illustration of an even more serious time of the Lord’s judgment of the universe!

I. The Proximity and Purpose of the Day of the Lord 13:6

Q - What two reasons did Isaiah give to people for wailing? He said that the day of the Lord was near, and that it would result in destruction from the Almighty.

II. The Effect of the Day of the Lord 13:7-8

A. Its Impact Upon Hands and Hearts 13:7

Q - What kinds of things cause limp hands and melting hearts among people? Things which cause great fear effecting hands and hearts.

B. Its Impact Upon Minds and Bodies 13:8

Q - What could account for the pains associated with the day of the Lord? Significant danger and destruction would account for the pains associated with the day of the Lord.

C. Its Impact Upon the Land 13:9

Q - In what sense was the land to become a desolation? Its walls and buildings would be destroyed and its productivity interrupted and ended.

D. Its Impact Upon the Heavens 13:10

Q - What does the day of the Lord's effect on heavenly bodies reveal about it? It reveals at least diminished visibility; perhaps astronomical disturbances.

E. Its Impact Upon the World 13:11-12

Q - What does the world focus of these verses reveal about the day of the Lord Isaiah had in view? He had ultimately in view a day reaching far beyond only the land of Israel.

III. The Fury of the Day of the Lord 13:13-16

A. The Evidence of God's Fury 13:13

Q - What would the Lord's decision to shake the heavens and earth tell about His feelings? It would reveal His strong displeasure with what He was seeing take place on earth.

B. The Scattering Which Will Result from God's Fury 13:14

Q - To what lands might survivors of the day of the Lord be turning in their flight? They might be seeking refuge on their own property, or returning to lands from which they originated.

C. The Deaths Which Will Result from God's Fury 13:15

Q - To whom does this verse reveal the Lord will turn over the outworking of some of His fury? It reveals that He will turn the outworking of His fury over to enemy soldiers.

D. The Devastation Which Will Result from God's Fury 13:16

Q - What impressions does this verse give regarding the hostilities of the day in view? This verse gives the impression that hostilities will be carried out by inhumane invaders.

Think About It: The day of the Lord pictured by Isaiah spills

over the boundaries of God's judgment against Babylon to His end-time judgment of the earth!

“Medea on Assignment”

Isaiah 13:17-22

Q - What impressions come to your mind with the mention of the Babylonian empire?

Though the Babylonian empire became a mighty empire, Isaiah predicted that it wouldn't last very long or leave much behind to mark its place in middle eastern history because of God's judgment against it - and so it has turned out, of course!

I. The Instruments of the Lord's Judgment 13:17-18

A. God's Use of the Medea 13:17

Q - Are there any other Old Testament prophecies predicting the judgment of Babylon by the Medo-Persian Empire which come to your mind? The Lord's writing on the wall of the palace in Balshazzar's time (Daniel 5:28) comes to mind.

Q - What is significant about the Medean disinterest in silver and gold mentioned here? It suggests that the Medeans were obsessed with domination rather than enrichment.

B. The Practices of the Medeans 13:18

Q - What does Isaiah reveal about the methods to be used by the Medeans in their judgment of Babylon? The Medeans' inhumane tactics would show no respect for any human life.

II. The Outcome of the Lord's Judgment 13:19-22a

A. The Comparison with Sodom and Gomorrah 13:19

Q - What made the Babylonian kingdom worthy of note for beauty and glory? It featured large walls and impressive build-

ings and famous features like its hanging gardens.
(Cf. Daniel 4:30)

Q - What does the mention of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of Babylon's promised destruction add to Isaiah's prediction? It adds the thought of complete destruction from the hand of the Lord.

B. The Desolation of Babylon 13:20-22a

1. The Absence of Human Inhabitants 13:20

Q - What would signify the completeness of the Lord's judgment against Babylon? Babylon would be completely ruined and never inhabited again generation after generation.

2. The Presence of Animal Inhabitants 13:21-22a

Q - What is significant about the animals described as Babylon's future inhabitants? The animals are desert creatures which are found in desolate places.

III. The Timing of the Lord's Judgment 13:22b

Q - What are we to understand by the prediction that Babylon's "fateful time" would come soon and her days "not be prolonged"? Isaiah's prediction of Babylon's destruction would soon be fulfilled.

Think About It: The Lord promised quick and thorough judgment by the Medians upon the Babylonian empire which He would soon use to judge the people of Judah.

“End-Time Reversals”

Isaiah 14:1-11

Q - What is the most memorable reversal of fortunes you have ever experienced or witnessed?

Though there was a day when the people of Israel experienced severe judgment at the hand of the Babylonians and their leaders, there is coming a day when the Lord will give His people the upper hand over their persecutors!

I. The Lord's Compassion on Israel 14:1-2

A. Israel's Resettlement in Their Land 14:1

Q - What did Isaiah anticipate Israel's resettlement in their land would reveal about the Lord? He anticipated that Israel's resettlement would reveal the Lord's compassion in His continued choice of Israel.

Q - Why might strangers want to join Israel in their resettlement of their land? Strangers might want to join Israel in their resettlement of their land in view of the Lord's obvious blessing on the nation.

B. Israel's Upper Hand in Their Resettlement 14:2

Q - How did Isaiah anticipate things would change in Israel's future relationship with her neighbors? Isaiah anticipated that Israel would have the upper hand in relation to all of her neighbors who would become Israel's servants.

II. Israel's Taunt Against the King of Babylon 14:2-11

A. The Prediction of Their Rest 14:3

Q - What time does Isaiah apparently have in mind? The

day when the Lord gives Israel rest looks forward to the millennial kingdom age.

B. The Prediction of Their Taunt 14:4a

Q - Why would the king of Babylon be singled out for a taunt by the people of Israel? He would be singled out for a taunt because of Babylon's defeat and deportation of Israel.

C. The Text of Their Taunt 14:4b-11

1. The End of Oppression 14:4-6

Q - In what sense will the oppressor have ceased by the time Israel voices its taunt? The oppressor will have ceased as the millennial age begins fresh with Israel predominant on earth.

Q - In what sense will the Lord have broken the staff of the wicked and the scepter of rulers? None who are opposed to Israel will enter the millennial kingdom - occupied only by followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Sounds of Rejoicing 14:7-11

a. The Rejoicing of Earth 14:7-8

Q - What will be the cause of the earth and forests' rest and rejoicing? The millennial kingdom will begin with new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17).

b. The Rejoicing of Sheol 14:9

Q - Why will Sheol have cause to rejoice in the arrival of the king of Babylon? All who occupy Sheol will be happy to see those who led them there be judged as they are being judged.

c. The Rejoicing of Leaders 14:10-11

Q - What cause will other leaders have to rejoice in the misfortunes of the king of Babylon? They will finally see him oppressed as they were oppressed by him.

Think About It: Isaiah could look past Babylon's oppression of his people to the day when Babylon's demise would bring comfort to Israel and to other nations she persecuted.

“The Fall of Babylon’s King”

Isaiah 14:12-15

Q - Who is the person you have known to fall from the “loftiest” position to the “lowliest” - from honor to dishonor?

The ancient kings of the Babylonian Empire enjoyed splendor and honor until the Lord brought their kingdom to an untimely end and demoted the ruling king to ignominy - just as He will do, when all is said and done, to the one who ruled behind the scenes as the “real king” of Babylon (and who is still ruling behind the scenes today as the “god of this world”).

I. The Fall of Babylon’s King 14:12

Q - What would Isaiah’s description of the fall of the “star of the morning” mean if applied to the human king of the Babylonian empire? To the “real king” of Babylon? To the human king it would mean being demoted from his royal status to something lower; to the “real king” it would mean being demoted from his place of leadership over the angels in the heavens to somewhere lower - like the earth.

Q - In what sense was the human king of Babylon “cut down to the earth”? The “real king” of Babylon? The human king was lowered, for a time, to animal status (Daniel 4:28-33) and ultimately died; the “real king” was demoted from leadership in heaven over the angels to his position as “god of the earth.”

II. The Boast of Babylon’s King 14:13-14

Q - In what sense could the human king of Babylon (13a) “ascend above the heights of the clouds?” The “real king” of Babylon? The human king couldn’t “ascend above the heights of the clouds” in any real sense; the “real king” could attempt to ascend to a position of authority higher than the one he occupied at the time.

Q - In what sense could the human king of Babylon (13b) “raise his throne above the stars of God?” the “real king” of Babylon? The human king would be only dreaming of raising his throne above the stars of God, and the “real king” found that he could not exalt himself any higher than he had been exalted by the Lord.

Q - What would it mean for the human king of Babylon to (13c) “sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north?” the “real king” of Babylon? In Canaanite mythology the gods sat in assembly on a northern mountain (EHV Study Bible). The “real king” of Babylon desired to rule on the “mount of assembly” (Zion) where the Messiah will rule.

Q - What would it mean for the human king of Babylon (14a) to “ascend above the heights of the clouds”? The “real king” of Babylon? The human king could only imagine himself rising above humanity to god-like status - like the “real king” did when he sought to be elevated above his God-given status.

Q - What would it mean for anyone to (14b) “be like the Most High”? It is a logical impossibility for anyone to be like the Most High - to be like God Himself - because only one person can be highest of all.

III. The Destiny of Babylon’s King 14:15

Q - What would it mean for the human king of Babylon to be “thrust down to Sheol?” the “real king” of Babylon? It would mean death and burial and punishment in hell for the human king, and it would involve being cast out of heaven to earth, with eventual assignment to the lake of fire for the “real king.”

Think About It: The Lord predicted that the king of Babylon (and Satan, the malevolent power behind him) would fail to realize lofty ambitions and be thrust, instead, into Sheol and into the “recesses of the pit.”

“The Disgrace of Babylon’s King”

Isaiah 14:16-23

Q - What should we expect to have been the treatment of the body and the memory of the deceased emperor of the ancient Babylonian empire?

Because of the failure of the emperor of the Babylonian empire to please the Lord by his leadership over his own people and the peoples he subjugated, the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah to predict an ignominious end for both the Babylonian emperor and the Babylonian empire which once became so significant on the horizon of human history.

I. Amazement at Babylon’s King 14:16-17

Q - What do the questions of the people reveal about the view they would see of their once glorious king? They would be surprised at the now inglorious fate of a man once so great.

Q - What is significant about Isaiah’s mention of the king’s refusal to allow his prisoners to go home? Babylonia deported many people from defeated nations to subdue any rebellion.

II. The Exposure of Babylon’s King 14:18-19

A. The Normal Experience of Kings 14:18

Q - What are some noteworthy examples of the norm Isaiah cites in burying the kings of earth? The Great Pyramid in Egypt, the tomb of Napoleon Bonaparte in France, and the Taj Majal in India are examples of tombs of famous people.

B. The Abnormal Experience of Babylon’s King 14:19

Q - What did Isaiah predict would be the experience of the king of Babylon as far as burial? He predicted that the king would be thrown out of his tomb like a rejected branch.

III. The Failures of Babylon's King 14:20a

A. The Ruin of His Country 14:20a

Q - In what sense could it be said that the king of Babylon "ruined" his country? He was known to have abused his authority in acts of cruelty toward his citizens (Clarke).

B. The Slaughter of His People 14:20a

Q - Can you cite any examples of the slaughter of people who were under the rule of the king of Babylon? Jamieson-Faucett-Brown cite Xenophon (Cyropaedia 4.6,3; 7.5, 32) to the effect that "Belshazzar oppressed his land with wars and tyranny, so that he was much hated."

IV. The Judgment of Babylon's King 14:20b-22

A. The Judgment of His Offspring 14:20b-21

Q - Why were the sons of the king of Babylon to share his ignoble fate? As the "offspring of evildoers" they would be slaughtered because of the iniquity of their fathers.

B. The Judgment of His City 14:22-23

Q - What did Isaiah foresee as the future of Babylon? Babylon was to be destroyed, without survivors, offspring, and posterity as the possession of the hedgehog and of swamps of water.

Conclusion: The Lord destined Babylon's king, his family and his kingdom for ignominy and destruction because of his failure to rule people righteously.

“Beware Assyria and Earth”

Isaiah 14:24-27

Q - What would the ability to control the Assyrian empire, bringing about its destruction, reveal about the one doing it?

Isaiah predicted that the Assyrian Empire, which threatened Judah and decimated northern Israel in his day, was going to be destroyed by the Lord in His own land and on His own mountains as a precursor to the Lord’s judgment against all the nations of earth.

I. The Lord’s Intention for Assyria 14:24-25

A. His Determination 14:24

Q - What are we to learn when the Lord states His determination and backs it by an oath? We are to learn that the Lord is sovereign in His control of the affairs of men and the earth.

B. His Plan for Assyria 14:25

1. To Break Assyria in Israel 14:25a

Q - What was the likelihood that Assyria would be broken in the land of Israel in Isaiah’s day? As the nation which overran Northern Israel it seemed unlikely that Assyria would be broken in the land of Israel in Isaiah’s day.

2. To Trample Assyria on His Mountains 14:25b

Q - What is added to the opening statement of verse 25 by the revelation that Assyria would be “trampled” on the Lord’s mountains? Assyria’s defeat on the mountains of Israel was to be humiliating in its severity.

3. To Remove Assyria’s Yoke from Israel 14:25c

Q - What impact was Assyria's "yoke" having upon the people of Israel in Isaiah's day? Assyria had defeated Northern Israel and was threatening Judah.

4. To Remove Assyria's Burden from Israel 14:25d

Q - What would the removal of Assyria's burden from Israel's shoulder require? It would require diminished influence and even defeat of the Assyrian empire.

II. The Lord's Intention for Earth 14:26-27

A. His Plan for the Earth 14:26

Q - What plan are we to understand that the Lord has in mind for the whole earth? The Lord has in mind the defeat of every earthly threat against His people and His plan.

Q - When, according to your understanding, is the Lord's plan to be realized? It is my understanding that the Lord's plan will be realized in the end times as a result of His crushing judgments throughout the tribulation.

(Cf. Ezekiel 38:17-23)

B. His Determination 14:27

Q - What is the effect of Isaiah's two questions in this verse? Isaiah's two questions assert and assure the Lord's sovereignty over the earth.

Think About It: Just as the Lord determined to destroy Assyria in His land (in Isaiah's day), so He intends to do to the nations of the whole earth (at the end of the age).

“Beware Philistia”

Isaiah 14:28-32

Q - What comes to mind when you think of the Biblical record of relations between Israel and the Philistines?

Isaiah predicted in his day that the Philistines should not get too excited about a temporary reprieve from their enemies to their north, a reprieve which would be followed by further oppression from the north and the end of the Philistine nation.

I. Introduction to Isaiah’s Oracle 14:28

Q - What is the value of Isaiah’s mention of the death of King Ahaz in connection with this prophecy? It pins down the time of the prophecy (probably 715 B.C.) to the end of a weak reign in which Judah had become a puppet state to Assyria.

II. Prediction for Philistia 14:29-31

A. The Breaking of a Former Rod 14:29a

Q - What might have been the “rod,” now broken, that struck Philistia? Either Judah (oppressed by Assyria) or Assyria itself (whose empire was under threat when Sargon reigned).

B. The Anticipation of a Future Viper 14:29b

Q - What was Philistia to anticipate in the years ahead? Further attacks by succeeding Assyrian emperors.

C. Provision for the Helpless and Needy 14:30a

Q - Who might have been enjoying security while the Philistine nation was being destroyed? The people of Judah, guarded against the Assyrians by the Lord.

D. Destruction of the Root and Remainder 14:30b

Q - What would the destruction of Philistia's root indicate for her future? It would indicate the end of Philistia.

E. Dirge for the Philistines 14:31

Q - Why should the gates and cities of Philistia be called upon to wail? The gates would be breached by the Assyrians.

Q - What was the likely significance of the smoke Isaiah anticipated coming from the north? The destructive influence of Assyria as it made its way toward Philistia.

III. Encouragement for Israel 14:32

A. The Stability of Zion 14:32a

Q - What messengers might have needed to be answered? The threatening messengers of the Assyrian army.

Q - What is the significance of the Lord's founding of Zion? What the Lord founds is solidly founded and destined for security - unless He determines otherwise.

B. The Security of Zion 14:32b

Q - What is significant in this context about "afflicted people" seeking refuge in Zion? Zion would remain secure while others in the region would fall to the enemy, so people under attack could find refuge in Israel.

Think About It: The Lord promised destruction for Philistia out of the north but security for His own people in Zion.

“Devastation for Moab”

Isaiah 15:1-9

Q - How does it feel to see an enemy get the punishment they deserve?

Isaiah prophesied of coming judgment upon the land of Moab, perpetual enemies of the nation of Israel, expressing sorrow over the extent of the suffering which would take place as a result of both human and divine judgment.

I. Prediction of the Devastation of Moab 15:1-4

A. The Devastation of Ar and Kir 15:1

Q - What is significant about the references to time in verse 1 for both the cities of Ar and Kir? The destruction of these cities would take place overnight.

B. The Devastation of Dibon, Nebo and Medeba 15:2-3

Q - What would the Moabites' weeping at their temple and high places (v. 2) reveal? It would reveal the worthlessness of their “gods” and their defeat by enemies.

Q - What is significant about the bald heads, shaved beards (v. 2), sackcloth and housetop wailing (v. 3) Isaiah refers to? They are all signs of the grief Moab would experience in the face of defeat.

C. The Devastation of Heshbon and Elealeh 15:4

Q - What would be the significance of cries from Heshbon and Elealah (east of the northern tip of the Dead Sea) being

heard at Jahaz (just north of the Arnon River)? The sounds of the defeat of King Sihon's capital would be heard many miles away.

Q - What do the cries of the armed men mentioned in this verse reveal? They reveal their defeat in armed conflict.

II. Sorrow Over the Devastation of Moab 15:5-9

A. Sorrow for Moab's Fugitives 15:5

Q - What do the feelings expressed about the plight of Israel's enemy Moab reveal about the one feeling them? They reveal Isaiah's sadness over the defeat of a related nation.

Q - What would the arrival of fugitives at Zoar reveal about Moab's plight? They would reveal the sorrows of a defeated people seeking refuge from their enemies.

B. Desolation of the Waters of Nimrim 15:6

Q - What would the conditions described in verse 6 mean to fleeing Moabite refugees? They would mean greater difficulty in flight because of a lack of the necessary resource of water.

C. Preserving the Wealth of Moab 15:7

Q - Who does this verse picture carrying off Moab's abundance? It pictures the Moabites seeking to preserve their former abundance by taking it with them in flight.

D. Extent of the Distress of Moab 15:8-9

Q - What would the suggestion that Eglaim was at the southern border of Moab and Beer-elim near the northern

border (cf. Numbers 21:6) add to our understanding of Isaiah's point in verse 8? The cry of Moab's distress was heard from border to border - throughout the whole land.

Q - What does verse 9 reveal of Moab's future prospects? The future prospects of Moab were very dim because of death and disaster in their experience.

Think About It: Isaiah predicted the devastation of Israel's neighbor, Moab, expressing personal sorrow over the suffering the nation would experience.

“Fading Hope for Moab”

Isaiah 16:1-14

Q - What is the most destructive thing you have ever seen pride bring about?

Isaiah predicted that Moab’s request for help from the people of Judah would not be granted because of Moab’s pride, leaving the nation scattered and impoverished and saddened and decimated.

I. The Request of Moab’s Refugees for Assistance 16:1-5

A. The Refugees’ Tribute Lamb 16:1

Q - What would be the purpose of a tribute lamb sent by Moab to Israel? It would be evidence of Moab’s submission to the nation of Israel.

B. The Refugees’ Plight 16:2

Q - How did Isaiah picture the plight of Moab as they sought help from the people of Israel? He pictured the women of Moab fleeing at the fords of the Arnon like birds or scattered nestlings.

C. The Refugees’ Request 16:3-4

Q - What was Moab hoping the people of Israel would do for their people? Moab was hoping the people of Israel would take in their people as refugees seeking protection from the destroyer.

Q - What had happened to enable the people of Israel to

become a shelter for the people of Moab? The oppressor was no longer the threat to Israel which they were to Moab.

D. The Refugees' Hope 16:5

Q - What was the real basis of Moab's hope in turning to the people of Israel in their time of need? The ultimate rule of the Messiah over the nation of Israel was the real basis for hope.

II. The Request of Moab's Refugees Denied 16:6-12

A. The Report of Moab's Pride 16:6

Q - What were the sins of which Moab was accused? The sins of arrogance, pride and fury were the sins of Moab.

B. The Prediction of Moab's Plight 16:7-8

Q - What was to be the cause of wailing in Moab? Their utter destruction and the devastation of their land would leave them wailing for the better times and things of the past.

C. Weeping Over Moab's Plight 16:9-11

Q - Who was going to join in weeping over Moab, and why? The Lord Himself was going to join in weeping over Moab because of its devastation and loss.

D. The Request of Moab Denied 16:12

Q - What was **not** lacking in Moab's request for help? Their ongoing dependence on their false "gods" was not lacking.

III. The Future of Moab's Refugees Predicted 16:13-14

Q - What was to happen to Moab within three years?

Moab's glory would be degraded and her population diminished and weakened.

Think About It: Isaiah predicted that Moab's hope for help from Judah was not to be realized, leading to the degradation of the nation in size and power.

“The Outlook for Aram and Ephraim”

Isaiah 17:1-14

Q - Why might the Lord have spoken to Syria and northern Israel in the same prophecy rather than individually as with other nations?

Both Aram (Syria) and Ephraim (northern Israel), which sometimes teamed up against Judah (cf. Isaiah 7:1), were addressed together as nations which would be judged by the Assyrians but would live to see the Assyrian nation eliminated from the face of the earth - just as Isaiah predicted.

I. The Oracle Concerning Aram and Ephraim 17:1-3

A. The Difficulty for Damascus 17:1-2

Q - What did Isaiah anticipate in the future of Damascus?
He anticipated its desertion and removal as a city - a fallen ruin.

B. The Decline of Ephraim and Aram 17:3

Q - What are the signs of the decline of Ephraim and Aram Isaiah lists in this verse? He writes of the disappearance of fortified cities from Ephraim and of the loss of sovereignty in Damascus.

II. The Prospects for Northern Israel 17:4-11

A. Jacob's Declining Condition 17:4-6

Q - What historical event is primarily in view in verse 4?
The defeat and deportation of many Israelites by the Assyrians.

Q - How do Isaiah's symbols in verses 5-6 illustrate his

point? They depict the stripping of a fruit harvest, leaving only a few fruits in the uppermost branches - as the Assyrians did.

B. Jacob's Regard for the Lord 17:7-8

Q - What would be the cause of man's regard for His Maker (v. 7)? It would be man's desperation as a result of the Lord's judgment against His people.

Q - What would cause the people of Israel to turn from the worship of idols described in verse 8? The failure of false gods to deliver the people from the judgment of the Lord would cause people to turn from failed "gods."

C. Jacob's Desolation 17:9-11

Q - What was to be the human cause of the desolation of Israel (v. 9)? The defeat of Israel and Aram by the Assyrians.

Q - What was the actual cause of the desolation of Israel as described in v. 10? Israel's departure from and judgment by the Lord.

Q - What was all of Israel's careful effort in living their national life (v. 11) going to amount to? Their efforts to achieve a harvest were going to fail in sickness and pain.

III. The Prediction for the Nations 17:12-14

Q - What does the "uproar" of verse 12 anticipate? It anticipates the rebellion of earth's nations against the Lord.

Q - What does verse 13 indicate was going to become of the "uproar" of these verses? The nations' uproar in rebellion against the Lord will be rebuked and defeated.

Q - What was to be the final outcome for the nations causing Israel's distress (v. 14)? The final outcome will be the destruction of the nations who have opposed Israel.

Think About It: Isaiah predicted, for the Lord, the judgment - but not the destruction - of both Syria and Northern Israel by nations who would themselves be destroyed after "rumbling" through the region.

“God’s Message for Ethiopia”

Isaiah 18:1-7

Q - How would you feel if your neighbor apprehended a thief who was prowling through your neighborhood?

The eighteenth chapter of Isaiah, though it is full of interpretive questions, apparently describes the response of Ethiopia to the threat presented by the Assyrian Empire to nations in their vicinity.

I. Ethiopia’s Messengers 18:1-2

A. The Word of Woe to Cush 18:1

Q - Why might the land of Cush (ancient Ethiopia) appropriately be described as a “land of whirring wings”? It was a land which included many flying insects.

B. The Arrival of Messengers 18:2a

Q - To whom does this verse apparently picture the Ethiopians sending envoys, and why? It apparently pictures the Ethiopians sending envoys to Israel.

C. The Response to Messengers 18:2b

Q - Where did the Lord, through Isaiah, apparently tell His people to go? He apparently instructed “swift messengers” of Israel to go to a nation tall and smooth, to a land divided by rivers (tributaries of the Nile) - to Ethiopia.

II. Anticipation of God’s Standard 18:3

Q - To whom is verse three addressed? It is addressed to the whole earth.

Q - Who are we to understand was going to raise the standard and blow the trumpet mentioned in this verse? The Lord was going to raise the standard and blow the trumpet.

III. The Lord's Harvest Activities 18:4-6

A. The Lord's Gaze Predicted 18:4

Q - What does Isaiah's description of the Lord's outlook on the situation tell us about Him? He awaits quietly, during both dazzling heat and refreshing dew, to fulfill His purposes.

B. The Lord's Pruning Predicted 18:5

Q - What is noteworthy about the Lord's pruning activities described in this verse? Because His pruning activities take place before the harvest, it appears to be premature - ruining the anticipated grape harvest.

C. The Creatures' Feast Predicted 18:6

Q - What is unusual about the harvest which is pictured in this verse? The harvesting is done by wild animals instead of the farmers for whom it was intended.

IV. Ethiopia's Future Gift to the Lord 18:7

Q - How did Isaiah predict the Ethiopians would respond to the Lord's dealings with the Assyrians? He predicted that they would bring a gift of homage to the Lord of Hosts at Mount Zion.

Cf. II Chronicles 32:22-23

Think About It: The Lord spoke through Isaiah to Ethiopians, who apparently wanted an alliance with Judah against Assyria, about His own plans for dealing with the Assyrian threat.

“Difficult Days for Egypt”

Isaiah 19:1-10

Q - What comes first to your mind when you think of the relationship between the nations of Egypt and Israel?

Though Egypt once played a major role in the life of Israel as master over his slave, Isaiah saw the day when the Lord would send confusion and conquest and difficulty into the experience of the Egyptians.

I. The Lord’s Coming to Egypt 19:1-4

A. The Lord’s Arrival in Egypt 19:1

Q - What does the Lord’s “chariot,” along with the response of Egypt’s idols and people, suggest about Him? It suggests that He is coming in conquest, and that the idols of Egypt are powerless in the face of His arrival.

B. The Lord’s Activity in Egypt 19:2-4

Q - When might the Lord have fulfilled the prediction of verse 2 concerning the Egyptians? A note in the Holman NKJV Study Bible reports that “During much of the eighth century Egypt was at war with itself. There were conflicts between the power centers at Zoan (Tanis), No (Thebes) and in the delta.”

Q - How did Isaiah predict the Egyptians would demonstrate their demoralized condition in verse 3? The Egyptians would resort to idols and ghosts of the dead and to mediums and spiritists in their desperate search for help.

Q - Which “cruel master” could Isaiah have been anticipating as ruler over the Egyptians in verse 4? Isaiah could have been anticipating the rule of the king of Assyria (Esarhaddon), who conquered Egypt in 670 B.C. (Cf. 20:4).

II. The Lord’s Judgment Against Egypt 19:5-10

A. His Drying Up of the Waters 19:5-7

Q - What “sea” was likely to dry up with the drying up of the “river” mentioned in verse 5? Apparently the confluence of the Nile and the Mediterranean Sea in the Nile delta.

Q - What would be the likely impact of the drying up of canals and streams and the rotting of reeds and rushes throughout Egypt as described in verse 6? The many people who depend on water and the plants the water sustained would be impoverished and desperate.

Q - Why would verse 7’s drying of bulrushes by the Nile be significant? The drying of sown fields by the Nile? The Nile Delta was the economic lifeblood of Egypt - so the absence of water would dry up major food supply and commerce there.

B. The Difficulties of the People 19:8-10

Q - What is significant about the lamentation of Egypt’s fishermen described in verse 8? Their lamentation would be the result of low waters in the Delta and low numbers of the fish which normally filled the waters - diminishing their livelihood.

Q - Why should manufacturers and weavers of verse 9 be dejected? The fabrics used in their work would be lacking due to the absence of plants used to create them and the water

needed to process their flax.

Q - Who would likely be described as the “pillars” of Egypt (v. 10, NASB) in apparent contrast with the “hired laborers”?
The “pillars” of Egypt would likely be the nation’s leaders.

Think About It: The Lord spoke through Isaiah to predict judgment upon the land and people of Egypt, as well as its idols, by means of confusion, conquest and drought.

“The Demise of the Wise Guys”

Isaiah 19:11-17

Q - What comes to your mind when you think of the “wise men” of Egypt?

The prophet Isaiah predicted a day when Egypt’s fame as a depository of wisdom would fade and Egypt’s earlier domination of Judah would be turned to fear of Judah by the hand of the Lord.

I. The Challenge to Egypt’s Wise Men 19:11-15

A - The Failure of Pharaoh’s Advisors 19:11

Q - What crisis has Isaiah described in chapter 19 which even the princes of the Nile Delta city of Zoan (capital for the 25th dynasty) and other wise men of Pharaoh had no solution? The oppression of a “cruel master” (v. 4) and judgment from the Lord.

B. The Challenge to Pharaoh’s Advisors 19:12

Q - What were the advisors of Egypt up against which rendered their wisdom inadequate? They were up against the purposes of the Lord of Hosts for Egypt.

C. The Folly of Pharaoh’s Advisors 19:13

Q - What did Isaiah identify as the problem Pharaoh’s “cornerstone” advisers were creating for Egypt? He said these cornerstones were leading Egypt astray by their counsel.

D. The Problem with Pharaoh’s Advisors 19:14

Q - What, in addition to their normal inadequacies as mere human beings, further devalued the wisdom of Egypt's wise men? A "spirit of distortion" sent by the Lord against Egypt devalued their acclaimed wisdom.

E. The Unemployment of Egypt's People 19:15

Q - Whose unemployment does Isaiah anticipate by his reference to "head or tail, palm branch or bulrush?" Isaiah anticipated the unemployment of the leaders of Egypt by his reference to "head or tail, palm branch or bulrush."

(Cf. 9:14-15)

II. The Lord's Hand Against Egypt 19:16-17

A. Their Fear of the Lord's Hand 19:16

Q - What day does Isaiah apparently have in mind by his reference to "that day" when the Egyptians will be in dread of the hand of the Lord? He apparently has in mind a coming "day of the Lord" (probably the millennial "day of the Lord") when Israel will dominate Egypt.

B. Their Fear of the Land of Judah 19:17

Q - To what did Isaiah attribute the fear the Egyptians would feel toward the land of Judah? He attributed the Egyptians' fear to the "purpose of the Lord."

Think About It: The Lord spoke through Isaiah of a day when Egypt would be sadly lacking in wisdom and terribly afraid of the Lord and His people because of the Lord's hand against them.

“Unlikely Alliances”

Isaiah 19:18-25

Q - How likely does it appear to you that Egypt, Israel and Iraq will live in harmony any time soon?

Isaiah addressed Egypt in days when she was unsuccessfully seeking alliance with Israel against their common enemy Assyria. The same middle-east regions, of course, are at odds with one another in our day. But Isaiah could see better days to come on the prophetic horizon.

I. Isaiah's Prediction of Egyptian Cities Speaking Hebrew 19:18

Q - What might Egyptian cities speaking Hebrew signify? It might signify the conversion of entire Egyptian cities to the Lord and to friendship with His people Israel.

Q - What might be the significance of Egypt's “City of Destruction”? Because the Hebrew word for destruction is close to the word for the sun it might be an intentional corruption of the Hebrew word for sun as a reference to Heliopolis, center of the worship of the sun god.

(see Nelson Study Bible note)

II. Isaiah's Prediction of Egypt's Altar and Pillar to the Lord 19:19-22

A. The Fact of Egypt's Altar and Pillar 19:19

Q - What would be the significance of the altar and pillar mentioned in this verse? It would seem to anticipate the worship of the Lord by Egyptians in harmony with their

neighbors in Judah.

B. The Sign and Benefit of Egypt's Altar and Pillar 19:20-21

Q - Who was Isaiah apparently anticipating as Egypt's deliverer? He was anticipating deliverance by the Lord, most likely in the person of the Messiah Jesus.

C. The Dealings of the Lord with Egypt 19:22

Q - How might the Lord strike Egypt in the event of rebellion on their part? He might use plagues, as in the days of Moses, or oppressors, as mentioned in verse 20.

Cf. Zechariah 14:17-19

III. Isaiah's Prediction of Egypt's Highway to Assyria 19:23

Q - What is it that made Isaiah's prediction in this verse of a highway from Egypt to Assyria surprising? Assyria had threatened Egypt and other nations in the area with conquest.

IV. Isaiah's Prediction of Egypt's Partnership with Israel and Assyria 19:24-25

Q - What would it take for Israel, Egypt and Assyria to be "a blessing in the midst of the earth"? It would take true spiritual awakening in each of the countries, leading to common worship of the Lord.

Q - What would have been surprising to Isaiah's people about the formula for the Lord's blessing in verse 25? They would have been surprised to hear the Lord blessing Egypt and Assyria - two of their enemies.

Q - What indication do we have of the time frame of this prophecy? The repeated phrase “in that day” (vv. 18, 25) looks forward to a future time from Isaiah’s perspective - telling of conditions which have not yet existed, so must be future still.

Think About It: Isaiah was privileged to see ahead from days of hostility between Egypt, Assyria and Israel to a day when all three will be in harmony at the center of the Lord’s blessing on earth.

“Humiliation Ahead”

Isaiah 20:1-6

Q - What are some of the hardest or most surprising things you can recall the Lord ever asking anyone to do?

The Lord instructed His prophet Isaiah to endure a humiliating experience as an object lesson for Egypt and Ethiopia (“Cush”) - a visual prediction of the treatment they would experience at the hand of their Assyrian captors.

I. The Lord’s Instruction to Isaiah 20:1-2

A. The Time of the Lord’s Instruction 20:1

Q - Why do the events of this verse provide a fitting context for the Lord’s message to Egypt and Ethiopia? They speak of the time when Assyria was progressing in their direction as Philistine strongholds along the Mediterranean coast were being conquered.

B. The Text of the Lord’s Instruction 20:2

Q - What do you find surprising about the Lord’s instruction to His prophet? It seems surprising that the Lord would instruct Isaiah to expose himself in seeming indecency.

Q - What does Isaiah’s response to the Lord’s instruction reveal about Him? His response demonstrates His unquestioning obedience to the instructions of the Lord - including his willingness to submit himself to humiliation on His behalf.

II. The Lord’s Message through Isaiah 20:3-6

A. The Subjects of the Message 20:3

Q - Why might the Lord have instructed Isaiah to do what He did in the land of Israel if he was to be “a sign and token against Egypt and Cush”? Because Egypt and Cush were seeking alliance with Judah against the Assyrian threat, their envoys would be aware of what was happening in Judah.

B. The Substance of the Message 20:4-6

1. The Exile of Assyrian Captives 20:4

Q - What was the point the Lord was going to use the nation of Assyria to drive home in Egypt? No alliance Egypt would make was going to keep them from defeat by the Assyrians.

2. The Shame of Assyrian Captives 20:5

Q - What were the captives who were taken to Assyria to learn from their experience? They were to experience shame for having trusted Cush and Egypt to protect them.

3. The Question of the People of the Coastlands 20:6

Q - Who are the “inhabitants of this coastland” Isaiah refers to in the sixth verse? The inhabitants of lands along the south-eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Q - What were the inhabitants of the coastland going to learn from their experience? They would learn that they had placed their hope in the wrong deliverer.

Think About It: Isaiah predicted visually and verbally the humiliation of Egypt and Ethiopia (and others who were allied

with them) who would be exiled as captives of the Assyrians.

“More Bad News for Babylon”

Isaiah 21:1-10

Q - What are some of the reasons people repeat things they have already said?

Though He has already spoken through His prophet Isaiah of the fate of Babylon (Isaiah 13:1-14:27), the Lord sent Isaiah another oracle of His coming judgment of the rising Babylonian empire.

I. Introduction to Isaiah’s Oracle 21:2-4

Q - What would make “the wilderness of the sea” an appropriate designation for Babylon? The Lord was anticipating the desertion and “drowning” of Babylon.

II. The Nature of Isaiah’s Oracle 21:2-4

A. Isaiah’s Description of His Vision 21:2

Q - What flaw did Isaiah’s “harsh vision” reveal regarding Babylon? Babylon was a treacherous nation, eventually to be judged by Elam and the Medians.

Q - What do Isaiah’s references to Elam and Media reveal? They reveal that Elam and Media would eventually play a role in the judgment and destruction of Babylon.

B. Isaiah’s Reaction to His Vision 21:3-4

Q - Why do you imagine Isaiah responded as strongly as described in these verses? Isaiah (like other prophets) was able to identify with the pain of the destruction of even enemy

nations.

Cf. 15:5; 16:11

III. The Content of Isaiah's Oracle 21:5-10

A. Preparation for the Battle 21:5

Q - Who is apparently eating the meal described in this verse? Babylon's conquerors, the Medo-Persians, are seen preparing for their "meal."

Q - Why is Isaiah encouraging the captains to oil their shields? They will need their shields in good shape, oiled to keep them from cracking in the upcoming battles.

B. Instruction for the Lookout 21:6-7

1. Placement of the Lookout 21:6

Q - What does the stationing of the lookout anticipate? It anticipates the danger of an oncoming threat or attack.

2. Attention of the Lookout 21:7

Q - Why should the lookout pay such close attention to the scene described? There is evidence of an approaching danger from riders, pairs of horsemen, and trains of donkeys and camels.

C. Outcry of the Lookout 21:8-9a

Q - What does the lookout's claim (v. 8) suggest? The lookout claims to have kept watch around the clock without any sign of apparent danger yet to report.

Q - What does the lookout's report in verse 9a anticipate?
It anticipates the fall of Babylon and the judgment of the gods of Babylon.

D. Outcome of the Battle 21:9b-10

Q - What did the Lord predict through Isaiah as the outcome of the battle? It predicted the threshing of God's people, Judah, and the destruction of Babylon and its gods.

Think About It: Isaiah's repeated warning of the upcoming destruction of Babylon (seen earlier in chapter 13) re-emphasizes the Lord's knowledge and control of future events.

“Long Nights for Edom and Arabia”

Isaiah 21:11-17

Q - What is the most challenging night-time experience you can recall going through?

The Lord revealed to Isaiah that there were going to be some anxious and difficult nights for both Edom and Arabia as a result of enemy activity in their region of the world.

I. Oracle Against Edom 21:11-12

A. The Question of the Watchman 21:11

Q - What does the repeated calling of the one from Seir (Edom) reveal about conditions to be expected there? It reveals anxiety on the part of the one calling as he anticipates daylight.

B. The Response of the Watchman 21:12

Q - What might the arrival of morning and the return of the night, about which Edom was anxious, anticipate in Edom's experience? It anticipated ongoing anxiety from day to day regarding Edom's security in view of an enemy threat.

II. Oracle Against Arabia 21:13-17

A. The Caravan's Resting Place 21:13

Q - What might lead a caravan to spend the night in a thicket? They might be seeking security from danger they are concerned about on their normal caravan route.

B. The Caravan's Provisions 21:14

Q - What further revelation does this verse contain about the thicket dwellers of verse 13? They are called upon to help provide water and bread for fugitives of war in the region.

C. The Flight of the Caravans 21:15

Q - Who was most likely the cause of the flight of the Dedanites? From the larger context, the expansionist aims of Babylon would likely be the cause of the anxiety of Arabian traders.

D. The Future of Kedar 21:16-17

1. The Termination of Its Splendor 21:16

Q - What is the point of Isaiah's reference to a year "as a hired man would count it?" The year envisioned will be a year of anxiety as the inhabitants of Kedar precisely count the "hours."

Q - What would the termination of Kedar's splendor reveal? It would reveal its subjugation and degradation at the hands of oncoming enemy warriors.

2. The Decimation of Its Population 21:17

Q - What would the reduction in the number of Kedar's bowmen indicate? Their reduction would anticipate the defeat and, in many cases, the destruction of the bowmen of Kedar.

Q - What is significant about the closing phrase of the seventeenth verse? It reveals the Lord's sovereign control over the affairs of nations and their prosperity or humiliation.

Think About It: The Lord reemphasized His knowledge and

control by revealing to Isaiah that both Edom and Arabia would be decimated by attacking enemies - first in the near future, and then again at a later time.

“Oracle Against Jerusalem”

Isaiah 22:1-11

Q - How can any nation best prepare for an anticipated enemy attack?

Isaiah anticipated, in Isaiah 22, an enemy attack against Jerusalem for which his people would not be ready.

I. Conditions in Jerusalem 22:1-3

Q - What is ironic, if not sarcastic, about Isaiah’s designation of Jerusalem in verse 1? His designation of Jerusalem as the “valley of vision” would seem to imply foresight on the part of its inhabitants - foresight which they clearly did not possess.

Q - Why might the people of Israel have been on their housetops? They may have been seeking a better view of their situation and hoping to be able to better defend themselves from behind the banisters on the tops of their houses.

Q - Why might Jerusalem’s slain not have been slain with the sword in battle (v. 2)? They may have died as a result of famine and disease under siege conditions.

Q - What should Jerusalem’s rulers have been doing instead of what Isaiah predicted they were going to do in verse 3? They should have been seeking the Lord’s help in defending their city/nation instead of fleeing in hope of saving their lives.

II. Sadness Concerning Jerusalem 22:4-5

Q - Why was it not worth the effort to try to comfort Isaiah (v. 4)? Isaiah was deeply committed to and concerned for the

well-being of his city and nation in the face of disaster.

Q - What does verse 5 reveal was at the bottom of Jerusalem's coming judgment? The Lord of Hosts planned a day of panic, subjugation, and confusion for Jerusalem.

III. Enemies of Jerusalem 22:6-11a

A. Preparations of the Enemies 22:6

Q - What region were Jerusalem's anticipated enemies going to come from? They were going to come from the region east of the Euphrates River - probably Persia.
(Cf. 21:1)

B. Vulnerability of Jerusalem 22:7

Q - What did Isaiah see as the outcome of Jerusalem's day of judgment? He saw Jerusalem's valleys full of chariots, with horsemen positioned at the city gates.

C. Judgment Against Jerusalem 22:9-11a

Q - What does verse 8 indicate would make Jerusalem's defenses inadequate? The Lord was going to remove Jerusalem's defenses as they relied on their armaments.

Q - What would the "many breaches" verse 9 predicts in Jerusalem's wall reveal? The "many breaches" would signal the success of the enemy in entering Jerusalem from many angles.

Q - What inadequate steps do verses 9b-11a reveal Jerusalem would take to defend herself? Jerusalem would tear down houses to re-fortify the city walls and try to store water for the

people's needs.

IV. Failure of Jerusalem 22:11b

Q - What would assure the doom of Jerusalem? The city's failure to depend on the Lord and His plans for their defense would assure its doom.

Think About It: Jerusalem would be overpowered by enemies she was not prepared to fight because of her failure to trust in the Lord.

Apply It: No amount of military preparation can equal the benefit of trusting and obeying the Lord in challenging times.

“Jerusalem’s Judgment Assured”

Isaiah 22:12-14

Q - What generally happens to people who believe their problems will go away if they just ignore them?

The Lord spoke through His servant Isaiah to assure and reassure the people of Jerusalem that they were going to experience the long-promised judgment from His hand - whether they took steps to be prepared for it or not! Now it was Isaiah’s unpleasant task to announce that they were past “the point of no return.”

I. The Lord’s Calling for Jerusalem 22:12-13

A. The Calling of the Lord 22:12

1. The Time of His Calling 22:12a

Q - To what time does the reference “in that day” in this verse refer? It refers to the time of the Lord’s judgment of Jerusalem described in the opening verses of chapter 22.

2. The Nature of His Calling 22:12b

Q - What should have been the response of the people of Judah and Jerusalem to God’s call? They should have been shaving heads, weeping, and wearing sackcloth as indications of their sincere repentance.

B. The Callousness of the People 22:13

1. Their Activities 22:13a

Q - What do the listed activities of the people of Jerusalem suggest? The people of Jerusalem were spiritually insensitive to the Lord's predicted judgment of their city, going on with their lives as usual in anticipation of their impending deaths.

2. Their Outlook 22:13b

Q - What does Isaiah's quotation of the people of Jerusalem reveal? It reveals an unhealthy self-centeredness and an attitude of fatalism in view of the impending crisis which surrounded their city.

II. The Lord's Condemnation of Jerusalem 22:14

A. His Messenger 22:14a

Q - What is significant about the prophet's choice of titles for the Lord? At a time when Jerusalem was threatened by foreign armies, Isaiah's title calls attention to the fact that the Lord is the commander of the greatest of armies.

B. His Message 22:14b

Q - What was the Lord's decision concerning His people? It was His decision not to forgive His people for their spiritual insensitivity.

Q - What is the effect of the repetition and modification of Isaiah's designation for the Lord? It emphasized the fact that God not only commands powerful armies, but that He is and always has been (and always will be) the one and only God to whom His people are answerable for their foolish and sinful behavior.

Think About It: The people of Jerusalem's rejection of God's

message of judgment could not hinder judgment from taking place.

Apply It: People who ignore the Lord's warnings are not improving their prospects!

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“Faithful Stewardship”

Isaiah 22:15-25

Q - What is your understanding of the role and responsibility of a steward in ancient times?

The Lord spoke through Isaiah to Shebna, a royal steward, who was apparently more concerned about his own well-being than that of God’s people. Isaiah was to tell Him of the man who, until God’s word of doom for His people Judah came to pass, would replace Him, and of his coming deportation as a captive.

I. The Lord’s Message for Shebna 22:15-19

A. His Instruction to Isaiah 22:15

Q - What appears to have been Shebna’s position of responsibility among the people of Israel? He appears to have been in charge of the household of the king of Judah.

B. His Question for Shebna 22:16

Q - What might be the significance of God’s questions “What right do you have here, And whom do you have here?” Shebna may have been a foreigner who was in a place of honor in Judah which he didn’t deserve - or he may have been found where he was building what he had no right to build.

Q - What could have been so serious about Shebna’s preparations for death? He was preparing ostentatiously for death in spite of his insignificance in the eyes of the Lord.

C. His Warning to Shebna 22:17-19

Q - What was the Lord planning (vv. 17, 18a) for Shebna's future? The Lord was planning for Shebna's eventual death in a far country - apparently referring to Babylonian captivity.

Q - What might be the significance of Shebna's "splendid chariots"? They were apparently another sign of his self-elevation because of his position in the household of the king.

Q - What was to come of Shebna's position as a steward? He was to be deposed by the Lord from his position.

II. The Lord's Replacement for Shebna 22:20-24

A. His Choice of Eliakim 22:20

Q - What apparently made Eliakim a better candidate as a steward? He is described by the Lord as "My servant," implying greater fidelity to the Lord than Shebna displayed.

B. His Appointment of Eliakim 22:21

Q - How does this verse suggest that Eliakim would improve on Shebna's performance in office? His description as a father to the inhabitants of Judah implies genuine concern for His people.

C. His Task for Eliakim 22:22-24

Q - How was the Lord's pleasure to be evident in Eliakim's life? The Lord promised to give him the "key of the house of David" - the authority to make official decisions for the nation.

Q - What does verse 23 indicate was going to characterize Eliakim's performance in office? He was going to govern with stability and achieve glory for his father's house.

Q - What is the point of verse 24? Eliakim would be the head of his extended household, with all of its members (greatest to the least) dependent upon him for their place in the family.

III. The Lord's Prediction for Eliakim 22:25

Q - What, in spite of Eliakim's good record, was going to become of his stewardship? Eliakim's firm place of leadership was eventually going to lose its grip with the defeat of the nation.

Think About It: Shebna's desire to serve himself rather than God's people would result in his replacement by Eliakim - until the people of Judah fell to their enemies.

“Trouble for Tyre”

Isaiah 23:1-9

Q - What are some of the reasons the Lord would most likely bring judgment upon a people?

The Lord spoke through Isaiah to tell of the coming destruction of Tyre, a city which (in Isaiah’s day) was one of the strongest and wealthiest cities in the Mediterranean world. But Isaiah made it clear that no amount of human strength or wealth is enough to withstand the plans and power of the Lord!

I. The Lord’s Prediction of Tyre’s Destruction 23:1-4

A. The Call to Wailing 23:1

Q - Why would ships of Tarshish have reason to wail over the destruction of Tyre? Tyre was a major port city and commercial center for the shipping business of the Mediterranean Sea and beyond.

B. The Call to Silence 23:2-3

Q - Why should coastal inhabitants and merchants of Sidon be silent over Tyre’s destruction? Because Tyre was a center of Mediterranean commerce and shipping, all coastal cities (including the nearby sister-city of Sidon) would be silenced by the shocking news of the destruction of such a powerful and wealthy commercial port.

C. The Call to Shame 23:4

Q - Why would Sidon be shamed if the “stronghold of the sea” failed to raise a family? The destruction of Tyre and the

failure of its population to reproduce themselves would weaken all of Phoenicia, including the nearby city of Sidon.

II. The Lord's Prediction of the Response of the Nations 23:5-7

A. The Response of Egypt 23:5

Q - Why would Egypt be in anguish regarding the news God was communicating about Tyre? Egypt would have had trading relations with Tyre and, through Tyre, with other nations, so Tyre's destruction would negatively impact the commerce of Egypt. In addition, the destruction of such a strong city would portend danger for other strong cities and nations.

B. The Response of the Coastlands 23:6-7

Q - What reasons does verse seven provide for "inhabitants of the coastland" (v. 6) to wail? Tyre, once a celebrated city, would no longer be in a position to travel to distant places to colonize (sojourn to) other coastal locations.

III. The Lord's Part in Tyre's Destruction 23:8-9

A. The Question Regarding Tyre's Destruction 23:8

Q - Why the apparent surprise that someone planned Tyre's destruction? It was surprising to many that a city, whose king claimed to be "a god" (Ezekiel 28:2), could be destroyed by anyone less than a "god" of greater strength.

B. The Answer Regarding Tyre's Destruction 23:9

Q - What is not surprising about the plans which were made

for Tyre's destruction? Because "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling" (Prov. 16:18), the pride of Tyre's king and of the city itself positioned it for destruction.

Think About It: Though Tyre was one of the ancient world's most powerful and wealthy cities, it was destined for destruction because the Lord planned it as judgment for its sins.

“Tyre’s Mixed Fortunes”

Isaiah 23:10-18

Q - What are some significant cities on earth which stand out in your thinking as having seen some of both the best and worst of times?

Though Isaiah saw the day of Tyre’s destruction ahead, he also saw the day when the Lord would permit her to return to “business as usual” as both a pagan and prosperous city.

I. The Lord’s Prediction of Distress throughout Canaan 23:10-12

A. His Command for Tarshish to Overflow 23:10

Q - What restraint being removed was going to allow the “daughter of Tarshish” to overflow her land like the Nile? The misfortunes of Tyre would create opportunities for other commercial centers of the Mediterranean like Tarshish.

B. His Outstretched Hand Against Canaan 23:11

Q - How was the Lord’s hand stretched out over the sea going to affect Canaan? His outstretched hand would result in the demolition of strongholds in Canaan.

C. His Crushing of the Daughter of Sidon 23:12

Q - To what might the “virgin daughter of Sidon” refer, and how was she going to be crushed? The virgin daughter of Sidon refers to the city itself, which was going to be crushed at this time by the Assyrians.

II. The Lord's Prediction of Judgment Against Tyre 23:13-16

A. His Focus on Babylon 23:13

Q - What was significant to Tyre about Assyria's destruction of the land of the Chaldeans? The destruction of the land of the Chaldeans would eliminate the threat of Chaldean dominance over the region of Tyre.

B. His Focus on Tarshish 23:14

Q - Why did the ships of Tarshish have reason to wail (cf. 23:1)? The destruction of Tyre would diminish the trading opportunities for the ships of Tarshish.

C. His Focus on Tyre 23:15-16

1. Her Seventy-Year Slumber 23:15a

Q - What might be the significance of the seventy years Tyre would be forgotten? Perhaps the length of Babylonian ascendancy in the region, diminishing Tyre's trading options.

2. Her Eventual Stirring 23:15b-16

Q - What did the harlot's song of verse 16 signify for Tyre? Tyre would once again engage in trade in the region, seeking to entice customers and profit by any means.

III. The Lord's Prediction of Restoration for Tyre 23:17-18

A. The Lord's Visitation 23:17

Q - What did Isaiah's prediction of the Lord's visitation and Tyre's return to harlotry anticipate? Tyre would be restored to

influence as a commercial power throughout the Mediterranean region, seeking to entice commercial customers like a prostitute seeks to entice customers.

B. The Lord's Collection 23:18

Q - In what sense might the wages of Tyre's harlotry have been set apart to the Lord? The region of Tyre eventually came under the influence of Christianity, changing the Lord's perspective on the business dealings of the region as it became a center of positive spiritual influence.

Think About It: The Lord predicted seventy years of judgment against Tyre, followed by restoration to her "harlotry."

“Judgment of the Earth”

Isaiah 24:1-6

Q - What stands out in your mind as the most widespread devastation which has occurred on earth during your life time?

The judgments of the nations which Isaiah foresaw in his day are one day going to be followed up by a final judgment of the whole earth as we know it according to the terms Isaiah begins to spell out with the opening of the 24th chapter of his prophecy - the introduction to “Isaiah’s Apocalypse/Revelation” (chapters 24-27).

I. The Coming of the Lord’s Judgment of the Earth 24:1-3

A. The Announcement of God’s Judgment 24:1

Q - What strikes you most about Isaiah’s description of future judgment coming from the hand of the Lord? It is presented as a world-wide devastation which decimates the earth and most of its human population.

B. The Leveling Effect of God’s Judgment 24:2

Q - What will the Lord’s judgment do to the existing social divisions among earth’s people? The Lord’s judgment will erase social distinctions as every person will be dealing with the crisis of judgment, keeping them from clinging to the social “pecking order” which is common among humans.

Q - What practical reality do you see in this truth? When “push comes to shove” everyone is equal in status in the eyes of the Lord - which is the only standing that really matters.

C. The Completeness of God's Judgment 24:3

Q - How will the judgment Isaiah is describing in this passage differ from judgments he has described in earlier portions of his book? The judgment which Isaiah describes in this passage is a world-wide judgment from the Lord, laying waste and despoiling the earth "completely" in contrast to regional judgments described elsewhere in Isaiah's prophecy.

Q - How could Isaiah be certain of such a radical message? Isaiah could be certain about his radical message because he received word about it from the Lord Himself.

II. The Consequences of the Lord's Judgment of the Earth 24:4-6

A. The Response to God's Judgment 24:4

Q - What/who will be in what kinds of trouble as a result of the Lord's coming judgment of earth? The entire earth will have reason to mourn as the withering judgment of the Lord comes upon all people - including the "exalted" among them.

B. The Reason for God's Judgment 24:5

Q - What does Isaiah inform us the people of earth have done to incur the wrath of God which he is describing in this passage? The people have polluted the earth by transgressing laws, violating statutes, and breaking the everlasting covenant (perhaps referring to the Law of the Lord in general terms because the phrase "everlasting covenant" is applied in Scripture to various aspects of God's dealings with men).

C . The Result of God's Judgment 24:6

Q - What will be the outcome of the judgment Isaiah is describing upon the planet and its population? Many of the inhabitants of earth will be “burned” as God’s curse devours the guilty, leaving very few people alive on the earth - apparently referring to the fiery judgment which will end this age, leaving only true believers to enter the coming kingdom age (cf. II Peter 3:7).

Think About It: The day is coming when man’s sinfulness will result in the Lord’s devastation of the earth and many (most) of its inhabitants.

“Mixed Feelings About Judgment”

Isaiah 24:7-17

Q - Would you say it is good news or bad news when a criminal gets what is due him?

The Lord’s end-times judgment of the earth is going to bring desolation and dread into the lives of people who are alive to experience it, though there will be some on earth who rejoice as they see the Lord exalt His name in judgment.

I. The Effects of the Lord’s Judgment of the Earth 24:7-12

A. Cessation of Merriment 24:7-9

Q - What is wrong with the picture Isaiah paints in verses 7-9? Everything is opposite of what human beings normally experience.

B. Destruction of Property 24:10

Q - What has happened when houses are shut up so people can’t enter them? Houses are often shut up when disaster has struck and the houses are damaged and dangerous to enter.

C. Introduction of Gloom 24:11

Q - What can be said of circumstances even wine can’t cheer up? Circumstances are generally very grim when even wine doesn’t cheer people up who drink it.

D. Desolation in the City 24:12

Q - What might a battered gate have to do with desolation

in the city? A battered gate is normal when enemies have broken through them, often using battering rams, as an act of war.

E. Summation of God's Judgment 24:13

Q - What does Isaiah's picture of judgment in this verse depict? It depicts a situation when only a few people are left, like the few grapes or olives at the end of a harvest season.

II. The Mixed Response to the Lord's Judgment of the Earth 24:14-17

A. Rejoicing Over the Lord's Judgment 24:14-16a

Q - Who (in verse 14) could be raising their voices in joy over the judgment scene Isaiah has depicted, and why? The fact that they are "from the west (or sea)" suggests that they are foreigners (from Israel's perspective) who rejoice because the Lord has brought judgment upon sinners.

Q - What is there about the judgment of sinners which calls for glorification of the Lord and of His name (v. 15)? His name reminds us that "He is," and His reality is very clearly and powerfully revealed in His ability to bring judgment upon sinners, and sin deserves to be judged.

Q - How is God's righteousness displayed (v. 16) in His judgment of sinners? Because righteousness is conformity to the will of God in thought, word and deed, His righteousness is displayed when those who are not in conformity are confronted with the "wages of [their] sin" which is "death."

B. Wailing Over the Lord's Judgment 24:16b-17

Q - While some rejoice at the prospect of righteous judgment, why did the prophet Isaiah express his woe (v. 16b)? He saw treacherousness all around him and felt concern about the judgment which would come as a result, and was probably particularly concerned about the judgment his own people might be heading for as a result.

Q - What makes the pit and the snare appropriate symbols of end-time judgments? Like pits and snares which come without warning upon those caught in them, end-time judgments will catch most of the world's unbelieving by surprise.

Think About It: The day of the Lord's end-times judgment will bring rejoicing among those who know Him and appreciate His sovereignty, but woe among those who don't.

“Tribulation Devastation”

Isaiah 24:18-23

Q - What experience have you ever had with difficulties which you thought you might not escape?

The Lord’s Tribulation judgment will affect not only the earth but the heavens, with conditions from which it will be impossible for anyone to escape as the Lord pours out His wrath on the sinfulness of mankind - and even angels!

I. The Lord’s Judgment of the Earth 24:18-20

A. Difficulty in Escaping 24:18

Q - What will be the fate of those trying to escape the Lord’s judgment during the Tribulation (18a)? When they flee His judgment they will move from one danger to another of even greater proportions.

Q - What is it that will make Tribulation judgments so serious and inescapable (18b)? Judgment will descend upon the earth from heaven, but will also emanate from the ground beneath.

B. Difficult Conditions on Earth 24:19-20

Q - What do Tribulation conditions described here reveal about the judgment of that day (vv. 19-20)? Tribulation conditions will be like those of an extremely powerful earthquake from which there is no escape.

Q - What will be the reason for the Lord’s judgment during the Tribulation (20b)? The reason is the transgression of which

earth's citizens are guilty - and have been since the beginning.

Q - In what sense will earth “fall, never to rise again” (20c)? It will be re-created (“new heavens and new earth” - Isaiah 65:17,22) for Christ’s reign in the millennial kingdom.

II. The Lord’s Punishment of Heaven and Earth 24:21-23

A. The Fact of the Lord’s Punishment 24:21

Q - What “host of heaven on high” will apparently be included in the punishment described? The heavenly host of angelic beings who followed Satan in rebellion are apparently in view.

Q - What is significant about the punishment of kings of the earth? Earthly kings are normally among the last people to be subjected to punishment because of their power and protectors.

B. The Confinement of the Lord’s Prisoners 24:22

Q - What “prison” could confine the “host of heaven on high” and the kings of the earth? The “pit” of hades and, ultimately, the lake of fire will confine them.

C. The Change for Sun and Moon 24:23a

Q - What will apparently happen to the sun and moon? They will apparently no longer exist in the conditions of the new heavens and earth, because there will be no need for them as the Lord becomes the constant light.

(Cf. Isa 60:19,20; Zech. 14:6,7)

D. The Reign of the Lord on Zion 24:23b

Q - What reign of the Lord is in view in this verse? The reign of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the millennial kingdom, followed by similar conditions in the eternal state is in view.

Think About It: The Tribulation which precedes Christ's kingdom will bring judgment which will be inescapable for both men and angels who have sinned against the Lord.

“The Lord Exalted”

Isaiah 25:1-5

Q - What are some reasons for which you would say the Lord deserves to be exalted?

The prophet Isaiah committed himself, along with strong and ruthless and helpless and needy peoples, to exalt and glorify the Lord in view of His destruction of His enemies and His defense of His friends.

I. Isaiah’s Exaltation of the Lord 25:1-2

A. Isaiah’s Statement of Exaltation 25:1a

Q - What is Isaiah’s first reason for exalting the Lord in verse 1, and why is it significant? The Lord has worked wonders with perfect faithfulness from plans long ago - revealing His power and sovereignty in the affairs of His universe.

B. Isaiah’s Reasons for Exaltation 25:1b-2

1. The Lord’s Wonders 25:1b

Q - What “wonders” might Isaiah have had in mind as reason to exalt the Lord? He might well have had the Lord’s works in the creation of the universe and all that is in it.

Q - Why does the Lord deserve to be exalted because His plans are long-standing? Long-standing plans reveal a long-standing God whose plans are stable and doable.

2. The Lord’s Devastation 25:2

Q - Why should the Lord be exalted for bringing permanent ruin upon cities? His ruin of cities demonstrates His power over peoples and His role as judge of all.

II. The People's Exaltation of the Lord 25:3-5

A. The Promise of Glorification 25:3

Q - Who does Isaiah envision glorifying the Lord in this verse? He envisions strong people and even ruthless nations glorifying the Lord with their reverence.

Q - How might such peoples go about expressing their glorification and reverence for the Lord? They might repent of sins, as Nineveh did, or acknowledge the sovereignty of the Lord, as Nebuchadnezzar did after the Lord humbled him.

B. The Reasons for Glorification 25:4-5

1. The Lord's Defense of the Helpless 25:4

Q - What "helpless" people might Isaiah have been envisioning the Lord as defending? He might have been thinking of his own people in Israel (specifically Judah) - especially the "righteous" among them.

Q - What symbols does Isaiah use to describe the Lord's defense in verse 4? He uses a refuge, a shade, and a wall in a rainstorm as symbols of the Lord's defense.

2. The Lord's Judgment of Enemies 25:5

Q - What makes "heat in drought" a good symbol for the Lord's subjugation of aliens? Heat in drought prolongs the destructive impact of the drought - symbolic of the Lord's

ability to keep the pressure on His foes.

Q - What ruthless people might Isaiah be envisioning the Lord as silencing? He might have been envisioning the Lord's silencing of Assyria in the earlier years of his ministry and of Babylon in the latter years of his ministry.

Think About It: The Lord deserves to be exalted and glorified as, in the midst of His destruction of enemies, He shows tender love for the helpless.

“Victory Celebration”

Isaiah 25:6-12

Q - What is the most celebratory dinner you can recall ever having attended?

The Lord has made plans, prophesied by Isaiah, for an extravagant dinner to be held near the end of the ages which will make all previous dinners pale by comparison because of who will be invited and where it will be served and what it will celebrate!

I. Isaiah's Prophecy of the Lord's Banquet 25:6

Q - What does Isaiah's reference to “that day” (v. 9) tell us about the timing of the events he is foretelling? “That day” is frequently used in Isaiah to refer to the future - particularly the day of the Lord's blessing for Israel in His kingdom.

Q - Who will be the participants in the banquet Isaiah describes? By “all peoples” Isaiah is anticipating the presence of believers from all nations celebrating in God's kingdom.

Q - What is significant about the location in which the banquet will be served? “This mountain” is a reference to Mt. Zion, referenced in several places throughout Isaiah's prophecy as the mountain of the Lord.

Q - What does the banquet fare reveal about the occasion? It will be a banquet which features the best of food and drinks available for a festive occasion.

II. Isaiah's Prophecy of Death's Defeat 25:7-8

Q - How does verse eight define the “veil” of verse seven? The “covering” and the “veil” of verse seven is defined as the universal human experience of death.

Q - What do the events of verse eight reveal about the timing of Isaiah’s prediction in this passage? They reveal the end-times conditions which will characterize heaven.

Cf. Revelation 21:4

III. Isaiah’s Prophecy of the Rejoicing of God’s People 25:9

Q - In whose mouths will the claims of verse nine be appropriate? The claims of verse nine will be appropriate for all believers, and especially believers from the nation of Israel.

Q - What aspect of the Lord’s salvation will be their reason for rejoicing? They will rejoice in their spiritual salvation in view of the end-time conditions mentioned in the context (cf. v. 8).

IV. Isaiah’s Prophecy of Moab’s Destruction 25:10-12

Q - Why might Moab be singled out for the judgment of this passage? Moab, because of its animosity toward the people of Israel, and its excessive pride (16:6), is merely a symbol of all nations and peoples who have resisted the Lord and His chosen people in every age (cf. Edom in 34:5-9).

Q - What will Moab’s attempts at self-preservation bring about? Moab’s attempts at self-preservation will fail because of the opposition of the Lord to those who resist and reject Him.

Q - What does the destruction of Moab’s “unassailable walls” anticipate on the prophetic horizon? It anticipates the

ultimate victory of the Lord at the end of the age over all who have opposed Him and His people.

Think About It: The end of time will bring a lavish dinner celebration of the Lord's salvation over death and the enemies of His people.

Apply It: We who know Him can rejoice because the Lord will be victorious over all opponents and will reward His people with a great celebration of their trust.

“Victory Psalm”

Isaiah 26:1-10

Q - What are some of the themes you most like to hear addressed in song?

Isaiah anticipated a song which the Jews of Judah will sing in the end times as they look back on what the Lord has done in making them secure from proud enemies - praising Him for the blessings which come to the righteous.

I. Singing of God’s Victory Over His Enemies 26:1-6

A. Anticipation of the Victory Psalm 26:1a

Q - What setting did Isaiah envision for the Psalm of Isaiah 26? He envisioned the “day of the Lord” - when the Lord takes control of earth’s affairs.

B. Celebration of the Victory Psalm 26:1b-3

Q - What “strong city” (verse 1b) might this song make reference to? It must refer to the millennial Jerusalem or the New Jerusalem, because it will take place “in that day” (v. 1).

Q - Who does verse 2 indicate will be welcome in the Lord’s strong city? It indicates that the righteous will be welcome in the Lord’s strong city.

Q - What is it, according to verse 3, that will assure “perfect peace” to the people of God? It is trust in the Lord, which the “steadfast of mind” exercise, which will assure “perfect peace.”

B. Challenge of the Victory Psalm 26:4-6

Q - What reason(s) does Isaiah offer in verse 4 for trusting God? He writes that one should trust in God forever because He is an “everlasting Rock.”

Q - What “unassailable city” (verses 5 and 6) will the Lord have brought low before His people sing this song? Any city which man has built, no matter how strongly built, will be brought low if it is not a city characterized by trust in the Lord.

II. Singing the Value of Righteousness 26:7-10

A. The Way of the Righteous 26:7a

Q - What does righteousness offer to those who pursue it? The way of the righteous is a smooth and level way (cf. Prov-ebbs 3:5-6).

B. The Prayer to the Righteous One 26:7b-9

Q - What will end-time saints recall having waited for during their earthly lives (verses 7b-9a)? End-time saints will recall having waited eagerly for the Lord Himself and for His name (to be honored).

Q - What lesson does verse 9b assure us earth’s inhabitants will learn from God’s judgments? Earth’s inhabitants will learn righteousness as a result of God’s judgments.

C. The Problems of the Unrighteous 26:10

Q - What obvious things do the wicked fail to learn even when shown the favor of the Lord? The wicked fail to learn righteousness and to recognize the majesty of the Lord as they pursue unjust ways.

Think About It: End-time Jews will rejoice in the Lord's victories over the proud, and in the value of having pursued the Lord and His righteousness.

Apply It: All of the people of God will rejoice with the Lord when He is victorious over all those who have risen up in pride against Him.

“The Long View”

Isaiah 26:11-21

Q - When, and under what circumstances, do you think you have been able to see the farthest?

Though things were not looking very bright for his people in his day, Isaiah could see (with divine insight) far down the corridor of time to the day when God would have judged the nations and resurrected the righteous of Judah to their greatest glory ever.

I. Singing of the Lord’s Accomplishments 26:11-15

A. His Uplifted Hand 26:11

Q - What did Isaiah see the Lord’s uplifted hand eventually bringing about? Isaiah saw the zeal of the Lord for His people shaming and devouring His sightless enemies.

B. His Established Peace 26:12

Q - What outcome did Isaiah see the Lord accomplishing for His own people? He saw the Lord establishing the works of His people and giving them peace.

C. His Rule Over His People 26:13

Q - What “other masters” might Isaiah have been recalling who had no interest in Israel confessing the name of the Lord? “Other masters” like surrounding nations (Philistines, Edomites, Ammonites, etc., and foreign powers like Syria and Assyria).

D. His Destruction of Enemies 26:14

Q - What outcome did Isaiah see the Lord bringing about for His enemies? Isaiah saw the punishment and death of enemies and the obliteration of the memory of them.

E. His Increase of His Nation 26:15

Q - How did Isaiah see the Lord eventually bringing glory to Himself in His own people? He saw the Lord extending the borders of His people and blessing them with increase.

II. Singing of the Lord's Dealings with His People 16:16-19

A. His Chastening of His People 26:16-18

Q - When were God's people able only to whisper their prayers (v. 16)? Perhaps during the oppression of the period of the judges (cf. Judges 6:2,6) and, later, the oppression of other hostile nations like Philistia and Midian and Assyria and Babylon.

Q - When did Israel ever writhe in pain like a pregnant woman (v. 17)? Israel writhed in pain under the oppression of surrounding nations (like Philistia and Midian) and foreign nations like Assyria and Babylon (Micah 4:10-13).

Q - In what sense did God's people give birth only to wind (v. 18)? Their pains, like labor pains which result in the birth of a baby, produced difficulty and distress rather than something good.

B. His Raising of the Dead 26:19

Q - How did Isaiah see the Lord eventually bringing a

measure of vindication to His people? He saw the Lord restoring life to His people beyond the grave (restoring them to life personally and nationally after their suffering and death).

III. Singing of the Lord's Judgments 26:20-21

A. The Hiding of His people 26:20

Q - Why would Isaiah counsel his people to hide behind closed doors? Closed doors might shield them from some of the difficulties of judgment coming upon them by the hand of the Lord from foreign oppressors.

B. The Punishment of Earth 26:21

Q - What punishment of the inhabitants of the earth might Isaiah have had in view in this verse? He may have had the Lord's judgment on oppressors like Assyria and Babylon in view, but the verse applies to end-time judgments as well.

Think About It: Isaiah could see ahead to God's judgment of the nations and His promotion of His people - even raising their dead - though he could see that it would take a while.

“Bad News/Good News”

Isaiah 27:1-6

Q - When has someone else's reason for weeping ever been your own reason for rejoicing?

Coupled with Isaiah's anticipation of the Lord's defeat of powerful enemies was his anticipation of the Lord's favor upon His own people - in spite of difficult challenges.

I. The Lord's Punishment of Leviathan 27:1

Q - What is the time frame in which Isaiah places the prophecy of chapter 27? “In that day” is frequently a reference to the end times.

Q - How does the Scriptures' use of “Leviathan” (Job 3:8; 41:1-34; Psalm 74:14; 104:26), “the dragon who lives in the sea,” help us understand Isaiah's message in verse 1? Leviathan is symbolic in Scripture of forces which are opposed to the Lord.

Q - What “fierce and great and mighty sword” might the Lord use to vanquish the sea monster, Leviathan? He will use the “sword of the Lord” which proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus (Revelation 1:16; 2:16; 19:15).

II. The Lord's Protection of His Vineyard 27:2-5

A. The Lord's Vineyard 27:2-3

Q - To what does the vineyard of verses 2-3 refer? It refers to the “vineyard” which is the nation of Israel - as seen earlier in Isaiah (Cf. Isaiah 5:7).

Q - What is the Lord's commitment to His end-times vineyard? He is committed to watering, keeping and guarding His vineyard "night and day".

B. The Lord's Control 27:4

Q - What is the point of the Lord's "no wrath" position toward His vineyard? Though He has exercised His wrath in judgment against Israel's sinful ways in the past (Cf. Isaiah 5:25), He will redeem the nation in the end, and His wrath toward Israel will be a thing of the past.

Q - What does the Lord's determination to step on and burn completely any briars and thorns given to obstruct Him indicate? He is committed judging all sin (Isaiah 33:12; Matthew 3:12) and to eradicating sinful behavior and the sin nature itself in His future dealings with His people.'

C. The Lord's Protection 27:5

Q - What was significant about the Lord's offer of protection to His people? It is significant that He is fulfilling His commitments to the people of Israel in spite of their failings in keeping His covenant.

Q - Why might Isaiah state the Lord's offer of peace twice in verse 5? Repetition is a means of emphasizing His intention and His determination to bless His people.

III. The Lord's Prediction of Prosperity 27:6

Q - What do the symbols of verse six anticipate for Jacob/Israel? They anticipate the Lord's commitment to establish Israel and make it fruitful to the ends of the earth in the last days.

Think About It: The Lord's judgment of evil forces in the last days will be coupled with His favor and protection and restoration of His own people of Israel.

“From Rejection to Restoration”

Isaiah 27:7-13

Q - When have you ever seen a relationship move all the way from rejection to the restoration of healthy relations?

Though Isaiah could see that the Lord was going to deal decisively with the sins of His people, he could also see the day when the Lord’s favor would be restored upon them as He re-gathered them to the “holy mountain” at Jerusalem.

I. The Lord’s Punishment of His People 27:7-11

A. The Question of His Judgment 27:7

Q - What was different about the way the Lord dealt with Israel than the way He dealt with other nations? The Lord’s judgment upon other nations has sometimes resulted in their obliteration as a result of His striking of them.

B. The Banishment of Israel 27:8

Q - What strong “east wind” was the Lord going to use to banish His people? The Lord was going to use the Assyrians, then the Babylonians to banish His people from their land.
(cf. Isaiah 7:17-20; 13:1-5).

C. The Pardon of Israel 27:9

Q - What was the Lord planning to accomplish through His banishment of His people? He was planning to accomplish their payment for the “full price of their sins,” resulting in their forgiveness.

Q - What specific sins of Israel was the Lord going to address once and for all by their banishment? The Lord was going to address once and for all the sin of idolatry on the part of His people Israel by their banishment.

Cf. Isaiah 2:18-21

D. The Desolation of Israel 27:10

Q - What was going to become of the land of Israel during their banishment? Their land was going to be desolate, “a homestead forlorn and forsaken like the desert,” overtaken by briars and thorns.

Cf. Isaiah 5:10; 7:23-25

E. The Dullness of Israel 27:11

Q - What would the Lord’s unfavorable evaluation of His people cause Him to do with them? It would cause Him to treat them like firewood as He removed His compassion and His characteristic gracious treatment from them.

Cf. Isaiah 5:13

II. The Lord’s Regathering of His People 27:12-13

A. The Process of Threshing 27:12

Q - Why was the Lord going to thresh such a large region “in that day”? He promised to thresh the extensive region which He had long before promised to give to His people as their land.

Cf. Genesis 15:18

B. The Promise of Regathering 27:13

Q - What would be the significance of the blowing of “a

great trumpet” in that day? The blowing of a great trumpet would signify the re-gathering of His people to Himself and to their land.

Cf. Numbers 10:2-7

Q - What did Isaiah envision his people doing in response to the blowing of the great trumpet? He envisioned his people being re-gathered to their land from the territories of Assyria and Egypt.

Think About It: Isaiah could see beyond the impending judgment of His people to a day when they would be re-gathered and restored to the Lord in their land.

“Staggering to Doom”

Isaiah 28:1-8

Q - What is the sorriest state you can recall of any nation and its leaders in your lifetime?

As Isaiah turned his prophetic spotlight to the northern kingdom of Israel, he saw a deplorable scene of spiritual drunkenness which the Lord would soon be bringing to judgment!

I. The Lord’s Plan for Ephraim 28:1-4

A. The Lord’s Woe to Ephraim 28:1

Q - What was Isaiah describing by his reference to the “proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim” and “fading flower of its glorious beauty”? He was referring to the diminished status of the northern kingdom (Ephraim) where spiritual apostasy and literal drunkenness had reduced the people to the status of pagans worshipping idols.

Cf. Isaiah 28:7

B. The Lord’s Agent Against Ephraim 28:2

Q - What “strong and mighty agent” was the Lord going to use to do what to His people? He was going to use the Assyrian nation to cast His people down to the earth as if stricken by a powerful flood.

C. The Lord’s Picture for Ephraim 28:3-4

Q - What did Isaiah’s word pictures in verses three and four portend for the “proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim”?

His word pictures anticipated the trampling underfoot and the swallowing up of the northern kingdom in their drunken condition by the Assyrians.

II. The Lord's Plan for His Remnant 28:5-6

A. The Lord's Beauty to the Remnant 28:5

Q - How would the remnant's crown (v. 5) compare with Ephraim's former crown (v. 3)? The remnant's future crown would be the Lord Himself, immeasurably greater than any supposed crown they had ever worn.

B. The Lord's Help for His Servants 28:6

Q - In what ways did Isaiah assure us that the Lord would provide help for the remnant who would remain after Ephraim's destruction? He said that the Lord would provide a spirit of justice for their judges and of strength for those who sought to defend against enemies.

III. The Lord's Complaint Against the Priests and Prophets 28:7-8

A. The Drunkenness of the Priests and Prophets 28:7

Q - What further aggravated the problem of drunkenness mentioned in verse one among the people of Ephraim? The confusion and staggering often associated with drunkenness affected the leaders of Israel even as they sought to make judicial decisions and, perhaps, seek divine guidance through visions.

B. The Sickness of the Priests and Prophets 28:8

Q - What does the unpleasant picture of verse 8 reveal about the condition of God's people in Ephraim? The filth which is often associated with drunkenness is pictured in connection with the leadership of the northern kingdom.

Think About It: The Lord announced His plans, through Isaiah, for judging the northern kingdom because of the spiritual drunkenness of both the people and their leaders - leaving behind a "remnant" to enjoy His blessing.

“Teaching God’s Children”

Isaiah 28:9-16

Q - What are some of the differences between teaching children and teaching adults?

The Lord had a wonderful plan to prosper the people of Israel, but they and their leaders rejected it. So He has often had to treat them like little children, in anticipation of the day when His Messianic king will provide strong leadership over them.

I. The Lord’s Treatment of His People 29:9-13

A. The People’s Indignation 28:9

Q - How did the Lord’s dealings with His people make them feel? It made them feel like little children, just weaned from their mother’s milk.

B. The Lord’s Lessons for Israel 28:10-11

1. Lessons in Their Own Language 28:10

Q - What was it that the people found objectionable about the Lord’s lessons? They found it objectionable that the Lord was teaching them as if they were little children, order by order, line by line, a little here, a little there.

2. Lessons in Foreign Languages 28:11

Q - What further indignity did Isaiah predict the people were going to experience in the Lord’s training program? He predicted that the Lord was going to use stammering lips and

foreign languages in the instruction of His people.

C. The Lord's Original Intention 28:12

Q - Why had the people of Israel not experienced the blessings the Lord intended for them? When the Lord offered His people rest and repose in their weariness they did not listen and receive His offer.

D. The Lord's Alternate Plan 28:13

Q - What was the Lord's plan for His people in view of their failings? It was the Lord's plan to continue to teach His people order by order, line on line, here a little, there a little, and to cause them to stumble backwards, be broken and snared and taken captive.

II. The Lord's Plan for His People 28:14-17

A. His Indignation with Israel's Leaders 28:14

Q - What was the Lord's complaint against the leaders of His people? The Lord addressed His people's leaders as scoffers.

B. His Revelation of Israel's Folly 28:15

Q - What were the people and leaders of Israel trusting to keep them from experiencing the judgment Isaiah had been predicting? The people and leaders claimed to have made a covenant with death which would keep the overwhelming scourge from adversely affecting them, taking refuge in falsehood and concealing themselves with deception.

C. His Remedy for Israel's Situation 28:16-17

Q - What was/is the Lord's solution to the failings of Israel and its leaders? The Lord 's solution was/is to lay a tested and costly corner foundation stone in Zion, firmly placed to keep those who believe in it/Him from being disturbed.

Cf. Matthew 21:42; Romans 9:33; I Peter 2:6

Q - What did the Lord say will characterize the performance of the "cornerstone" of verse 16? He said that the rule of His "cornerstone" (Jesus) would be characterized by justice and righteousness and honesty - after His flooding of the secret place in judgment.

Think About It: Until Messiah takes charge, the Lord has had to treat Israel like little children because they and their leaders have foolishly rejected His plan.

“Judgment Ahead”

Isaiah 28:18-22

Q - What are some of the typical responses of parents who are faced with scornful disregard from their children?

Though Isaiah could look ahead to a day when the Lord would lay a firm foundation and bless His people Israel, His plans for their immediate future were not very encouraging because of their scornful disregard for Him and His righteous standards.

I. The Lord’s Description of Coming Judgment 28:18

A. His Cancellation of their Plans 28:18a

Q - What would be the result of the Lord’s cancellation of His people’s covenant with death and pact with Sheol (cf. Verse 15)? His cancellation of their covenant would open the door to the overwhelming scourge which would trample on God’s people in their folly.

B. His Assurance of their Judgment 28:18b-19

Q - What would becoming the “trampling place” for the predicted scourge mean to Israel (18b)? Israel would be seized by the scourge as it passed over them morning by morning and day or night, and they would experience sheer terror as a result, but would not be able to understand why they were experiencing what they were experiencing.

Q - What kind of scourge could Isaiah have in mind which would pass through “morning after morning” or at any other time of the day or night? He was probably referring to the re-

curing hostile invasions of enemies which would follow the deportation of the ten tribes by the Assyrians.

Q - What might have struck terror in the people of Israel as they sought to “understand” the meaning of the scourge? The Assyrians were infamous for their brutality in dealing with their enemies, making God’s people wonder why the Lord would permit them to experience such frightening ordeals.

II. The Lord’s Assessment of His People’s Situation 28:20

Q - What do the Lord’s symbols of a short bed and small blanket reveal about His assessment of Israel’s situation? Their sinful condition would not allow them to become comfortable, as a bed which is too short and blankets which will not cover prevent a comfortable night’s sleep.

III. The Lord’s Assurance of Coming Judgment 28:21-22

A. His Routing of Israel 28:21

Q - What happened at Mount Perazim and the Valley of Gibeon to foreshadow the Lord’s anticipated “unusual task” and “extraordinary work” with regard to Israel? The Lord gave military victories to His people at Mt. Perazim and the Valley of Gibeon which foreshadow the unusual task and extraordinary work He promised Isaiah He would do.

Cf. II Samuel 5:17-25; Joshua 10:1-11

B. His Warning to Israel 28:22

Q - Where was Israel’s scoffing going to get them with the Lord? Persistence in scoffing was going to result in their fetters being made stronger.

Q - What was Israel to learn from Isaiah's reference to the Lord's "decisive destruction" of all the earth? Israel was to learn that a day of judgment was coming from the Lord which was going to affect not only Israel but the entire earth.

Think About It: Though the Lord had long-range plans to bless His people, He had short-term plans to bring judgment on them from surrounding nations because of their sins.

“Working for a Harvest”

Isaiah 28:23-29

Q - What are some of the steps you need to take to get a healthy harvest out of a garden?

The Lord spoke to His people through Isaiah to remind them that the process He devised for obtaining a good harvest in the natural realm is similar to the process He needed to follow with them in obtaining a good spiritual harvest among them.

I. The Lord’s Challenge to Listen 28:23

Q - What are we to assume when the Lord calls upon His people to listen up? We can assume that He is calling for their attention because of their failure to give Him the respect and attention He deserves.

II. The Lord’s Parable about Farming Procedures 28:24-28

A. His Question about the Farmer 28:24

Q - What was wrong with the farm scene the Lord spelled out for His people’s consideration in verse 24? Continual plowing and harrowing of the soil would prevent the seed from getting established in the soil so it could begin to grow and produce a harvest.

B. His Reminder about the Farmer 28:25

Q - How does the process described in verse 25 differ from that in verse 24? The process described in verse 25 is the normal agricultural process which levels the soil and plants

seeds of differing kinds in anticipation of the growth of healthy crops.

C. His Instruction of the Farmer 28:26-28

1. The Nature of His Instruction 28:26

Q - How does the Lord go about properly instructing and teaching the farmer? The Lord instructs farmers (as they learn by experience and from one another) in the proper agricultural procedures which manage seeds and soils so they can produce healthy crops.

2. The Examples of His Instruction 28:27-28

a. Dealing with Dill and Cummin 28:27

Q - How would a farmer know to thresh dill and cummin with the rod and club rather than the threshing sledge and cart-wheel? He would learn agricultural procedures which work by experience of his own or from other farmers who had learned proper procedures in one way or another.

b. Dealing with Grain for Bread 28:28

Q - Why would a farmer not continually thresh the grain to be used in making bread? Continually threshing the grain to be used in making bread would break it down to powder form which would not work well in making bread.

III. The Lord's Wisdom in His Dealings with Israel 28:29

Q - What was Israel to learn from the Lord's wonderful counsel and great wisdom? They were to learn that the Lord provides wonderful counsel and great wisdom to those who are

attentive to His words and His ways.

Think About It: The Lord challenged Israel to compare His instruction of their farmers with His dealings with their nation as He sought a healthy spiritual harvest among them.

“Judgment for Judah”

Isaiah 29:1-8

Q - Can you think of a time when threatened judgment brought about good results in someone’s experience?

The Lord assured the people of Judah that they were going to be judged and humbled, but He also promised the people of Judah that their enemies were going to experience even stronger judgment than they would experience from the hand of the Lord.

I. The Lord’s Woe for Ariel 29:1-4

A. His Woe Stated 29:1

Q - Whom does the Lord address by His use of the term “Ariel,” and what was the designation’s significance? The term is of uncertain meaning, but could mean “Lion of God,” referring to Jerusalem as the city of His choice during the time of David, who made it his capital.

Q - What objection does the Lord imply regarding the people’s practices? He seems to imply that the routine of Israel in celebrating His feasts had become meaningless ritual to the people.

B. His Promise of Distress 29:2

Q - What were the people of Judah to expect when the Lord brought distress to Ariel? The people were to expect reason for them to lament and mourn as the Lord brought distress upon the city.

C. His Promise of Opposition 29:3

Q - What did the Lord's description of impending judgment suggest would be happening to Ariel? The Lord's description suggests that the city of Jerusalem was going to be attacked by enemies who would place it under siege and build battle towers to use in their attempt to subdue and defeat the city.

D. His People's Humiliation 29:4

Q - What does the language of verse 4 tell us about Judah's future? The language suggests that Judah was going to be lowered into the ground from where their voice would be coming.

II. The Lord's Woe for Ariel's Enemies 29:5-8

A. His Promise of Sudden Destruction 29:5

Q - How does verse 5 make it sound that the fate of Israel's enemies would compare to that of Israel itself? Verse 5 makes it evident that Israel's enemies were going to be reduced to "fine dust" and be blown away in an "instance," a fate more serious than that of Israel.

B. His Promise of Judgment on Judah 29:6

Q - What might the weapons of verse six anticipate in Judah's future? They anticipate that it would be the hand of the Lord which would bring about their judgment.

C. His Promise of Enemy Destruction 29:7

Q - What reason was there for Israel to be encouraged in the face of God's promise of judgment against them? The Lord revealed that the nations which would judge them would

become like a dream in the night - insubstantial and inconsequential.

D. His Promise of Enemy Frustration 29:8

Q - How do the pictures of verse 8 apply to the multitude of nations which could be expected to wage war against Israel?
They picture their dreams of food and drink which actually provide no food or drink for the hungry and thirsty - as the future experience of the nations opposing Israel who would fade out of the picture.

Think About It: Though the Lord promised judgment against the people of Judah, He also promised even more severe judgment against their enemies because of His long-term commitment to His people.

“Marvelous Judgment”

Isaiah 29:9-16

Q - What is there about God’s judgment that you would be likely to describe as “marvelous”?

The Lord responded to the spiritual rebellion of the people of Judah by sending them into a spiritual stupor which dumbed down their spiritual leaders and rendered them spiritually insensitive to even God Himself as a part of the “marvel” of His dealings with them in Isaiah’s day.

I. The Lord’s Blinding of His People 29:9-12

A. His Observation of Spiritual Stupor 29:9

Q - How did the drunkenness of the people of Judah compare/contrast with the drunkenness of the people of Ephraim (28:1)? The drunkenness of the people of Judah was primarily a spiritual condition, not like the physical drunkenness of the people of Ephraim.

B. His Hand in their Stupor 29:10

Q - What was the Lord’s part in the spiritual condition of the people of Israel in Isaiah’s day? The Lord was judicially placing His people and their leaders into a spiritual slumber - making them spiritually blind and deaf.

Cf. Romans 11:7-8

C. His Illustration of their Condition 29:11-12

Q - To what did the Lord compare His people’s response to prophetic vision in Isaiah’s day? He compared their response

to a literate person who finds the book sealed shut, and to an illiterate person who cannot read what has been written.

II. The Lord's Assessment of His People 29:13-14

A. His Description of their Behavior 29:13

Q - What was missing from Israel's spiritual life by the Lord's evaluation? Israel's spiritual life was lacking a heart response, though they spoke the right words out of their practice of empty traditions.

B. His Decision to Deal in Judgment 29:14

Q - What "marvelous" thing did the Lord have in mind for His people in view of their spiritual condition? He had in mind a "marvelous" (*pala* - difficult, wondrous) and "wonderfully marvelous" (*pala pala*) removal of wisdom from their wise men and removal of discernment from their discerning men.

III. The Lord's Rebuke of His People 29:15-16

A. His Word of Woe for their Hiding 29:15

Q - What kind of plans might the people of Israel been attempting to hide from the Lord? The people were trying to hide their plans to increase their sinful practices - practices which were of their own making, not the Lord's.

Cf. 30:1-5

B. His Questioning of their Assumptions 29:16

Q - What did the people of Israel have turned around from the reality of which the Lord was aware? They had turned around their reliance on the Lord who made them, and their

reliance on His understanding - as if He had no understanding.

Think About It: The Lord assured His people that He would deal “marvelously” with them in judgment because of their spiritual hardness, empty religion, and futile intrigue.

“Good News After Bad”

Isaiah 29:17-24

Q - What is the best news that can come to people who are under judgment?

Though the prophet Isaiah could see days of judgment ahead for the people Israel and (more specifically, in this chapter) Judah, he could also see days of blessing ahead for both the people of Israel and of the earth.

I. The Lord’s Prediction of Better Days 29:17-21

A. The Blossoming Out of Nature 29:17

Q - What would be different between the Lebanon of Isaiah’s day and the day of Isaiah’s view? The Lebanese forest of Isaiah’s day are contrasted with a fertile field comparable to a forest of nourishment, providing nourishment for those who need it.

B. The Healing of Physical Ailments 29:18

Q - How would the prediction of this verse help us place Isaiah’s prophecy? The restoration of sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf is a promise made with reference to the millennial kingdom.

Cf. 35:5

C. The Improved Conditions for the Afflicted 29:19

Q - How broad does the prophecy of this verse appear to go? The prophecy appears to anticipate a time when the most needy among men will have their needs met by the Messiah.

D. The Cutting Off of Evil Doers 29:20-21

1. The Termination of Evil Doers 29:20

Q - What would it take to bring about the prediction of this verse? It would take divine power to change the sinful nature of human beings committed to their sinful practices.

2. Examples of Evil Doers 29:21

Q - What do the examples of this verse reveal about the Lord's concerns? They reveal His concern over people who condemn people for their speech, trap judges in their exercise of justice, and defraud righteous people by means of meaningless arguments.

II. The Lord's Dealings with Israel 29:22-24

A. The Rescue of Jacob from Shame 29:22

Q - What would be significant about the end of shame for Israel? It would be deliverance from a curse which has plagued Israel throughout most of its history - as evidenced by ongoing anti-Semitism around the world.

B. The Return of Jacob's Children 29:23

Q - Why should seeing his children in his midst cause Jacob to sanctify God's name? The children of Jacob/Israel have often been defeated and destroyed in ways which will no longer take place under God's future blessings on His people.

C. The Correction of Those who Err 29:24

Q - What would it take to bring about the conditions

described in this verse? The correcting of all error and the opening up of closed human minds to instruction will take divine intervention which is assured throughout the millennial kingdom and the eternal state.

Think About It: The Lord promised that His judgment of His people would be followed by restored blessing upon them and upon the earth.

“Unworthy of Trust”

Isaiah 30:1-5

Q - When have you ever placed your trust in someone or something which proved unworthy of your trust?

Under pressure from the Assyrian and, later, Babylonian nations, the people of Israel were inclined to turn to Egypt for the support they felt they needed instead of turning to the Lord as they should have done. So the Lord uttered the fourth of six woes between Isaiah 29:1 and 33:1 to assure His people that trusting Egypt would be a serious mistake!

I. The Lord's Woe to His Rebellious Children 30:1-2

A. The Nature of their Rebellion 30:1

Q - What did the Lord identify as the nature of His people's rebellion? They made and pursued plans which were not of the Lord, and made alliances which did not originate with God's Spirit, adding sin to sin in the process.

Q - What sin were the people of Israel tempted to add to what other sin? The people of Israel were tempted to add the formation of unwise alliances to their sin of rebellion against the Lord.

B. The Specifics of their Rebellion 30:2

Q - Why is it always important for God's people to consult Him in making their plans? It is always important because He is God and sovereign over the affairs of men, whose decree will always stand in spite of man's foolish plans to the contrary.

Q - What would have been wrong with seeking refuge and shelter in Egypt? Egypt was an undependable source of refuge, unable to maintain their own stability in a dangerous world, let alone assure stability to others.

II. The Lord's Plan for His Rebellious Children 30:3-4

A. His Plan for their Humiliation 30:3

Q - How would the outcome of Israel's plan compare with their anticipation at the onset? Rather than providing refuge to Israel, Egypt would shame and humiliate Israel by their inability to provide refuge.

B. The Reason for their Humiliation 30:4

Q - What might be considered ironic in the fact that Israel's princes and ambassadors were at Zoan and Hanes seeking Egyptian help? Zoan and Hanes were considered significant Egyptian cities and centers of Egyptian wisdom, but their seeming significance and wisdom would prove illusory.

III. The Lord's Warning to His Rebellious Children 30:5

Q - Why could Egypt not profit the people of Israel as they expected? Rather than provide benefit to Israel, Egypt would cause shame and reproach for the people of Israel who sought their help.

Q - How might the nation of Israel experience shame and reproach because of their trust in Egypt? Egypt itself would be unable to stand against northern powers which were threatening Israel and causing them to seek help in Egypt.

Think About It: The Lord warned Israel through Isaiah of the

folly of rebelliously placing their trust in Egypt instead of Himself.

Apply It: The Lord should always be the source of refuge to which the people of God should turn rather than any human help.

“Truth Rejected”

Isaiah 30:6-11

Q - When have you seen someone who refused to listen to authority get into trouble for their refusal?

As the people of Israel contemplated turning to Egypt for help in view of the threats of Assyria and (later) Babylon, the Lord sent faithful messengers to warn His people not to put their trust in an untrustworthy ally. But the people had their mind made up, so they rejected not only the Lord’s message but the Lord Himself.

I. The Lord’s Oracle Concerning the Beasts of the Negev
30:6-7

A. His People’s Caravan in the Negev 30:6

Q - What dangers did the people of Israel expose themselves to in pursuit of help from Egypt? By going south to Egypt Israel was exposing itself to the dangerous animals which inhabited the desert between their land and Egypt.

Q - What kind of expenses did the people of Israel expose themselves to in pursuit of help from Egypt? They exposed themselves to the loss of the resources which they took to pay for the help of the Egyptians.

B. His People’s Destination through the Negev 30:7

Q - What is the significance of the Lord’s designation of Egypt as Rahab? Rahab is seen as a monster in the Nile River - symbolizing Egypt (cf. Psalm 87:4) as a defeated monster.

Cf. Isaiah 51:9; Ezekiel 29:3

II. The Lord's Message to His Rebellious People 30:8-11

A. His Instruction to Write the Message 30:8

Q - Why did the Lord want Isaiah to write out His message to a people who didn't want to hear it? The Lord wanted His message written down as an eternal witness concerning His word and His work on behalf of Israel.

B. His Description of the Prophet's Audience 30:9

Q - What was the Lord's assessment of His people Israel? He assessed Israel as a rebellious nation of false sons who refused to listen to His instruction.

C. His Quotation of the People's Rebellion 30:10-11

1. Their Rebellion Against the Lord's Messengers 30:10

Q - What was wrong with the people's instructions for their seers and prophets? They told their seers and prophets not to see visions or to prophesy what was right, but to speak pleasant words and prophesy illusions.

2. Their Rebellion Against the Lord Himself 30:11

Q - What was the most serious thing about the people's rebellion? They were rejecting the instruction of "the Holy One of Israel" - the only God, set far apart from all false gods.

Think About It: The people of Israel insisted on traveling to Egypt for their security, rejecting the message of the Lord through His prophets who were predicting that seeking help from Egypt would do them no good.

Apply It: Trusting in any source of help apart from the Lord is an exercise in futility - as illustrated by Israel's trust in Egypt.

“Coming Collapse”

Isaiah 30:12-17

Q - When have you seen collapse come into the life of someone who refused to turn from sin and trust the Lord?

Because the people of Israel refused to accept the Lord’s terms for their salvation and strength, He spoke through the prophet Isaiah of coming judgment which would devastate their nation and humiliate them before their enemies.

I. The Lord’s Prediction of Coming Disaster 30:12-14

A. The Reason for Coming Disaster 30:12

Q - What is significant about the title this verse uses of the Lord after Israel’s request in verse 11? The title “the Holy One of Israel” sets the Lord apart from any other so-called “god” as the only God there is - the God Israel should have been trusting in view of His having chosen them as His people.

Q - What “word” were the people of Israel rejecting in favor of oppression and guile? They were rejecting the word of God which Isaiah was faithfully delivering to them in spite of their rebellion and indifference.

Q - How were oppression and guile evident in the life of the people of Israel? Oppression was evident in the oppressive response of the leadership of the nation toward the poor, and guile was evident in their insistence on relying on Egypt instead of relying on the Lord.

Cf. 29:15, 20-21

B. The Result of Coming Disaster 30:13-14

Q - What makes “a breach about to fall” and “a bulge in a high wall” fitting illustrations of Israel’s iniquity? Both a breach about to fall and a bulge in a high wall picture disaster about to take place - which was Israel’s situation at the time.

Q - What makes a smashed potter’s jar a fitting illustration of Israel’s future condition? Like a smashed potter’s jar, Israel was about to be broken up and scattered to foreign lands.

II. The Lord’s Description of Coming Disaster 30:15-17

A. Israel’s Rejection of God’s Plan 30:15

Q - What was the Lord’s plan for His people’s salvation and strength? Repentance and rest could have been their salvation, and quietness and trust could have been their strength.

Q - What kept the Lord’s plan for His people from working? The people’s unwillingness to repent and rest and listen to and trust the Lord kept His plan from working for them.

B. God’s Revision of Israel’s Plan 30:16-17

Q - What was to become ironic about Israel’s plan to flee their enemies on swift horses? They were going to flee, to be sure, but it would be their enemies riding on swift horses in pursuit of fleeing Israel.

Q - What was significant about the Lord’s prediction that one enemy would make one thousand of the people of Israel flee? The Lord had earlier promised that only a few Israelites, by God’s blessing, would cause their enemies to flee in large numbers. Now it would be the opposite.

Cf. Leviticus 26:7-8; Deuteronomy 32:30

Q - How would a flag on a mountain top and a signal on a hill serve as a picture of Israel? A flag on a mountain or a signal on a hill without a powerful army to provide significance to them would be meaningless - as Israel had become in its insensitivity to the Lord.

Think About It: Because the people of Israel refused to repent of sin and trust in the Lord, He promised a collapse of their national fortunes.

Apply It: What are the chances our fortunes are what they might be because of our trust in and obedience to the Lord?

“Still Hopeful”

Isaiah 30:18-26

Q - When have you seen a “hopeless” situation turned around with new hope?

During Isaiah’s prophetic ministry the northern kingdom of Israel was defeated and deported by the Assyrians and the southern kingdom was under threat of the same from the Assyrian and then the Babylonians, but the Lord still offered His help if His people would turn to Him.

I. The Lord’s Desire to Extend to Israel His Grace 30:18

Q - What did the Lord’s longing and waiting for His people reveal? The Lord’s longing to be gracious and waiting to have compassion revealed His amazing patience with and love for His people.

II. The Lord’s Promise of Response to Israel’s Cry 30:19-22

A. The Prospect of Repentance and Rejoicing 30:19

Q - What could have brought Israel’s weeping to an end? If Israel had been willing to trust the Lord and ask for His help their weeping could have come to an end.

B. The Prospect of Revelation and Reprieve 30:20

Q - What was the Lord offering to bring to an end if His people would pay attention of their Teacher? The Lord was willing to come out of hiding as Israel’s teacher and put an end to their bread of privation and water of oppression.

C. The Prospect of Response to Direction 30:21

Q - What was the Lord offering to His people if they would listen? The Lord was offering to speak His guidance in their ears if they would responsively listen to His word.

D. The Prospect of Rejection of False Gods 30:22

Q - What spiritual problem was the Lord asking His people to address? The Lord was asking His people to address their idolatry by defiling their graven and molten images, scattering them with the command to “be gone.”

III. The Lord’s Promise of Blessing in Israel’s Future 30:23-26

A. The Prediction of Restored Blessing 20:23

Q - What blessings of nature was the Lord eager to restore to His people? He was eager to restore the rains which would result in a rich and plenteous supply of bread as well as roomy pastures for their animals.

B. The Prediction of Restored Prosperity 30:24

Q - Who, besides His people, stood to be blessed by Israel’s response to God? Israel’s oxen and donkeys would be blessed with a supply of salted fodder.

C. The Prediction of Military Victory 30:25

Q - What blessings does verse 25 anticipate for obedient Israel? Verse 25 anticipates an abundant supply of water on lofty mountains and high hills and the destruction of enemy armies with the falling of their towers.

D. The Prediction of Renewal and Healing 30:26

Q - What kinds of healing could obedient Israel look forward to? Israel could look forward to the binding of their fractures and the healing of the bruises inflicted by the Lord as He blessed them with greater light from responsive heavenly bodies.

Think About It: Though the southern kingdom was virtually assured of God's judgment upon their sins, the Lord was still willing (even eager) to bless their repentance at some future day.

Apply It: As God's people we never need to languish in defeat if we will respond to His word and His amazing patience and love.

“Deliverance Predicted”

Isaiah 30:27-33

Q - When have you ever enjoyed seeing a bully punished by someone bigger and stronger?

Though the Assyrians were a serious threat to the people of Israel in Isaiah's day, the Lord spoke through Isaiah in anticipation of the day when His people would rejoice in God's strength as He decimated the nation of Assyria and its king.

I. The Lord's Arrival to Judge 30:27-28

A. The Announcement of the Coming of the Lord 30:27

Q - Why might Isaiah write of the coming of the “name of the Lord” rather than of the Lord Himself? The name of the Lord represents the Lord Himself, so when His name comes from a remote place, He Himself has come.

Q - What was to be the effect of the Lord's arrival? Isaiah saw His arrival coming with burning anger in a cloud of dense smoke, His lips filled with indignation, and His tongue like a consuming fire.

B. The Purpose of the Coming of the Lord 30:28

Q - What further revelation does this verse give of the reason for the Lord's arrival? It describes the Lord shaking the nations back and forth in a sieve and putting in the jaws of the peoples a bridle to lead them to ruin.

II. The Lord's Deliverance of His People 30:29

Q - What does Isaiah's anticipation of songs and gladness suggest for Israel in this context of judgment? Isaiah pictures the people of Israel going to the mountain of the Lord to celebrate their festival with songs in the night and gladness in their hearts as they march in procession to the sound of the flute.

III. The Lord's Judgment of Assyria 30:30-33

A. The Awesomeness of the Lord 30:30

Q - What do the statements and symbols of verse 30 reveal about the Lord's dealings? The fact that the Lord's voice of authority and arm of fierce anger is demonstrated in the flame of a consuming fire, cloudburst, downpour and hail stones is a revelation of His seriousness and severity in dealing with the enemies of His people.

B. The Terror of Assyria 30:31

Q - What is significant about Isaiah's specific mention of Assyria? The mention of Assyria makes it evident that the Assyrians were a specific threat to Israel at the time of Isaiah's message.

C. The Rejoicing of God's People 30:32

Q - What place does the music of tambourines and lyres have in the context of this passage? The music of tambourines and lyres is indicative of the celebration of God's people in view of His actions against their enemies.

D. The Preparations for God's Judgment 30:33

Q - What is the significance of Isaiah's mention of Topheth? Topheth was a place in the Valley of Hinnom where

degenerate Jews sacrificed their children by fire to the heathen “god” Milcom - picturing in this verse the place where the Lord would defeat the enemies of His people by the fire of His breath.

Q - What might this verse anticipate in Assyria’s history?
It anticipates the destruction of the Assyrian empire (and every other enemy of God’s people) by the breath of the Lord.

Think About It: The Lord encouraged His people through Isaiah concerning coming days of strong judgment upon the Assyrians.

Apply It: The Lord will exercise His awesome divine power in the defeat of every enemy His people have faced in the day of judgment which is certain to come.

“Undeserved Deliverance”

Isaiah 31:1-9

Q - When have you ever seen someone undeservedly delivered from disaster?

Though the Lord had spoken earlier through Isaiah of certain judgment to come because of rebellion in Judah, He still called upon the people of Judah not to put their trust in the flimsy help of Egypt and not to fear the threat of Assyria because of His ongoing commitment to their protection.

I. The Lord’s Warning Against Trusting Egypt 31:1-3

A. Israel’s Misplaced Trust 31:1

Q - What made the people of Judah’s trust in Egypt irrational? Israel’s trust in Egypt distracted them from trusting the Lord - the only reliable source of help.

B. Israel’s Wise Judge 31:2

Q - How was the Lord going to display His wisdom to skeptical (cf. 29:14-16) and undeserving servants? He was going to bring justice in the form of disaster against the house of evildoers and against the help of workers of iniquity.

C. Israel’s Inadequate Ally 31:3

Q - How was the Lord going to demonstrate the folly of trusting in Egypt? He was going to “stretch out His hand” to cause those who were supposedly helping to stumble and those who were supposedly being helped to fall.

II. The Lord's Promise of Protection for Judah 31:4-5

A. The Lord Compared to a Lion 31:4

Q - What made a lion standing in defense of its prey against shepherds a fitting picture of the Lord? The lion's fearless defense of its kill in the face of shepherds trying to frighten it away was illustrative of the Lord's fearless performance of His will against any opposition.

B. The Lord Compared to Birds 31:5

Q - What made a flying (hovering) bird a fitting picture of the Lord? Because birds travel through the air they are difficult to stop - just as the Lord, who is spirit, cannot be stopped in carrying out His intentions.

III. The Lord's Call to Turn from Defection 31:6-9

A. The Call to Return to the Lord 31:6

Q - Why did the people of Israel need the challenge to "return" to the Lord? Israel needed the challenge to return to the Lord because they had defected from following and obeying Him.

B. The Anticipation of Abandoned Idols 31:7

Q - What would eventually cause the people of Judah to abandon their handmade idols? The people of Judah would eventually recognize that they had sinned by creating and trusting in idols.

Cf. 2:20

C. The Assurance of Judgment Upon Assyria 31:8-9

1. The Defeat of Assyria 31:8

Q - What sword was going to defeat the Assyrians? The sword of the Lord, a “sword not of man,” would defeat the Assyrians.

2. The Fear of Assyria 31:9

Q - What “rock” of the Assyrians was to pass away, and what “standard” terrify them? The “rock” of the false “gods” of the Assyrians was going to pass away, and the “standard” of the Lord was going to terrify them.

Think About It: The Lord called on Judah to turn from trust in Egypt and to anticipate the judgment of Assyria as they enjoyed His undeserved protection.

Apply It: The Lord’s protection is available to those who turn away from false “gods” to place their trust entirely in Him.

“Righteousness Ahead”

Isaiah 32:1-8

Q - Who stands out in your thinking as the best, most competent leader you have ever witnessed in action?

Though the Lord sometimes predicted, through Isaiah, coming judgment upon His wayward people in both Israel and Judah, He also spoke through Isaiah of a day when both the leaders and the people are going to do what ought to be done!

I. The Lord’s Prediction of Righteous Rule 32:1-2

A. The Character of Future Kings and Princes 32:1

Q - When should we expect a king who will reign righteously? Righteousness and justice have been promised to Israel in the hands of the “son” predicted in Isaiah 9:6-7 - a prophecy of Jesus reigning in His millennial kingdom.

Q - What would have to happen before we can expect princes who rule justly? The Lord’s intervention with respect to the sinful nature of mankind would need to happen before we can expect princes who rule justly.

B. The Effect of Future Kings and Princes 32:2

Q - What do each of Isaiah’s figures of speech reveal about the effects the king and princes anticipated will bring about? Each of Isaiah’s figures of speech anticipate protection and provision which the Lord will bring about by the king and princes anticipated in verse 2.

II. The Lord’s Description of Those Righteously Ruled 32:3-4

A. The Function of their Eyes and Ears 32:3

Q - What makes Isaiah's description in this verse seem unreal? The restoration of sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf is miraculous, so very seldom seen among men.

B. The Function of their Minds and Tongues 32:4

Q - What changes does this verse anticipate over conditions we are familiar with? Hasty minds seldom arrive at the truth ("Haste makes waste"), and stammering tongues seldom speak clearly.

III. The Lord's Description of Changes Righteousness Will Bring 32:5-8

A. The End of Mislabeling 32:5

Q - When have fools ever been called "noble" and rogues "generous"? Political rivalries among men have frequently involved deception where fools have been packaged as noble and rogues have been described as generous.

B. The True Nature of Fools and Rogues 32:6-7

Q - What is the benefit of Isaiah's revelation of the true nature of fools and rogues? Isaiah's revelation pictures fools and rogues as they actually are rather than the way they are frequently described by deceitful people.

C. The True Nature of Noble People 32:8

Q - What does Isaiah's description of the noble man anticipate? Isaiah's description of the noble man anticipates the time when noble minds will do what noble minds should

do, and the plans of noble minds will stand firm.

Think About It: The Lord anticipated, through Isaiah, a future day when Israel will enjoy the rule of a righteous king and just princes and when people will do as they should do.

Apply It: Only when plans and programs are carried out by leaders who are righteous and just are they pleasing to the Lord, so it is important for God's people to make and carry out plans and programs which are right and just.

“Bad Days, Good Days”

Isaiah 32:9-20

Q - What is the most dramatic reversal of fortunes you can recall any nation experiencing in your days?

Though the sins of Isaiah’s people had, by his day, virtually assured them of soon-coming days of difficulty, Isaiah could see beyond Israel’s difficulties to days of prosperity as a result of the outpouring of God’s Spirit.

I. The Lord’s Description of Israel’s Impending Distress 32:9-14

A. His Call to Women at Ease 32:9

Q - Why might Isaiah’s call from the Lord be addressed to the women of Israel in this verse? Though women are often more sensitive to the Lord than men are, the women of Jerusalem were spiritually insensitive and pursuing live of ease.

B. His Prediction of Impending Change 32:10

Q - What change was about to come into the lives of the women addressed? In only a little more than a year the vintage of their prosperity would come to an end and there would be no harvest coming on to replenish their former prosperity.

C. His Warning to Women at Ease 32:11-14

Q - What might the call to “tremble” (vv. 11-12) portend for women who were at ease? Because people tremble at circumstances which are frightening, Isaiah was calling on the women of Judah to tremble because very difficult times were

coming upon them.

Q - What reasons do verses 13-14 provide for Isaiah's call for the women to "rise up" and "tremble"? The population of Judah would be heading for exile in caves as their cities and fields were abandoned and their armies defeated

II. The Lord's Description of Israel's Glorious Future 32:15-20

A. Anticipation of the Outpouring of the Spirit 32:15a

Q - When might Isaiah's people expect the predicted outpouring of God's Spirit? They could expect the predicted outpouring of God's Spirit when their righteous king arrived to rule with princes who will be committed to justice in the millennial kingdom of Christ.

Cf. Verse 1

B. Results of the Outpouring of the Spirit 32:15b-20

Q - What did Isaiah anticipate the Spirit's outpouring would mean to the land itself (v. 15b)? He anticipated the restoration of healthy conditions in nature when wilderness areas would become fertile fields and fertile fields would be like forests.

Q - What impact do verses 16-17 anticipate the Spirit's outpouring would have upon the conduct of the people of Israel? The Spirit's outpouring would result in justice and righteousness on earth, leading to peace and quietness and confidence forever.

Q - What change in Israel's living conditions does verse 18 anticipate from the Spirit's outpouring? Israel's living conditions will be characterized by peace in their cities and homes

and by security as their resting places will be undisturbed.

Q - What comfort might the people of Israel find in the flattened forests and devastated city mentioned in verse 19? The flattened forests and devastated city will be those of the enemies of Israel - primarily the nation of Assyria in the day in which Isaiah was writing his prophecy, but anticipating the defeat of every enemy of Israel more distantly when Messiah reigns.

Cf. 28:2; 30:30; Revelation 16:21

Q - What is so “blessed” about the conditions described in verse 20? The people of Israel will no longer face competition for their land which will be sufficient in extent to enable them to allow their animals to range freely.

Think About It: Though Israel was facing some difficult days because of sinful ways, Isaiah could see days of future blessing under the influence of God’s Spirit.

Apply It: Sinful behavior greatly complicates human experience, but there is hope for sinners in the mercies of the Lord.

“Judgment for the Judge”

Isaiah 33:1-12

Q - What are some nations the Lord has used to bring judgment against sinners before being judged themselves at the hand of the Lord?

The Assyrian empire served as an instrument of divine judgment in Isaiah’s day against both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. But Isaiah could see prophetically that the end was in view for Assyria itself at the hand of the Lord.

I. The Lord’s Warning to the Destroyer 33:1

Q - What makes Assyria a prime candidate for God’s description as a destroyer and treacherous nation? Assyria was expanding its territory and influence throughout the middle-east by means of violent and treacherous means.

II. The People’s Prayer for Salvation 33:2-4

Q - What claim on the Lord does verse 2 indicate Israel had in their distressing circumstances? Israel’s claim on the Lord was His graciousness in His dealings with His people as the God of salvation.

Q - What does verse three reveal as Isaiah’s confidence in the face of Israel’s difficulties? He was trusting in the Lord as the power who causes people to disperse when He brings on tumult.

Q - What do the figures of verse 4 picture regarding the spoiling of the enemies of Israel? The destructive behavior of the caterpillar and the locust are illustrations of the destruction

the Lord is well able to inflict upon His opponents.

III. The Prophet's Praise of the Lord 33:5-6

Q - What claims to fame does Isaiah list in verse 5 and 6 which called for the Lord's exaltation? The Lord's heavenly dwelling, His corner on justice and righteousness, His stability in any circumstance, and the wealth of His salvation, wisdom and knowledge all make Him the God to be feared by any enemy.

IV. The Prophet's Anticipation of Judah's Judgment 33:7-9

Q - What might have caused the disillusionment Isaiah describes in verse 7? The bravery of the men of Israel and the nation's ambassadors seeking peace were going to be insufficient to prevent bitter tears in the face of coming judgment.

Q - What broken covenant could have caused the desolate highways and despised cities of Israel described in verse 9? The covenant made at Mt. Sinai came with such curses in the event that the people should fail to obey its conditions (Leviticus. 26; Deuteronomy 28).

V. The Lord's Exaltation in Victory 33:10-12

Q - When did the Lord rise up on behalf of His people to be exalted by them as envisioned in verse 10? The Lord's predicted judgment of the Assyrian nation would be evidence that the Lord was rising up on behalf of His people.

Q - What "chaff" was conceived by the Assyrians which gave birth to "stubble" as described in verse 11? Assyria's bold assertions of dominance (Isaiah 36:8-10) was "chaff" which would give birth to "stubble" when they were consumed

by the fiery breath of the Lord.

Q - What do Isaiah's figures in verse 12 envision for Assyria? The figures of cut thorns burned to lime in a fire envision the complete destruction of Assyria.

Think About It: Though the Lord would use Assyria to judge His people, Isaiah predicted that He would also exalt Himself by judging Assyria.

“Trusting in a Tight Spot”

Isaiah 33:13-24

Q - When has the Lord proved Himself most worthy of trust in difficult circumstances in your life?

With the Assyrian army camped outside her walls, the people of Jerusalem and Israel had no reason to rejoice in their present circumstances. But there was still reason to remain committed to the Lord and to the promise of His eventual revelation of glory for His beleaguered people.

I. The Lord’s Protection of the Righteous in Zion 33:13-16

A. His Call to Attention 33:13

Q - Who does this verse call to attention, and why? It calls people both far and near to pay attention to the works of the Lord.

B. The Terror of Sinners in Zion 33:14

Q - What reason did the sinners of Zion have to be terrified? They had reason to be terrified by the consuming fire of the judgment of the Lord against Israel.

C. The Qualifications of the Secure in Zion 33:15

Q - What was the Lord’s answer to the despair expressed in the questions of verse 14? People whose lives were righteous in every respect had no reason to despair.

D. The Security of the Righteous in Zion 33:16

Q - What was the Lord's commitment to the righteous even in difficult days? The Lord assured the righteous that their place of refuge would be secure and their supply of food and drink would be sufficient.

II. The Lord's Prediction of the Future - Near and Far 33:17-24

A. The Vision of God's King and Kingdom 33:17

Q - What reason did the righteous have to hope in spite of current difficulties? They were promised that they would see the King in His beauty in a far-distant land.

B. The Prospect of Assyrian Judgment 33:18

Q - What terrors were facing even the righteous in Isaiah's day? They were facing the calculations of enemy forces with respect to the contents and construction of their cities.

C. The Vision of Deliverance from Enemies 33:19-22

1. The Demise of Foreigners 33:19

Q - What would have to happen for Israel to be delivered from fierce people of unintelligible speech? Israel would have to be transported to a future time and place of refuge in the care of the Lord.

2. The Deliverance of Jerusalem 33:20

Q - What does Isaiah's vision of Jerusalem present as reason for the oppressed Jews of his day to be encouraged? His vision anticipates a time when Jerusalem will be secure and able to observe its feasts in undisturbed conditions.

3. The Protection of Jerusalem 33:21

Q - What changes did Isaiah envision in the glorious Jerusalem of the future? He envisioned a city with rivers and wide canals which would not be traversed by hostile forces.

4. The Salvation of Jerusalem 33:22

Q - What did Isaiah see as Israel's only hope of salvation? He saw salvation from the Lord as their judge and lawgiver and king as their only hope.

D. The Prospect of Jerusalem's Judgment 33:23

Q - What hope did Isaiah see of Jerusalem's deliverance in the face of the Assyrian siege? Isaiah saw the "ship of state" for Jerusalem in disrepair as enemies, even lame ones, divided the plunder of its defeat.

E. The Vision of Jerusalem's Healing 33:24

Q - What did Isaiah see as the ultimate outcome for Jerusalem? He saw a day when no one would be sick and every iniquity would be forgiven.

Think About It: Isaiah could see hope in the Lord for beleaguered Israel even in the face of an Assyrian siege.

Apply It: The Lord has a promising future in store for His chosen people even in times when present circumstances are seemingly beyond any hope.

“Plans for Devastation”

Isaiah 34:1-7

Q - What is the most devastating war scene you have ever either seen or heard described?

The Lord spoke through Isaiah of His intention to judge the nations of earth, singling out the hostilities He had in store for the nation of Edom (which so often troubled His people Israel) as an example of the plans He had to bring destruction upon all of His enemies.

I. The Lord’s Call to the Nations 34:1

Q - Who does the Lord call to attention, and what does this suggest? The Lord calls all nations to attention, suggesting that He has an important announcement to make to all.

II. The Lord’s Warning of Wrath 34:2-4

A. His Destruction of Nations 34:2

Q - What do the scope and the force of the Lord’s indignation suggest about the time of this prophecy’s fulfillment? The scope and force of the Lord’s indignation suggests the future time when He will have vanquished all who have stood in opposition to Him.

Note: What His people were instructed to do upon entering Canaan, the Lord fully intends to do to all of His enemies.

B. His Devastation of Troops 34:3

Q - What does the Lord’s treatment of His enemies reveal

about them and about Him? It reveals the impotence of the Lord's enemies in the face of His awesome power to destroy them.

C. His Judgment in the Heavens 34:4

Q - Where else in Scripture, and with reference to what, do we find similar descriptions of the Lord's acts of judgment? We find similar descriptions of the Lord's judgment in Isaiah and Ezekiel and Joel, but most clearly in Matthew 24:29 and II Peter 3:10 with reference to judgment at the end of the tribulation.

III. The Lord's Focus of Wrath 34:5-7

A. The Satiation of His Sword 34:5

Q - What could be the significance of the Lord's reference to Edom in this verse? As an ancient enemy of God's people, Israel, Edom serves as an example of the Lord's intentions in dealing with peoples who are opposed to Him.

B. The Location of His Sacrifice 34:6

Q - Why might the Lord use sacrificial terminology to describe His judgment against Edom? Sacrificial terminology involves the death and destruction of animals, depicting the Lord's treatment of the nation of Edom and all other enemies.

C. The Outcome of His Wrath 34:7

Q - What do the terms used in this verse reveal about God and about His intentions? The terms used reveal the Lord's plan to put His enemies to death as an ox or young bull would be killed, creating a messy scene by its blood and greasy fat.

Think About It: The Lord has plans to judge the nations as He judged the nation of Edom - as Isaiah said He would.

Apply It: Opposing the Lord is a dead-end path to defeat and destruction by His powerful hand of judgment.

“Desolation for Edom”

Isaiah 34:8-17

Q - What is the most desolate region of land you have ever spent any time visiting?

The Lord committed Himself to bring devastating judgment against the nation of Edom - turning it permanently into a desert wasteland - because of their hostile treatment of their Jewish relatives over many years (as predicted in Genesis 12:3).

I. The Lord’s Acts of Vengeance 34:8-16

A. The Cause of Vengeance 34:8

Q - What reason did the Lord give for His commitment to a “day of vengeance” against the nation of Edom? The treatment of “the cause of Zion” by the nation of Edom was the reason for the Lord’s commitment to a “day of vengeance.”

B. The Terms of Vengeance 34:9-15

1. Its Desolation 34:9-10

Q - What infamous site of God’s judgment do the terms of Edom’s judgment recall to mind? The terms of Edom’s judgment recall to mind the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Cf. Jeremiah 34:17-18

Q - What time frame did the Lord commit Himself to in judging Edom? The Lord committed Himself to judgment of Edom which would encompass generations forever.

2. Its Animal Inhabitants 23:11

Q - What is significant about the animals the Lord predicted would inhabit the territory of Edom? The animals predicted to inhabit Edom are ceremonially unclean wild animals generally found in desolate and desert environments.

3. Its Humiliation 34:12

Q - What did the Lord predict concerning the future human inhabitants of the territory of Edom? He predicted that those inhabiting the territory would not be people qualified to be considered nobles or princes.

4. Its Produce 34:13a

Q - What did the Lord predict regarding the future productivity of the territory of Edom? He predicted that the plants which would grow best in Edom would be thorns, nettles, and thistles.

5. Its Most Numerous Inhabitants 34:13b-15

Q - What impression do you get of the future of Edom on the basis of its primary inhabitants? The impression is that Edom would be uninhabited by humans as wild animals became its primary inhabitants.

II. The Lord's Record of Vengeance 34:16

A. His Book's Assignment of Inhabitants 34:16

Q - What "book of the Lord" is apparently in view in this verse? The "book of the Lord" being recorded by Isaiah is apparently in view in verse 16.

Q - What impression does this verse give of God's commitment? It gives the impression that the Lord was committed to seeing Edom inhabited by wild creatures.

B. His Book's Assignment of Land 34:17

Q - What does God's assignment of Edom's territory bring to mind? It brings to mind His assignments for Sodom and Gomorrah and for Babylon (Jeremiah 50:39-40).

Think About It: The Lord determined to permanently destroy Edom for many years of mistreatment of the nation of Israel.

Apply It: There is always a price to pay for going contrary to the will of the Lord!

“Restoration for Troubled Earth”

Isaiah 35:1-10

Q - What are some conditions on earth as we know it that you would most like to see changed?

The Lord restated to Isaiah His longstanding promise that there is coming a day when He is going to radically change conditions on our earth and in Israel in the classic Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 35.

I. Conditions in God’s Kingdom 35:1-2

A. The Wilderness in Bloom 35:1

Q - What is going to make the wilderness and desert rejoice? The Lord’s creation of a “new heaven and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17) will make the wilderness and desert rejoice.

B. The Wilderness in Comparison 35:2

Q - How do verse 2’s comparisons fill out the prediction of verse 1? Verse 2 references flowers in blossom and cites some of the most productive places known to Israel in Isaiah’s day.

II. Encouragement from God’s Kingdom 35:3-4

A. Encouragement for the Exhausted 35:3

Q - What is surprising about the assignments given in verse 3? Encouraging people who are exhausted and strengthening those who are feeble are challenging assignments.

B. Encouragement from the Lord 35:4

Q - What basis will kingdom inhabitants have for encouragement? They will be encouraged that the Lord will have come on their behalf with vengeance and recompense toward those who have opposed them.

III. Miracles in God's Kingdom 35:5-6a

A. Healing of the Blind and Deaf 35:5

Q - Why might the afflictions of blindness and deafness have been singled out for attention in this verse? Deafness and blindness are not normally correctable conditions.

B. Healing of the Lame and Dumb 35:6a

Q - What is significant about the healings which will take place in the kingdom? Troubling physical conditions like lameness and muteness will not only be improved but fully reversed.

IV. Restoration in God's Kingdom 35:6b-10

A. Transformation of the Land 35:6b-7

Q - What surprising signs of transformation will take place in God's kingdom? Water will be present in places which were once desert wildernesses and once grassy places will be characterized by reeds and rushes.

B. Existence of a Holy Highway 35:8

Q - What will set the highway Isaiah envisions apart from existing highways? The highway he envisions will be known

for its holiness and for the absence of fools and unclean people.

C. Absence of Predators 35:9a

Q - What will be significant about the absence of lions and other beasts? The absence of lions and other dangerous beasts will make the highway a safe place.

D. Return of the Ransomed to Zion 35:9b-10

Q - Who will inhabit the land, from where, and under what conditions? The highway will be traveled by those whom the Lord has ransomed and redeemed, shouting with everlasting joy because they have been freed of sorrow and sighing.

Think About It: The messianic kingdom will bring restoration and renewal to our troubled earth and its people from the hand of the Lord.

Apply It: The Lord has very good plans in store for people whom He has redeemed from the slaveries of their past.

“The Challenge of Rabshakeh”

Isaiah 36:1-12

Q - When have you been faced with any challenge which was seemingly insoluble?

When the Lord entered into His covenant relationship with the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai there were bright prospects ahead if the nation conformed their national life to the conditions of the covenant; but there were dire consequences ahead if they failed to conform. The nation's history, of course, was characterized by failure to conform to the conditions of the covenant far more often than by success in conformity. So by the time of Isaiah judgment from the Lord was inevitable, and the arrival and the threats of agents of the King of Assyria looked like certain disaster for the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

I. The Invasion of Judah by Sennacherib 36:1-3

A. The Timing of the Invasion 36:1

Q - What is a little surprising about the timing of the enemy invasion Isaiah describes in view of the description of King Hezekiah which is found in II Kings 18:1-6? Because Hezekiah got off to such a good start in his reign as king it is somewhat surprising that the Lord allowed Israel's enemies to invade during his reign.

B. The Leader of the Invasion 36:2

Q - Who does Isaiah identify as the spokesman for the enemy invaders who threatened Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time? He identifies Rabshakeh as the spokesman for the Assyrians who

came with a large army to seize fortified cities and to threaten Jerusalem.

C. The Responders to the Invasion 36:3

Q - Who does Isaiah say King Hezekiah sent out to represent him to the Rabshakeh? Isaiah reports that Hezekiah sent out Eliakim the son of Hilkiah (his household manager), and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph to represent him.

II. The Insulting Message of Rabshakeh 36:4-10

A. Rabshakeh Questions Hezekiah's Confidence 36:4-5

Q - What was Rabshakeh's question and challenge for King Hezekiah and his representatives at the city wall? He asked who the king was relying on in his rebellion against the king of Assyria, and he charged the king with speaking only empty words in any plans he was making for defense.

B. Rabshakeh Questions Hezekiah's Defenders 36:6-7

Q - What was Rabshakeh's accusation regarding any hope Hezekiah had in looking to Egypt or to the Lord for defense? He described Pharaoh as a staff of a crushed reed and charged that Hezekiah had distanced himself from the Lord by removing His high places and altars in favor of the temple altar.

C. Rabshakeh Questions Hezekiah's Power 36:8-9

Q - What did Rabshakeh offer to provide for Hezekiah in his futile defense against the Assyrians? He offered to provide two thousand horses if Hezekiah could find horsemen to ride them, suggesting that neither Hezekiah nor Egyptian chariots and horsemen would be able to repulse even one of his own

officials.

D. Rabshakeh Questions the Lord's Support 36:10

Q - What part did Rabshakeh claim the Lord Himself was playing in his threat to the city of Jerusalem? He stated that the Lord had approved his hostility against Jerusalem and had even instructed him to go up against Israel and destroy it.

III. The Insistence of Rabshakeh 36:11-12

A. The Request to Rabshakeh 36:11

Q - What request did Hezekiah's representatives make of the Rabshakeh? They requested that he speak to them in the Aramaic language so the people assembled along the wall of Jerusalem wouldn't hear his insulting words.

B. The Response of Rabshakeh 36:12

Q - Why did Rabshakeh say he was unwilling to do what he was asked to do? He said he was unwilling to grant their request because the people assembled along the wall needed to know about the desperate conditions they were facing at the hands of the Assyrian army.

Think About It: The Assyrian invasion of Judah began with insults from the commander regarding Judah's ability to respond and the Lord's availability to help.

Apply It: The suggestion that even God can't help His people presents a desperate but unreal situation!

“When Things Seem Hopeless”

Isaiah 36:13-22

Q - When has anyone ever suggested to you that your confidence in the Lord was a waste of trust?

Speaking about spiritual things with someone who does not believe that the Lord exists or who believes in some “other god” than the God revealed in the Bible presents its challenges! Atheists and agnostics and followers of false religions can’t begin to see any reason why a believer would want to depend on someone they deny or at least doubt is real. Even evidence for the existence and the supremacy of the Lord God who is revealed in the Bible appears to such people as an exercise in futility. And the challenge remains in the case of those who believe that God may exist but who are convinced that He has turned against you - as Job discovered in his conversation with his “friends.”

I. The Reproach of Assyria’s Rabshakeh 36:13-20

A. His Admonition Not to Listen to Hezekiah 36:13-15

Q - What was the basis on which the Assyrian Rabshakeh challenged the messengers of King Hezekiah not to depend on him for help in their time of trouble? It was his assertion that Hezekiah would be of no help to those who depended on him to help them.

Q - What was Rabshakeh’s warning to those who knew that King Hezekiah was challenging his people to place their trust in the Lord? It was his warning that Hezekiah was challenging his people with bad advice because the Lord was not going to help.

B. His Advice to Make Peace with Assyria 36:16-17

Q - What was Rabshakeh's encouraging promise to the people of Jerusalem if they would make peace with the king of Assyria? He promised that they would continue to enjoy the fruit of their vines and fig trees and to drink water from their own cisterns.

Q - What less encouraging prediction did Rabshakeh make to the people of Jerusalem regarding their long-term prospects? He stated that he would come to take the people away from their land to another land of bread and vineyards like their own where they would continue to have grain and new wine.

C. His Assertion that the Lord Could Not Help 36:18-20

Q - What foolish reason did Rabshakeh give the people of Jerusalem for turning away from their trust in their king and their God? He told them that the Lord was no more able to protect them from Assyria than the gods of other nations who had been defeated by Assyria had been able to protect those who trusted in them.

II. The Response of Israel's Representatives 36:21-22

A. Their Restraint by the King 36:21

Q - What good advice had King Hezekiah given to his representatives who were conversing with Rabshakeh? He had commanded his representatives not to speak a word in reply to Rabshakeh.

B. Their Report to the King 36:22

Q - What evidence of their demoralization did King Heze-

kiah's representatives present as they appeared before the king with the report of the words of Rabshakeh? The fact that they came before Hezekiah with their clothing torn was evidence that they were grief-stricken over the dire prospects before them and their nation.

Think About It: Israel's leaders reported to King Hezekiah in distress over Rabshakeh's warning against trusting the Lord.

Apply It: There is little reason for encouragement when the people of God despair of help from the Lord.

“The Promise of Help from on High”

Isaiah 37:1-7

Q - When have you turned to the Lord for His help in dealing with seemingly impossible circumstances?

Life on a sin-cursed earth often takes us to difficult places. There are times when the difficulties can seem insurmountable, as the difficulties faced by the people of Israel down through the centuries have often been (e.g. their experience at the Red Sea as the Egyptian army moved in behind them). But it is when life's difficulties become most challenging that those who turn to the Lord in trust discover that His arm is not too short to help! Such was the experience of Judah's King Hezekiah in the face of threats from the Rabshakeh sent to Jerusalem by the king of Assyria during the days of Isaiah.

I. The Response of Hezekiah to Rabshakeh's Insults 37:1-4

A. His Visible Show of Despair 37:1a

Q - What was the cause of King Hezekiah's despair? He was concerned about the danger the Assyrian army posed to his city and nation as they camped outside the walls of Jerusalem.

B. His Visit to the Temple 37:1b

Q - What decision of Hezekiah in the face of despair was an encouraging sign? From the house of the Lord he sent messengers to Isaiah for His help in the crisis at hand.

C. His Verbal Appeal to Isaiah 37:2-4

1. His Description of Distress 37:2-3

Q - What was significant about the person Hezekiah turned to with a report of his difficulty? Isaiah was significant as a prophet of the Lord who had served the Lord and His nation for years by Hezekiah's time.

Q - What was the substance of Hezekiah's message to Isaiah? Hezekiah reported that his people were facing a day of distress from which there was no evident hope of deliverance.

2. His Dependence on the Lord 37:4a

Q - What was Hezekiah hoping that the Lord might do in light of his desperation? He was hoping that the Lord might hear the words of Rabshakeh and rebuke his message.

3. His Desire for Prayer 37:4b

Q - Why might Hezekiah have considered the prayer of Isaiah of particular importance in response to his people's need? The Prophet Isaiah was known to have a significant relationship with the Lord as a choice spokesman.

II. The Response of Isaiah to Rabshakeh's Insults 37:5-7

A. His Advice Not to Fear 37:5-6

Q - What good reason did the Prophet Isaiah give to King Hezekiah for a fearless response to his difficulties? Isaiah explained that Rabshakeh had offended the Lord Himself by his blasphemous words.

B. His Anticipation of Rabshakeh's Fate 37:7

Q - How did Isaiah predict that the Lord was going to work on behalf of His people with respect to Rabshakeh's threats?

He predicted that Rabshakeh would hear a rumor which would cause him to return to Assyria where he would be killed by the sword in his own land.

Think About It: Hezekiah's request for help from the Lord was met with Isaiah's encouragement and prediction of rescue.

Apply It: Those who turn to the Lord for His help in times of despair need not fear because He is willing and able to help.

“Whose Power Is Greater?”

Isaiah 37:8-13

Q - When have you had to decide whether you would trust in the power of man or the power of the Lord?

When difficulties in life come our way it is natural for us to look for help from the people who surround us in life. But there are times when those who surround us have little or nothing they can do to help with our problems. So we are far better served to do as King Solomon challenged us to do in the familiar words of Proverbs 3:5: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart.” King Hezekiah discovered in the difficulties he faced that (as the psalmist expressed it in Psalm 118:8) “it is better to take refuge in the LORD Than to trust in man.”

I. The Discovery of Rabshakeh Upon Returning to Assyria 37:8-9a

A. The Current Combat with Libnah 37:8

Q - What did the Assyrian King’s contest with Libnah, after fighting at Lachish, reveal about Assyria’s danger to Israel? It reveals that Assyria had other challenges on its mind as it tied up some of its troops in its challenge to Israel.

B. The Coming Combat with Cush 37:9a

Q - What new revelation complicated Rabshakeh’s aggressions toward the city of Jerusalem? After expending resources at Lachish, and now expending more at Libnah, the Rabshakeh now learned of yet another challenge from the king of Cush which would also require the attention of his armies.

II. The Declaration of Rabshakeh Upon Returning to Assyria 37:9b-13

A. His Messengers to Hezekiah 37:9b

Q - What did Rabshakeh's need to send messengers to King Hezekiah reveal about his threat to the king and his people? It revealed that Rabshakeh did not yet have Judah and Jerusalem under his control.

B. His Message to Hezekiah 37:10-13

1. The Challenge Not to Let the Lord Deceive Him 37:10b

Q - What was foolishly problematic about Rabshakeh's challenge to King Hezekiah? Rabshakeh clearly had too little understanding of the person and power of the Lord!

2. The Claim of Assyrian Destruction of Other Nations 37:11-13

Q - What was the basis for Rabshakeh's confidence (v. 11) that not even the Lord would be able to provide deliverance for the people of Israel? He was confident that not even the Lord could help Hezekiah because the "gods" of other nations which had been defeated by Assyria had been unable to help them.

Q - Where were the fatal flaws (verse 12) in Rabshakeh's confidence in his nation's superiority in the threat it posed to the people of Israel? His fatal flaws were in his assumption that the "gods" of defeated nations were to be equated with the Lord God of Israel.

Q - What made Rabshakeh's claims of victory over foreign

“nations” less than significant claims? The defeated kings of the nations Rabshakeh listed were not looking to the Lord for their help as Hezekiah was.

Think About It: Rabshakeh returned to embattled Assyria boastfully warning King Hezekiah not to imagine that the Lord could help his nation.

Apply It: The enemies of God’s people foolishly want them to think that their power is superior to the power of the Lord.

“Hezekiah’s Prayer”

Isaiah 37:14-20

Q - When have you had a desperate prayer request to take to the Lord?

Prayers are frequently lifted by the peoples of the earth to their “gods” for help in times of need. But the prayers of the people of the God of heaven are different from the prayers of others because they are addressed to the only God who actually hears their prayers and is able to act on behalf of His people as they take their needs to His throne in prayer. King Hezekiah appears to have understood the difference very clearly as evidenced by his prayer to the Lord at a critical time for the city of Jerusalem and the people of Judah.

I. Hezekiah’s Presence at the Temple 37:14

A. His Reading of Rabshakeh’s Letter 37:14a

Q - Why was Hezekiah receiving the message of the Assyrian Rabshakeh in the form of a letter rather than in person? The Rabshakeh had returned to his land (vv. 7-8) in response to other conflicts he was facing at the time when he was threatening Jerusalem.

B. His Response to Rabshakeh’s Letter 37:14b

Q - Whose attention to the letter of Rabshakeh did Hezekiah invite by his handling of the letter? He invited the Lord’s attention to the letter by taking it to the temple and spreading it out before the Lord.

II. Hezekiah’s Prayer in the Temple 37:15-19

A. His Acknowledgement of the Lord 37:15-16

Q - What important and relevant truth did Hezekiah acknowledge as he began his prayer to the Lord? Hezekiah acknowledged the Lord role as the only true God and His role as the maker of heaven and earth.

Q - How did Hezekiah identify the Lord's superiority over the gods of the Assyrians? Hezekiah identified the Lord's superiority over the gods of the Assyrians because of His location in heaven and His role as God over all the kingdoms of the earth.

B. His Appeal to the Lord 37:17

Q - What folly did Hezekiah call upon the Lord to see and hear and respond to from Rabshakeh? Hezekiah called upon the Lord to see and to listen to the words which Sennacherib sent to reproach Him, the living God, through his messenger Rabshakeh.

C. His Acknowledgment of Syrian Victories 37:18-19a

Q - What boast of the Assyrians did Hezekiah confess was true? Hezekiah acknowledged that the Assyrian boast to have devastated all the countries and lands they had attacked, throwing their "gods" into the fire were true.

D. His Awareness of Idol Impotence 37:19b

Q - To what did Hezekiah attribute the successes of the Assyrians in their defeat of the gods of other nations? Hezekiah attributed the successes of the Assyrians in defeating the gods of other nations to the fact that they were not gods at all, but only idols crafted by the hands of their human makers.

III. Hezekiah's Petition in the Temple 37:20

A. His Petition for Deliverance 37:20a

Q - What "life message" (cf. 12:2-3) of Isaiah's prophecies did the prayer of Hezekiah reflect? Hezekiah's prayer reflected the "life message" that the Lord God provides salvation to those who place their trust in Him.

B. His Prediction in Deliverance 37:20b

Q - What did Hezekiah pray would happen when the Lord answered his prayer for deliverance? Hezekiah prayed that all the kingdoms of earth would know that the Lord God alone is truly God because of His deliverance of the city of Jerusalem from the attack of the Assyrians.

Think About It: Hezekiah's awareness of Assyrian successes was surpassed by His confidence in the Lord's superiority.

Apply It: Though the challenges of our lives may at times be daunting they are never too difficult for the Lord to address for the honor of His name.

“A Word of Encouragement”

Isaiah 37:21-35

Q - When has your reliance on the Lord for His help in a time of need been memorably rewarded?

As a college student I was paying my way through school with earnings from a part time job. My earnings provided just enough to make a monthly payment with about five dollars left over to meet any incidental expenses. As Christmas season approached a month came when there wasn't enough to make my payment to the school, but I sought the Lord's provision and waited for His answer. A letter came in the mail one day with a check for thirty dollars in it - sent by a friend who had no idea of my need. It was the only time in years of college and seminary when anyone sent any money to help with my expenses, but it was an important lesson on the Lord's ability to meet the needs of those who trust in Him. King Hezekiah's need was much bigger, but the Lord demonstrated His ability to meet any need!

I. The Reason for Hezekiah's Encouragement 37:21

Q - What reason did the Prophet Isaiah give Hezekiah to be encouraged in the face of his difficulties? The prophet Isaiah assured Hezekiah that the Lord was pleased that he had prayed about his need.

II. The Response for Hezekiah's Encouragement 37:22-29

A. The Lord's Rebuke of Assyria 37:22-25

1. Assyria's Reproach of Israel 37:22

Q - What problem with Assyria's attitude toward Israel did the Lord identify in His response to Hezekiah? The Lord identified Assyria's acts in despising and mocking Jerusalem in His response to Hezekiah.

2. Assyria's Blasphemy of God 37:23-25

Q - What did the Lord identify as the underlying and real problem of Assyria's attitude toward Israel in verse 23? The Lord identified Assyria's reproaching and blaspheming and lifting up their eyes against Him as the underlying problem in Assyria's response to Jerusalem.

Q - What claims on the part of the Assyrians did the Lord find offensive and blasphemous (vv. 24-25)? The Lord found Assyria's claims to have cut down all the tall cedar and cypress trees of Lebanon and to have dried up all the rivers of Egypt as offensive and blasphemous claims.

B. The Lord's Reminder to Assyria 37:26-27

1. His Enablement of their Successes 37:26

Q - What did the Lord identify as the actual reason for any success the Assyrians had in defeating their enemies? The Lord identified His own long-standing plan to use the Assyrians to "turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps" as the reason for any success the Assyrians were having.

2. His Subversion of their Enemies 37:27

Q - What did the Lord do to the enemies of Assyria to assure their defeat by the Assyrians? The Lord diminished the strength of the enemies of Assyria to assure their defeat.

C. The Lord's Determination for Assyria 37:28-29

1. His Awareness of their Activities 37:28

Q - What did the Lord say He was well aware of with respect to the Assyrians? The Lord said that He was well aware of the Assyrians' sitting down, their going out and coming in, and their raging against Him.

2. His Announcement of their Doom 37:29

Q - What did the Lord predict He was going to do to the Assyrians in response to the prayer of Hezekiah? The Lord predicted that He was going to put a hook in the nose of the Assyrians, a bridle in their lips, and was going to turn them back in the way from which they had come against Jerusalem.

Think About It: The Lord responded to Hezekiah's dependence on Him with the assurance that He was going to defeat the arrogance of the Assyrians.

Apply It: The Lord is pleased when His people depend on Him and is well able to reward their dependence with deliverance from their enemies.

“Powerful to Save”

Isaiah 37:30-38

Q - When have you seen the Lord bring about unlikely results in response to your trust in Him?

When the Assyrian King Sennacherib sent his troops into Israel where they were very successful in defeating city after city in the kingdom of Judah, he assumed that his troops would also be successful in defeating and destroying Jerusalem, the only remaining obstacle in his pursuit of a complete dominance over the people of Israel. He even sent the Rabshakeh to speak derisively of King Hezekiah and of the king's trust in the Lord for help in defending his city. But the Lord was very pleased with Hezekiah's dependence on Him for help, so the Assyrian king was in for a very big surprise!

I. The Lord's Promise of Deliverance for Israel 37:30-32

A. The Provision of Food 37:30

Q - What made the Lord's provision of food so encouraging in view of Israel's challenges? The Lord's promise to supply food for the people of Jerusalem by means of volunteer crops, then normal agricultural activities, encouraged them by its assurance that He knew of their need and had plans to meet it.

B. The Prediction of Fruitfulness 37:31

Q - What promise of fruitfulness was even more significant than the promise of food? The Lord's promise to protect the surviving remnant of the house of Judah, enabling them to take root and bear fruit in years ahead, was His assurance of their survival as a nation in the face of great danger.

C. The Preservation of a Remnant 37:32

Q - What made the promised preservation of a remnant such a significant promise for Hezekiah? Apart from the zeal of the Lord in accomplishing preservation for Judah the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Judah could have been completely defeated and destroyed.

II. The Lord's Prediction of Defeat for Assyria 37:33-35

A. The Prevention of Assyrian Hostility 37:33

Q - What was the explanation, in view of the threat which existed, for the unanticipated prediction of verse 33? The word of the Lord in furthering the promise of verse 32 provided the explanation for Assyria's failure to carry out the defeat and destruction of Jerusalem and Judah.

B. The Return of the King of Assyria 37:34

Q - How did verse 29 of the 37th chapter of Isaiah further explain the promise of the Assyrian king's return to his own country? Verse 29 explained that the Lord would cause the Assyrian army to go back the way they came in view of the offense of Assyria's arrogance in raging against the Lord.

C. The Preservation of the City of Jerusalem 37:35

Q - What reason did the Lord give Hezekiah for His preservation of the city of Jerusalem? The Lord explained that He was preserving Jerusalem for His own sake and for the sake of David, to whom He had promised a lasting posterity.

III. The Lord's Promise of Destruction Realized 37:36-38

A. The Destruction of the Assyrian Army 37:36

Q - How does verse 36 number the opposing forces in the overnight battle which it describes? Verse 36 tells of the destruction of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers by the angel of the LORD - though it implies that there were others who awoke to discover the carnage which had taken place.

B. The Departure of the Assyrian King 37:37

Q - What was the smart decision made by Sennacherib in view of the power he had just witnessed at the hand of the Lord? King Sennacherib wisely decided to go back to Assyria as a result of the Lord's power in destroying his army.

C. The Death of the Assyrian King 37:38

Q - What contrasting results came from the visit of King Hezekiah to the Jerusalem temple (v. 14) and that of King Sennacherib to the house of Nisroch his god? King Hezekiah's visit to the Jerusalem temple resulted in the Lord's response in defense of Jerusalem by killing Assyrian soldiers, where King Sennacherib's visit to the house of Nisroch his god resulted in his death at the hands of his own sons.

Q - What contrast is seen in the fates of the three sons of Sennacherib in verse 38? Two of Sennacherib's three sons escaped into the land of Ararat after killing their father, while his third son, Esarhaddon, became king in the place of Sennacherib.

Think About It: The Lord's promise of deliverance for Israel was realized by His defeat of the Assyrian army and the death of the Assyrian King.

Application: The Lord is easily able to defeat His people's enemies in response to their genuine trust in Him.

“Hezekiah’s Reprieve”

Isaiah 38:1-8

Q - When have you faced prospects from the hand of the Lord which were not particularly encouraging?

King Hezekiah’s trust in the Lord during many years of his reign were rewarded, as we might expect, with some amazing blessings in his life and the life of his nation. Because he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord - removing high places and breaking down sacred pillars and cutting down Asherah polls - even breaking in pieces the bronze serpent which Moses had built during the plague of serpents in his day which had become an object of veneration to the people of Israel, “the LORD was with him” and “wherever he went he prospered.” But the time came when Hezekiah was no longer so faithful to the Lord so, not surprisingly, he ran into some problems.

I. The Discouraging Prediction for Hezekiah 38:1-3

A. Isaiah’s Challenge from the Lord to Ailing Hezekiah 38:1

Q - What was the Prophet Isaiah’s unwelcome prediction from the Lord for King Hezekiah? It was Isaiah’s unwelcome prediction that an illness Hezekiah experienced was leading him to his death.

B. Hezekiah’s Call to the Lord in Response to Isaiah’s Word 38:2-3

Q - How did King Hezekiah display his emotions in his response to Isaiah’s prediction? Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and wept bitterly as he complained to the Lord that his

faithfulness should not be rewarded with a life-threatening illness.

II. The Encouraging Prediction for Hezekiah 38:4-6

A. The Lord's Promise of an Additional Fifteen Years 38:4-5

Q - What reason did the Lord give for His surprising modification of His prediction through Isaiah for King Hezekiah? The Lord promised to extend Hezekiah's life by fifteen years because he had prayed to the Lord about his illness and the prospect of his death.

B. The Lord's Promise to Defend and Deliver Jerusalem 38:6

Q - What made the Lord's promise in verse six even more significant than the promise of verse five? The promise of verse six revealed the Lord's plan to go beyond extending Hezekiah's life personally to defending the city of Jerusalem from the hand of the Assyrians.

III. The Miraculous Sign for Hezekiah 38:7-8

A. The Lord's Promise of a Sign for Hezekiah 38:7-8a

Q - What was appropriately symbolic about the sign which the Lord promised to Isaiah? Just as the Lord had promised to extend Hezekiah's life by fifteen years, He promised to affirm His promise by miraculously extending the length of that day as evidenced by the retreating shadow on a stairway.

B. The Lord's Provision of His Sign for Hezekiah 38:8b

Q - How far does II Chronicles 32:31 report the knowledge of God's sign for Hezekiah was known? The report of the miraculous sign the Lord granted to Hezekiah became known all the way to Babylon because the rulers of Babylon sent envoys to check on the reports of the sign the Lord had granted to Hezekiah.

Think About It: The Lord is easily able to alter His plans for those who seek His help in prayer.

Application: There is nothing the Lord cannot do in response to the needs and prayers of His people - though trusting Him to do what He says, even when it is not encouraging, may be the best path to take.

“Hezekiah’s Response to God’s Sign”

Isaiah 38:9-22

Q - When have you been discouraged by the possibility that your earthly life could soon come to an end?

Though Christians live in anticipation of life on a far higher plane beyond their present earthly experience, the Lord has built into the human psyche the desire to remain alive. There are always things we think we would like to accomplish or complete which make the thought of physical death an unwelcome thought. So when King Hezekiah became ill (Isaiah 38:1) and faced the likelihood that he was about to die he did some serious thinking about his remaining days on earth and recorded his thoughts in a psalm.

I. Hezekiah’s Complaint 38:9-14

A. His Anticipation of Early Demise 38:9-11

Q - What sense of injustice did Hezekiah reveal in response to the thought of early death? He revealed that he might be cheated out of the fullness of life he had anticipated if he were deprived, in mid-life, of the rest of his years.

B. His Illustrations of Early Demise 38:12-14

Q - What metaphors did Hezekiah use to describe the prospect of his untimely death? He wrote of (1) the folded tent - 38:12a; (2). The Severed Weaving - 38:12b; (3). The Destructive Lion - 38:13; (4). The Sounding Bird 38:14a; and (5) The Upturned Eyes 38:14b.

II. Hezekiah’s Confidence 38:15-22

A. His Speechlessness 38:15

Q - What was the cause of Hezekiah's loss for words in view of his situation? Though he was feeling bitter about having his future established at only fifteen years, he felt unable to express his appreciation for the Lord's decision to alter His original prediction.

B. His Request 38:16

Q - What things does Hezekiah seem to have in mind by his acknowledgment that "by these things men live"? He seems to have in mind the Lord's blessing in granting him additional years of life.

Q - What was Hezekiah's request in view of the Lord's blessings in his life? It was his request that the Lord restore his health and allow him to continue to live.

C. His Forgiveness 38:17

Q - What did Hezekiah realize the Lord had done to keep his soul from the "pit of nothingness"? He realized that the Lord had to forgive his sins in order to prolong his life.

D. His Thankfulness 38:18-19

Q - What did Hezekiah recognize the Lord had done in order to permit him to express his thankfulness? He realized that the Lord had preserved him alive to permit his thankfulness, because it was his understanding that dead people cannot express thankfulness.

E. His Expectation 38:20

Q - What was Hezekiah expecting to do the rest of his life in view of the Lord's favor in preserving him alive? He was expecting to write songs of gratitude to be played and sung at the temple the rest of his life.

III. Hezekiah's Treatment 38:21-22

A. The Prescription of Isaiah 38:21

Q - How might the Lord's prescription through Isaiah have been beneficial in addressing Hezekiah's physical need? Because Hezekiah was suffering as a result of a boil, the application of a cake of figs must have had some capacity to draw out infection which was threatening his life.

B. The Question of Hezekiah 38:22

Q - What did Hezekiah's request for a sign regarding his return to the temple reveal about him? It revealed a lingering lack of faith in view of the significant sign the Lord had already granted in the receding shadow of verse 8.

Think About It: King Hezekiah responded to the Lord's prediction of his death with complaints and questions as well as commitments to worship in spite of the Lord's miraculous indication of reprieve.

Application: We need to be grateful when the Lord extends His mercies to us as undeserving sinners.

“Short Sighted Spirituality”

Isaiah 39:1-8

Q - When have you seen a spiritual leader’s seeming disregard for the long-term effects of their leadership?

History is replete with examples of people in places of spiritual leadership who failed to lead in such a way that their leadership had positive results for the long term. While it is commendable that a spiritual leader provide life-giving direction for a time - perhaps years or even decades - the benefits of such leadership often lose their luster when it is later learned that they have failed to exemplify, over the long haul, the important truths their leadership once championed. Such was the experience of Judah’s King Hezekiah whose reign got off to such a promising spiritual start but ended poorly because of some bad decisions in his later years.

I. Hezekiah’s Visitors from Babylon 39:1-2

A. The Letters and Gift for Hezekiah 39:1

Q - What was the reason for the letters and gift received by King Hezekiah from Merodach-baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon? They were sent in recognition that Hezekiah had recovered from a serious illness.

B. The Hospitality of Hezekiah 39:2

Q - How did King Hezekiah welcome the Babylonians who delivered the letter and gifts sent by Merodach-baladan? He showed them all of the valuables of his treasure house - including silver and gold and spices and precious oil and his whole armory.

II. Hezekiah's Visit from Isaiah 39:3-4

A. The Prophet's First Question 39:3

Q - What did the Prophet Isaiah ask to know from King Hezekiah following the visit of dignitaries from Babylon? He wanted to know where they came from and what they had to say to Hezekiah.

B. The Prophet's Second Question 39:4

Q - What was Isaiah's follow-up question for King Hezekiah regarding the visit of dignitaries from Babylon? He asked what King Hezekiah showed his visitors in his house during their visit.

III. Hezekiah's Message from Isaiah 39:5-7

A. The Prophecy Concerning Treasures 39:5-6

Q - What discouraging prediction did Isaiah have for King Hezekiah regarding the treasures he had proudly shown to his visitors from Babylon? Isaiah predicted that the days were coming when all the treasures which Hezekiah and his predecessors had stored up in Jerusalem would be carried away to Babylon.

B. The Prophecy Concerning Family 39:7

Q - What discouraging prediction did Isaiah have for King Hezekiah regarding some of his sons? Isaiah predicted that some of Hezekiah's sons would be taken to Babylon where they would become officials in the palace of the Babylonian king.

IV. Hezekiah's Response to Isaiah 39:8

Q - What surprising response did King Hezekiah have to the prediction that his treasures and even some of his sons would be taken away to Babylon? He responded with the message that God's word through Isaiah was a good word!

Q - What reason did King Hezekiah give for his assessment that Isaiah's prediction of Babylonian captivity was good? He said that Isaiah's message from God was good because what he predicted would not happen during Hezekiah's days.

Think About It: King Hezekiah demonstrated a callous lack of concern for the long-term prosperity of God's people.

Application: Our concern for the prosperity of God's kingdom should extend well beyond our own time and personal comfort.

“Words of Comfort”

Isaiah 40:1-8

Q - When have you found encouragement in the promises of God’s word in the midst of difficult circumstances in your life?

The fact that human beings live on a sin-cursed earth means that every person’s life is likely to include both some happy experiences and some which are not only unhappy but perhaps even painful and calamitous. As a result, while many people who are not attuned to divine providence and revelation experience defeat and despair, those who know the Lord and who are familiar with the truths revealed in His word can do as the Apostle Paul encouraged God’s people to do in Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” It was such a perspective which the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed to the people of Israel in the face of great difficulties in the fortieth chapter of his prophecy.

I. Isaiah’s Proclamation of Comfort for Israel 40:1-2

A. The Word of Comfort 40:1

Q - How does Isaiah 39:5-7 make the prophet’s message from the Lord in 40:1 a very welcome word? The Lord’s message to Hezekiah of coming defeat makes His word of comfort a pleasant surprise.

B. The Reason for Comfort 40:2

Q - What does God’s message for His people Israel reveal about His nature and His plan? His message reveals that He is a patient and forgiving and loving God who plans to bring res-

toration to a people currently destined for defeat.

Q - When could the people of Israel anticipate the full realization of God's message of comfort which He commissioned Isaiah to deliver? Israel could anticipate the full realization of God's comfort when its wars become a thing of the past and its sins have been dealt with completely (i.e. during the coming kingdom of the Messiah predicted in 9:6-7).

II. Isaiah's Prediction of Glory 40:3-8

A. The Call to Clear the Way 40:3

Q - What did Isaiah's call to clear the way in the desert anticipate in Israel's future? It anticipated a time when the Lord would return to favor His people with His presence and influence in their affairs.

B. The Call to Level the Terrain 40:4

Q - What differing understandings might Isaiah's terminology in verse 4 present? Taken literally, his terminology would anticipate geographical changes in the millennium; taken figuratively, his terminology would anticipate changes in the spiritual "landscape" of the nation of Israel.

C. The Revelation of Glory 40:5

Q - Who did Isaiah predict would witness the revelation of God's glory in verse 5? He predicted that "all flesh" would witness the revelation of the glory of God.

D. The Transience of Plants and People 40:6-8a

Q - What were Isaiah's descriptions of the passing glory of

plant life intended to illustrate? They were intended to illustrate the brevity and comparative insignificance of human existence.

E. The Permanence of the Word of God 40:8b

Q - What is the message of Isaiah's contrast of the passing experience of human beings with the permanence of God's word? While human beings come and go with the passing of time, God's word continues to have undiminished relevance down through the ages.

Q - How was the truth of the second line of verse 8 intended to provide the comfort for Israel of which verse 1 spoke? It was intended to encourage Israel with the fact that the changing fortunes of their national experience would not keep the Lord from fulfilling His promises to bless them and make them a blessing.

Think About It: In troubling times for the displaced people of Israel the Prophet Isaiah had words of comfort regarding the lasting word of God.

Application: While earthly life is a passing experience of ups and downs, God's dependable word offers lasting encouragement for God's chosen people.

“Looking Up”

Isaiah 40:9-11

Q - What hard times which the nation of Israel has gone through stand out in your thinking?

The times the people of Israel were experiencing during the days of the Old Testament prophets were not very encouraging times. The spiritual apostasy which characterized much of the nation during the days of Elijah and Elisha were already very problematic. And the Lord's judgment of His people's spiritual wanderings during days of defeat and dispersion were even more troubling. But, even during some of its darkest days, the Lord was still mindful of ancient promises to bring the people of Israel through their troubles to days of prosperity - as the 40th chapter of Isaiah's prophecy reveals.

I. Isaiah's Challenge to Look Up to the Lord 40:9

A. The Call to Announce Good News from on High

Q - What would be the point of calling for an announcement of good news from a high mountain? Making the announcement from a high mountain would make it audible to a larger number of people.

B. The Call to Announce Good News Loudly

Q - What does the further instruction to announce good news with a mighty voice and without fear add to the impact of the first instruction? It would further emphasize the fact that what is to be announced is important and intended for a broad audience.

C. The Call to Announce the Presence of the Lord

Q - What was at least somewhat surprising about Isaiah's announcement that the Lord was present among His people and that He had good news for them? In Isaiah's day the people of Israel were being subjected to the judgment of Assyrian and Babylonian enemies, leaving the impression that the Lord had abandoned His people.

II. Isaiah's Prediction of the Coming of the Lord 40:10

A. The Prediction of the Might of the Lord

Q - What was particularly encouraging about Isaiah's revelation that the Lord was going to come among His people with might and a strong arm ruling for Him? Israel's defeat and dispersion by enemy Gentile nations was going to require a great show of divine might to reverse.

B. The Prediction of the Reward of the Lord

Q - What reason did the people of Israel and the cities of Judah have to expect any reward from the Lord? Because they were under judgment from the Lord they had little reason to anticipate any reward from the Lord. Their only hope of reward from the Lord was His commitment to bless them.

III. Isaiah's Description of the Tender Care of the Lord 40:11

A. The Picture of the Lord's Leading

Q - How did Isaiah's description of the Lord as a shepherd tending His flock more fully explain the "reward" the Lord had in mind for His people? The image of the Lord as a shepherd speaks of leadership which wisely addresses the needs of some-

what helpless sheep - providing food and water and protection and attention to individual needs.

B. The Picture of the Lord's Embrace

Q - How does Isaiah's picture of the Lord gathering lambs and carrying them in His arms further develop the thought that the Lord was going to care for His flock? Isaiah's picture presents the Lord providing tender care for the most fragile and needy members of His flock.

C. The Picture of the Lord's Tender Care

Q - What does Isaiah's description of the shepherd's attention to the needs of nursing ewes suggest? It suggests that the Lord will show sensitivity to concerns among His people like the concerns of a mother for the needs of her young for nourishment and a slower pace.

Think About It: Isaiah comforted his people with the prospect of the Lord's coming to them with the strength of a conquering king and with the reward of a shepherd competently caring for his flock.

Apply It: The Lord will fulfill His commitments to bless those whom He has promised to bless.

“The Greatness of God”

Isaiah 40:12-17

Q - Who are some of earth’s citizens who stand out in your thinking as great human beings?

There have been many people down through the ages of human history who have been very influential, standing out from the crowd of humanity because of their amazing skills in one field or another. Some have proudly proclaimed their own greatness - like the boxer Cassius Clay (who chose to go by the name Mohammed Ali) who made the bold pronouncement for all the world to hear “I am the greatest.” And the ancient Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar thought pretty highly of himself until the Lord sent him out to pasture for the seven-year period when he literally became like an animal (Daniel 4:28-33). As Nebuchadnezzar came to acknowledge (Daniel 4:35), “all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing” in terms of greatness when compared with the Lord!

I. The Greatness of God in Creation 40:12

A. His Measurement of the Waters

Q - What would be true of the hollow of the hand which could measure all the waters on the earth? Such a hand would be incredibly large and strong.

B. His Measurement of the Heavens

Q - How does the Lord’s ability to measure the heavens compare with man’s ability to do the same? His ability is beyond understanding because mankind, with all of his instruments, still cannot even be sure how large the universe is.

C. His Calculation of the Dust

Q - What would be some of the challenges of measuring the amount of dust on the earth? It would be impossible for any human being to know how much dust is on the surface of the earth, let alone how much more is beneath the surface and blowing in the atmosphere of the earth.

D. His Weighing of the Mountains and Hills

Q - What would be true of the balance which could weigh the mountains or the scales which could weigh the hills of earth? They would be far beyond man's ability to even imagine, let alone construct or operate.

II. The Greatness of God in Understanding 40:13-14

A. He Has No Need of Direction 40:13a

Q - What does the Spirit of God's independence of any direction or counsel from man reveal about man? The direction and counsel which mankind has to offer is of no importance to the omniscient Spirit of God.

B. He Has No Need of Counsel 40:13b

Q - How did Job's experience in questioning the Lord's dealings in His life turn out by his own evaluation in Job 42:1-6? Job retracted all that he had said and repented in dust and ashes for even questioning the Lord's dealings.

C. He Consults No One for Understanding 40:14a

Q - What is clearly the answer to the question posed in the opening line of verse 14? God's Spirit has never consulted

anyone or been informed by anyone for the understanding of all things which He possesses.

D. He Has No Need for Instruction 40:14b-c

Q - What does the Spirit of God's grasp of justice and knowledge and understanding reveal about man's appropriate response to Him? It reveals that mankind should respect and trust God's Spirit rather than trying to question or advise Him in any way about any matter.

III. The Greatness of God Among the Nations 40:15-17

A. The Insignificance of the Nations 40:15

Q - What does the Lord's comparison of the nations of earth with a drop from a bucket or a speck of dust on a scale reveal to all who question the ways of the Lord? It reveals that any supposed importance of mankind in his own view is merely an illusion.

B. The Illustration of Lebanon's Insignificance 40:16

Q - What is significant about the Lord's choice of Lebanon as a potential source of firewood or animals to be used to offer an appropriate sacrifice to Him? Lebanon seemed to many in Israel as a significant source of wood and animal life because of its extensive forests of large trees, but they were hardly significant in view of the greatness of the Lord.

C. The Meaninglessness of the Nations 40:17

Q - Why did Israel need to hear from Isaiah of God's assessment of all nations as nothing and meaningless? Israel needed to be reminded that neither they nor any other nation

was of great significance by comparison with the Lord who rules the nations.

Think About It: Nothing on earth or in the universe can be compared favorably with the greatness of the Lord.

Apply It: Do we begin to appreciate the greatness of the Lord as we should?

“The Incomparable God”

Isaiah 40:18-26

Q - When have you witnessed material objects which have been venerated by human beings as worthy of worship?

Anyone who has traveled to foreign lands where idolatry is practiced has probably seen man-made objects which are held up as “gods” by the peoples of many nations. Hinduism, for example, has over 330 million “gods” who can be worshiped by the veneration of idols created to represent them. According to the website manashanii.com, Hindus believe that there are many gods who each belong to one of three categories: (1) Creator gods (e.g. Brahma); (2) Maintainer gods (e.g. Vishnu) and (3) Destroyer gods (e.g. Shiva or the goddess Kali). To the Prophet Isaiah the Lord clearly distinguished Himself from any idol. He is the only God and creator of all that is, and is not to be likened to any object created by man. He is the incomparable God!

I. The Futility of Idolatry 40:18-20

A. The Searching Question 40:18

Q - How did the Lord’s question in verse 18 set Himself apart from any other “god” worshiped by mankind? His question challenged the notion that any other being or any object is worthy to be compared to Him.

B. The Silliness of Idolatry 40:19-20

Q - How did the Lord set Himself apart from any of the many objects which are venerated among men? He set Himself apart by the observation that the objects venerated among men

are made by men out of a variety of natural products.

II. The Fame of the Lord 40:21-26

A. The Lord's Supremacy 40:21-22

Q - How did the Lord picture His supremacy over all things? He described Himself sitting high above the earth, stretching out the heavens as a curtain above its inhabitants who are compared to grasshoppers.

B. The Lord's Sovereignty 40:23-24

Q - How does the Lord display His sovereignty over the nations according to these verses? He merely blows on earth's rulers and judges, causing a storm which carries them away like stubble.

C. The Lord's Superiority 40:25

Q - What is the Lord's challenge to anyone who would question or criticize Him in verse 25? He asks them to whom they would liken Him and compare Him as a potential equal.

D. The Lord's Strength 40:26

Q - How does the Lord demonstrate His strength in verse 26? He challenges His people to lift their eyes toward heaven where He created the stars and places them in the heavens, calling each one of them by name as evidence of the greatness of His strength.

Think About It: The Lord is so superior in every measure to man-made idols that there is no comparison to be made.

Apply It: What are some of the things we allow at times to compete in our thinking with the greatness of the Lord?

“Reasons to Wait”

Isaiah 40:27-31

Q - When have you experienced the wisdom of waiting for the Lord’s leading in some important matter in your life?

Waiting for things we hope to experience in life can sometimes be a frustrating experience. Living at a time when many things in life can be experienced or accomplished with little or no waiting hasn’t made the need to wait any easier. So many things in our age are subject to “instant gratification.” For the people of Israel in Isaiah’s day it would take decades to see the Lord’s deliverance from Babylonian captivity take place, so the Lord spoke through His prophet to remind the people of Israel (and us) that waiting for the Lord is a very reasonable choice!

I. The Lord’s Question 40:27

A. He Questions Those Who Try to Hide 40:27a

Q - What is the Lord’s obvious assumption in questioning people who claim their ways are hidden from Him? He is obviously assuming that such claims are empty claims.

B. He Questions Those Who Claim Injustice 40:27b

Q - What is the Lord’s obvious assumption in questioning people who claim He is not just? He is obviously assuming that their claims are wrong because His ways are just.

II. The Lord’s Assertion 40:28-29

A. He Is Tireless 40:28a

Q - How do the Lord's titles in verse 28 affirm His tirelessness? The fact that He is eternal and that He created all that is on the earth affirm His boundless energy.

B. His Understanding Is "Inscrutable" 40:28b

Q - What are some of the ways in which the Lord demonstrates incomprehensible understanding? The genius of His creative works, His knowledge of all future events, and His full awareness of the thoughts in the mind of every man are each demonstrations of His complete understanding of all things.

C. He Is the Source of Strength 40:29

Q - What are some examples of the Lord giving strength to the weary and increased power to those in need of it? His provision of strength for Elijah, running from Jezebel, to travel forty days on the basis of one meal (I Kings 19:8), and the strength He gave to Samson to take out the supporting pillars of the large building where his enemies were mocking his defeat (Judges 16:28-30) are memorable examples.

III. The Lord's Comparisons 40:30-31

A. His Comparison with Youth 40:30

Q - Why did the Lord choose to compare Himself with youthful human beings? Young people exemplify humanity at its greatest period of strength and energy.

B. His Strength for Those Who Trust 40:31

Q - What was the Lord's assurance through Isaiah for those who "wait for the LORD"? He assured them that their renewed strength would enable them to mount up with wings like ea-

gles, to run and not get tired, and to walk and not get weary.

Think About It: Because the Lord is incomparably great and powerful and wise, those who wait for Him to accomplish His purposes will always be best served.

Apply It: Are we growing in our ability to trust in the Lord by patiently waiting for Him to perfect His will in our lives?

“In Control”

Isaiah 41:1-7

Q - What stands out in your thinking as an example of the Lord’s sovereign control in the affairs of the earth?

The pursuit of greatness has marked much of human history on the part of both individual human beings and the nations of the world. The quest for power and control was clearly evident in Isaiah’s days when the nations of Egypt and Assyria and Babylon were frequently jostling among themselves for control over the middle-eastern world. So the Lord spoke to and through the Prophet Isaiah to assure him and his people and his readers that He is ultimately in control of the affairs of earth. And his example of His use of “one from the east” (a reference to King Cyrus of Persia) clearly illustrates His control.

I. The Lord’s Call to Listen 41:1

Q - What does the Lord’s call to the coastlands to listen to Him in silence suggest? It suggests that He has something to say that they may find objectionable.

Q - How has Isaiah 40:31 just explained the source of new strength for those who need it - a source the coastlands have not relied on as they face judgment from the Lord? Isaiah 40:31 revealed that new strength is available to those who “wait for the LORD.”

II. The Lord’s Choice of a Conqueror 41:2-4

A. The Identity of His Conqueror 41:2

Q - Who does Isaiah 44:28 identify by name as the person

from the east whom the Lord intended to use for His purposes? It identifies Cyrus (“the great”), leader of the rising Persian empire as the person He would use.

Q - How did the Lord intend to use the man from the east of whom Isaiah wrote? He intended to use the man from the east to subdue kings and their nations, making them like dust by his sword and like wind-driven chaff.

B. The Success of His Conqueror 41:3

Q - What successes did the Lord predict on the part of the man from the east? He predicted that he would pursue enemies, continuing on his way in safety to regions (i.e. areas of the Euphrates and beyond) which were previously unfamiliar to him.

C. The Control of His Conqueror 41:4

Q - Who did Isaiah recognize as the reason for the successes of the man from the east? Isaiah recognized the Lord, who controls the generations of humanity, as the reason for his successes.

III. The Lord’s Consideration of Resistance 41:5-7

A. The Fear of the Coastlands 41:5

Q - What “coastlands” would have been in view in Isaiah’s prophecy of those who would fear the man from the east? The coastlands of the Mediterranean Sea would primarily be in view.

B. The Bravado of the Coastlands 41:6

Q - How did Isaiah describe the bravado of the coastlands who were to be threatened by the successes of the man from the east? He described their challenge to one another to “be strong.”

C. The Preparations of the Coastlands 41:7

Q - What futile effort on the part of the coastal nations did Isaiah’s prophecy describe in verse 7? His prophecy described the futile efforts on the part of coastal nations to construct more “gods” by the efforts of their craftsmen.

Q - How did Isaiah anticipate the futility of their preparations in his description of their efforts? He wrote of their futile attempts to keep their manmade “gods” from falling down by the use of nails to steady the products coming from the hands of their metal workers.

Think About It: The Lord announced His plan to use a man from the east (Cyrus) to conquer middle-east nations as evidence of His control over the affairs of earth.

Apply It: The Lord exercises control over the affairs of nations by His use of human instruments of His choosing.

“Favored People”

Isaiah 41:8-20

Q - What are some of the ways in which the Lord has favored the people of Israel down through the centuries?

The history of the people of Israel has been characterized by many highs and lows. As explained in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, the Lord promised to richly bless Israel if they obeyed the terms of their covenant with Him, but He also promised to curse their disobedience - which explains the many difficulties the people of Israel have experienced over the centuries. But the Lord revealed to Isaiah that He has plans to restore His favor to His people in days to come as He enables them to defeat their enemies and as He refreshes their land.

I. The Lord’s Encouragement for Israel 41:8-10

A. His Description of His People 41:8

Q - What encouraging descriptive terms did the Lord use with regard to the people of Israel in verse 8? He referred to Israel as His “servant,” as Jacob who was “chosen” by Him, and as descendants of “Abraham, my friend.”

B. His Reminder of His Favor on His People 41:9

Q - How did the Lord recall His favorable treatment of the nation of Israel down through the years? He recalled having taken the people of Israel “from the ends of the earth” as His own “servant,” chosen by Him and not rejected as in the case of other nations.

C. His Word of Encouragement for His People 41:10

Q - What did the Lord assure His people Israel they did not need to do in spite of conquering powers coming from the east? He assured them that they did not need to fear or to anxiously look about them in view of conquering kings who threatened their region.

Q - What was the Lord's assurance to Israel in support of His words of encouragement? It was His assurance that, as their God, He would strengthen them and help them and uphold them with His righteous right hand.

II. The Lord's Plan to Defend Israel 41:11-16

A. His Intention to Dishonor Israel's Enemies 41:11-12

Q - How did the Lord promise He was going to dishonor the enemies of Israel? He promised to shame them by eliminating them as if they had never been.

B. His Intention to Support Israel Against Enemies 41:13-14

Q - What unflattering term did the Lord use with reference to the nation of Israel and their deservedness of His favor? He referred to them as "you worm Jacob."

Q - What did the Lord promise to do for Israel in spite of their lowliness among the nations? He promised to help them by upholding their right hand.

Q - How did the Lord describe Himself as Israel's helper? He described Himself as their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

C. His Intention to Use Israel to Defeat Enemies 41:15-16

Q - What imagery did the Lord use to describe His people's conquest over their enemies? He used the imagery of harvest - a double-edged threshing sledge pulverizing Israel's enemies, turning them to chaff, carried away by the wind.

III. The Lord's Plan to Bless Israel 41:17-20

A. His Plan to Satisfy their Thirst 41:17-18

Q - How did the Lord describe His people's quest? He described their quest as a thirst for water.

Q - What was the Lord's plan to address Israel's quest? It was His plan to provide rivers and streams and pools, turning dry land into fountains of water.

B. His Plan to Replenish their Land 41:19

Q - How did the Lord intend to refresh the desert scene He pictured in their day? He intended to provide a variety of trees - cedars, acacias, myrtles, olive trees, junipers, box trees and cypress trees - to refresh their dry land.

C. His Plan to Grant them Understanding 41:20

Q - What were the people of Israel destined to understand as conditions improved in their land? They were destined to understand that the hand of the Lord - the Holy One of Israel - was responsible for the improved the conditions in their land.

Think About It: The Lord has big plans to bless the nation of Israel and their land, as promised, in spite of the failures of their past.

Apply It: The Lord can be trusted to keep every promise He has

made to His chosen people of the Old Testament - as well as every promise He has made to His chosen people in every age.

“Comparing the Gods”

Isaiah 41:21-29

Q - What has been your experience with false “gods”?

Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician, physicist, inventor, philosopher, writer and Catholic theologian, has often been quoted as saying that “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made know through Jesus Christ.” Evidence that he was right in what he said is seen in the religious beliefs of people all around the world - many of whom are placing their trust in “gods” which do not exist!

I. The Lord’s Challenge to False “Gods” 41:21-24

A. His Challenge to Argue 41:21

Q - What was the challenge of “the King of Jacob” to the so-called “gods” of the peoples who surrounded His people Israel? It was His challenge that they present their case with any strong arguments they could come up with.

B. His Challenge to Predict or Even Understand 41:22

Q - What two directions in time, which He clearly understands, did the Lord challenge false “gods” to address as evidence of their existence? He challenged them to predict the future or even to explain events of the past.

C. His Challenge to Demonstrate Deity 41:23

Q - What did the Lord observe that false “gods” are not able to do in their own defense? He observed that they are not

only unable to predict the future, but that they are actually not able to do anything - good or evil - to cause men to fear them.

D. His Challenge to Their Existence 41:24

Q - What was the Lord's concluding thought regarding the false "gods" worshiped by many people? He stated that false "gods" are actually of no account and that those who choose them as their "gods" are abominable.

II. The Lord's Claims as the True God 41:25-29

A. His Prediction of the Rise of Cyrus 41:25

Q - What did the Lord cite as clear evidence of His own standing as the true God? He cited His own plan to arouse a man from the north (Cyrus) to call on His name and to overwhelm rulers in his path.

B. His Prediction Unequaled Among the "Gods" 41:26

Q - What was the Lord's challenge to other "gods" in whom surrounding people (and even some in Israel) placed their trust? The Lord asked who among the "gods" had either predicted the future or accurately assessed the past, and He answered His own question with the assurance that there was no one who had.

C. His Problem with His Own People 41:27-29

Q - What was so disappointing to the Lord regarding even His own people Israel in Isaiah's day (vv. 27-28)? Though the Lord had sent good news to Zion by His messengers (v. 27), there was no one left who provided good counsel (v. 28).

Q - What was the Lord's assessment of the people of Zion in Isaiah's day (v. 29)? He described them as false and their works worthless because of their devotion to molten images which He described as wind and emptiness.

Think About It: Though the Lord had demonstrated His deity by prophecy of the future and explanation of the past, which no other "god" could do, His people had turned inexplicably to the worship of false "gods."

Apply It: It is far more sensible for us to worship the only true God than the false "gods" revered by so many of earth's peoples.

“Behold, My Servant”

Isaiah 42:1-4

Q - What do you think it was about Jesus that kept His own people from receiving Him (John 1:11) as the Messiah He IS?

Though Jesus did, when He came to earth as a man, what the prophets predicted He would do, there were some people whose expectations exceeded the accomplishments of Jesus during His earthly ministry. The Jewish people understood the Old Testament’s description of the blessings Jesus will bring when He comes as their Messianic King, but they did not understand its description of His sufferings and rejection and death for the sins of humanity. At His first coming, Jesus did not do ALL that the prophets predicted He would do. But He WILL have done all that was predicted of Him when all has been said and done!

I. The Servant’s Credentials 42:1

A. He Is Upheld by God

Q - In what sense would you say Jesus was “upheld” (Heb. *tamak* - to grasp; hold up; support) by God at His first coming? His ministry was initiated and supported by God the Father throughout His physical presence on earth.

B. He Is Pleasing to God

Q - How do we know God the Father “took pleasure” in Jesus? The Father spoke His pleasure of His Son from heaven on more than one occasion (Matthew 3:17; 17:5), and He worked in harmony with Jesus throughout His ministry (Matthew 11:27; John 8:54; 10:18).

C. He Possesses God's Spirit

Q - What evidence of the presence of God's Spirit in Him can you cite from the life and ministry of Jesus? He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil and empowered by the Spirit to overcome temptation.

D. He Will Bring Justice to the Nations

Q - In what sense would you say the nations of earth are experiencing justice as a result of Jesus' coming? The nations where justice is more likely to be realized are nations inspired in their policies by the teachings of Christianity.

II. The Servant's Quiet Ways 42:2-3a

A. His Soft Voice 42:2

Q - What evidence can you cite of Jesus' soft-spokenness in ministry? Matthew 8:4 records His instruction to a healed leper not to spread word of his healing, but to go to the priests as the Law directed.

B. His Gentle Ways 42:3a

Q - What example of Jesus' gentle dealings can you cite when He might have been expected to act more forcefully? He responded to Judas as "Friend" even as Judas was betraying Him to His enemies in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:50).

III. The Servant's Success 42:3b-4

A. He Will Bring Justice 42:3b-4a

Q - When do you think we can safely say that Jesus will have brought justice to the nations? He will have brought justice to the nations when they are judged during the tribulation and when His just rule extends around the world during His millennial reign.

B. He Will Bring Instruction 42:4b

Q - What might keep the coastlands waiting for the Law of the Lord? Because the coastlands are the remotest parts of the earth they may not immediately receive word of God's law as soon as people closer to the center of Messiah's administration due to their distant locations.

Think About It: Jesus first came to earth as a humble servant, but He will come again to bring God's justice to the nations.

Apply It: Though justice is often unrealized on our sin-cursed earth, it will be realized during the administration of Jesus as millennial king.

“The Servant’s Assignment”

Isaiah 42:5-9

Q - What are some of the things servants have done over the centuries to please the ones they have served?

The Lord called His Servant, the Messiah, to promote and preserve His glory by doing what no other servant could ever possibly have done - enlightening and delivering prisoners from the darkness of their prison as a light to the nations.

I. The Lord’s Self-Description 42:5

Q - What does the Lord’s role as creator of the heavens reveal about Him? He is truly God and is extremely intelligent and powerful as evidenced by the vastness and intricacy of the universe (cf. Romans 1:20).

Q - What does the Lord’s work as earth’s maker and the creator of its “offspring” add to the knowledge that He created the heavens? It adds the thought that He is the Creator of the amazing variety of plants and animals which are evident around the world.

Q - What does the Lord’s ability to give breath and spirit to earth’s human population add to His self-description? It adds the truth that mankind, the “pinnacle” of God’s creative genius, was given life and awareness as a result of the Lord’s creative work.

II. The Lord’s Messianic Appointment 42:6-7

A. His Call Upon His Servant 42:6

Q - What makes the Servant's calling in righteousness significant to His place in God's plan? The Father did what was right in calling His Son and He called Him to live righteously and bring righteousness to those who trust Him.

Q - What is the importance of God's holding and watching over His Servant? His Servant's life was secure and destined to fulfill His purpose in the hand of the Lord in spite of the opposition of both Satan and human enemies.

Q - What is the Servant's role as a covenant to the people? God's Servant fulfilled the Lord's promise to provide salvation for humanity (in Genesis 3:15) and for His people Israel (Psalm 53:6, etc.) as Savior and Messiah.

Q - What does the Servant's description as "a light to the nations" signify? It signifies that His ministry would not only serve and enlighten His people Israel but people of other nations as well.

B. His Assignment for His Servant 42:7

Q - Whose "blind eyes" would be in need of opening at the hands of the Lord's Servant? Every person is afflicted with spiritual blindness until the Lord enlightens their understanding.

Q - What dark prison holds those for whom God's Servant would provide escape? Every person is locked up in the prison house of sin until the Lord saves them through the ministry of His Servant Jesus.

III. The Lord's Determination and Declaration 42:8-9

A. The Preservation of His Glory 42:8

Q - What challenge could graven images present to the glory of the One whose name is the LORD? Though graven images present a distraction to those enamored by them, they are false “gods,” so they present no threat to the ultimate glory of the Lord.

B. The Declaration of Things to Come 42:9

Q - What does the Lord’s ability to proclaim new things before they spring forth indicate? It shows that the Lord not only knows the future but He knows it because He controls it.

Think About It: The Lord, who created all things, appointed His Servant (the Messiah) to preserve His glory by delivering and enlightening prisoners as anticipated by His prophet.

Apply It: How are we showing genuine gratitude to the Lord for His appointment of Jesus as our deliverer from the prison-house of sin?

“Praise for the Sovereign God”

Isaiah 42:10-17

Q - When have you witnessed the folly of the worthless worship of false “gods”?

The many religious beliefs and practices of the peoples of the earth provide lots of evidence that Satan is alive and well on planet earth (as the title of Hal Lindsey’s book expressed it). But the time is coming when it will be evident that worship which is not addressed to the Lord, the only true God, is a worthless exercise. So the prophet Isaiah calls on the whole earth to sing to the Lord in view of His determination to exercise His power to demonstrate the folly of false worship.

I. The Challenge of Isaiah to Sing a New Song 42:10-13

A. The Lord’s Worthiness of Praise 42:10-12

1. The Challenge to the Ends of the Earth 42:10a

Q - What is the benefit of the Scripture’s frequent challenge to sing “a new song”? New songs present fresh challenges to those who sing them because they are not so familiar that their lyrics go unnoticed, and they add to the chorus of worship the Lord deserves from the peoples of the earth.

2. The Challenge to Those in the Sea 42:10b

Q - What makes a challenge to those in the sea to praise the Lord significant? Relatively few people ever venture out into the sea, but the Lord deserves praise even from such remote places as open seas and distant islands as seafarers witness vast oceans and their diverse life forms.

3. The Challenge to Those on the Land 42:11

Q - Which land dwellers are the focus of Isaiah's challenge in verse 11 for voices to be lifted up in praise of the Lord?

Isaiah's challenge focuses on cities in wilderness and desert areas and on those who are high in the mountains - people in some of the remote places on the earth.

4. The Challenge to Those Along the Coast 42:12

Q - What does Isaiah's challenge to coastal communities add to his call to glorify the Lord? Because much of earth's population lives along its coasts, his challenge broadens the numbers of people who are called to glorify the Lord.

B. The Lord's Plan to Defeat His Enemies 42:13

Q - How does verse 13 clarify the reason for Isaiah's challenge to praise and glorify the Lord? Verse 13 anticipates the Lord's intention to go up against His enemies and defeat them as a mighty warrior.

II. The Determination of the Lord to Take Control 42:14-17

A. His Decision to Speak Up 42:14

Q - In what sense could the Lord say He had been silent for a long time and had restrained Himself from speaking? The Lord had demonstrated His patience with sinful Israel and other sinful peoples by permitting them to seemingly get away with their sinful behavior.

B. His Decision to Use Drought 42:15

Q - What impact would the Lord's decision to use drought

in judgment against His enemies have on them? The Lord's use of drought against His enemies would create great difficulties in coming up with the food and other necessities which sustain life and bring comfort to those afflicted by the drought, calling attention to His role as the controller of weather and the provider of life's basic necessities.

C. His Decision to Give Sight 42:16

Q - What did the Lord's intention to guide people who were spiritually blind out of judgment into safety reveal about Him? Though the Lord has the power to judge sinners in their sin, He is also merciful and gracious in His dealings with sinful people.

D. His Decision to Shame Idolaters 42:17

Q - What did the Lord identify as the predictable outcome for the many peoples of earth who worship idols? The Lord predicted that idol worshipers will be turned back and put to shame for giving their devotion to the works of their own hands.

Think About It: The Lord deserves the praise of all people in view of His determination to prevail over His enemies.

Apply It: There is no positive future for those who choose to serve anyone other than the Lord.

“The Cost of Spiritual Insensitivity”

Isaiah 42:18-25

Q - When have you seen someone pay a high price for their insensitivity to the Lord and His word?

The Scriptures assure us that people who wholeheartedly trust in the Lord instead of trying to manage their own affairs will be richly rewarded for their trust. But down through the centuries there have been many people who have possessed God's word - which could have greatly enriched their lives - but have lived as if they didn't know or care of His existence and His call for their trust. So many people have experienced the complications which predictably come into the lives of those who are spiritually insensitive - as was frequently the case with the people of Israel who were chosen by God to enjoy His blessings.

I. The Lord's Summary of His People's Failings 42:18-22

A. His Challenge to the Blind and Deaf 42:18-20

Q - Who was the Lord charging with blindness and deafness by His reference to His “servant”? He was charging the people of Israel and their spiritual leaders and prophets with blindness and deafness (cf. V. 24).

Q - How did the Lord substantiate His charge of blindness and deafness in verse 20? The Lord charged His people with seeing things they failed to observe, and with failing to hear things their ears were able to hear.

B. His Observation of His People's Insensitivity 42:21-22

Q - What provision did the Lord make for Israel which made their blindness and deafness inexcusable? The Lord gave to Israel His “great and glorious” law.

Q - What unfortunate outcome was the nation of Israel experiencing because of their failure to respond to the Lord’s provision and direction? The people of Israel were “plundered and despoiled” by foreigners, trapped in caves or hidden away in prisons with no one to deliver them.

II. The Lord’s Response to His People’s Failings 42:23-25

A. His Questions Regarding His People 42:23

Q - What was inexplicable about Israel’s response in view of their deplorable condition at the hands of foreign nations? It was inexplicable that the Jewish people seemed disinterested in hearing what the Lord had to say to His troubled people.

B. His Response Regarding His People 42:24

Q - What was the Lord’s response to His people’s spiritual insensitivity? The Lord turned His people over to the control of plundering nations because of their failure to walk in His ways and submit to His law.

C. His Anger at His People’s Insensitivity 42:25

Q - How were the Lord’s feelings regarding His people’s spiritual insensitivity expressed? The Lord responded in anger at His people’s indifference toward Him and His will for them, exposing them to warfare and destructive flames.

Q - What was Israel’s response to the Lord’s feelings toward their indifference toward Him and His law? Israel did

not even recognize the Lord's hand of judgment against them
in response to their sinful disobedience.

Think About It: Though the Lord gave His people Israel His
“great and glorious” Law, they failed to respond with insight,
so He turned them over to their enemies for judgment.

Apply It: As God's people, we never do ourselves any favor by
rejecting His word and disregarding the problems which result.

“The Lord’s Commitment to Israel”

Isaiah 43:1-7

Q - How should loving parents respond when their children behave in sinful ways?

When the Lord chose the people of Israel as His own spiritual children He committed Himself to their ultimate well-being in spite of His realization that they would often fail to live in obedience to His word and ways. He assured them, in His covenant, that there would be painful consequences for their sinful choices - and there often have been; but He remains committed to His promise to Abraham to make his descendants great, and bless them, and make them a blessing (Genesis 12:2).

I. The Lord’s Encouragement for Israel 43:1-2

A. His Challenge Not to Fear 43:1

Q - How did Isaiah 42:25 set the stage for the encouraging tone of 43:1? Isaiah 42:25 had just reminded the people of Israel of the heat of the Lord’s anger in view of their sinful and insensitive ways.

Q - What reasons did the Lord give His sinful people not to fear? The Lord reminded Israel that He created them, He chose them as His own people, and He redeemed them.

B. His Assurance of Protection 43:2

Q - What significant challenges was the Lord promising would not negate His protection for His sinful people? He promised them that neither high waters nor burning flames

would be permitted to harm them.

II. The Lord's Love for Israel 43:3-4

A. His Favor Toward His People 43:3

Q - How did the Lord describe Himself in His relationship with Israel? He described Himself as their God, their Holy One, and their Savior.

Q - Who did the Lord say He was giving as a "ransom" for His people Israel? He said He was giving Egypt, Cush and Seba as a ransom for His people - perhaps by rewarding Persia for favoring Israel while defeating Egypt, Cush (Ethiopia) and Seba.

B. His Love for His People 43:4

Q - How did the Lord express His rationale for making foreign lands a ransom for Israel? He expressed His rationale by making Israel "precious" in His sight, by honoring Israel and by loving Israel.

III. The Lord's Future for Israel 43:5-7

A. His Promise to Restore Israel 43:5-6

Q - Why did the Lord assure His people Israel that they had no reason to fear? He said His people did not need to fear because He was with them.

Q - What did the Lord promise to do with Israel's offspring as evidence of His presence with them? The Lord promised to bring Israel's offspring back to their land from the nations to which they had been dispersed in the east, the west, the north

and the south - as far as the ends of the earth.

B. His Calling Upon Israel 43:7

Q - How did the Lord explain His favoritism toward the people of Israel? He reminded Israel that He had called them by His name and had created them for His glory when He formed them and made them,

Think About It: The Lord remains committed in love for the people of Israel in spite of their sinful ways.

Apply It: There is still hope for even sinning believers because of the Lord's unending love and commitment.

“Call to Witness”

Isaiah 43:8-13

Q - What are some of the ways in which the nation of Israel has been blessed by God above other nations of the earth?

When the Lord first stated the terms of His covenant with Abraham, father of the Jewish nation, He anticipated that the Jewish descendants of Abraham would be blessed and would be a blessing on the face of the earth. And so, in spite of the failures of the people of Israel to follow the leadership of the Lord at many points in their storied history, they have always stood out from other nations as a people who have had a special relationship with the Lord. The Lord has called upon Israel to serve as a witness to the nations.

I. The Call of the Lord to the Nations 43:8-9

A. His Description of the Nations 43:8

Q - With the understanding that He is speaking of the condition of earth's nations in general, what was the Lord's assessment of earth's spiritual condition? He described them as being blind, in spite of their eyes, and deaf, in spite of their ears.

B. His Challenge to the Nations 43:9

Q - What was the Lord's challenge to the nations? It was His challenge that they provide witnesses who could present an accurate explanation of His dealings among them in past events - the “former things,” which would include His prophecies and their realization down through the centuries.

II. The Lord's Call for Witnesses 43:10-13

A. His People's Privileged Position 43:10a

Q - How did the Lord explain the privileged position of the people of Israel among the nations? He explained that they were His chosen "servant" who were to be His witnesses among the nations.

Q - What important truths was Israel to bear witness to which other nations would not be equally aware of? Israel was intended to know and believe in the Lord, understanding His reality in contrast with other nations which did not know or honor the Lord.

B. His Own Unique Position 43:10b-13

1. His Uniqueness as God 43:10b

Q - What did the Lord say it was which set Him apart from the "gods" other nations worshiped and served? The Lord stated the fact that He was the first and only God in existence.

2. His Identity as Lord and Savior 43:11

Q - What is the significance of the Lord's emphasis on the fact that He (even He, for emphasis) is "the LORD"? His personal name, *Yahweh*, based on the Hebrew verb *hayah*, "to be," sets Him apart from other so-called "gods" which do not actually exist.

Q - What is the significance of the Lord's identity as the "savior"? Because the sinful condition of humanity assigns humans to eternal punishment unless they are saved from the wages of sin (death), the Lord's role as the Savior is critically

important for every person who ever lives.

3. His Singularity as Savior 43:12

Q - What sets God's people apart from those who seek salvation in other "gods" than Himself? God's people are witnesses to the reality that no other "god" has declared and saved and proclaimed what the Lord has done as the one and only true God.

4. His Eternality as Savior 43:13a

Q - What sets God Himself apart from other so-called "gods" to whom His people might foolishly look for their salvation? The Lord is the one and only God in existence - and He has been from the eternal past.

5. His Sovereignty as Savior 43:13b

Q - Who or what can deliver out of His control anyone who sets themselves or itself up against the Lord? Nothing in existence has the ability to deliver from the strong hand of the Lord when He takes any action.

Think About It: The Lord called on His people to bear witness to their privilege as the only nation which has been chosen by the only God in existence as their Lord and Savior.

Apply It: A personal relationship with the Lord is the greatest privilege any person or nation can experience.

“More Bad News for Babylon”

Isaiah 43:14-21

Q - When have you seen bad news for God’s enemies become good news for His chosen people?

The enslavement of the people of Israel by their Babylonian captors seemed like very bad news for the people the Lord chose as His own, but just as He delivered His chosen people from slavery in Egypt, He had plans to deliver them from their captivity in Babylon. His provision for Israel in the desert between Egypt and Canaan was to be repeated as He provided for Israel in the desert between Babylon and Canaan.

I. The Lord’s Plan for Babylon 43:14-15

A. Babylon’s Fate as Fugitives 43:14

Q - What plans did the Lord have for Israel’s Babylonian captors according to verse 14? The Lord had plans for enemies to deport Babylonians in their own ships, turned into slave ships.

B. Israel’s Privilege as God’s People 43:15

Q - What four truths found in verse 15 set Israel apart from other nations? (1) Their God was the “real” God - the one who is; (2) Their God was set apart from all others as “the Holy One of Israel;” (3) The Lord created Israel to fulfill His purposes; and (4) The Lord was ultimately king over the nation of Israel.

II. The Lord’s Plan for Israel 43:16-21

A. His Reminder of Past Provision 43:16

Q - What past provision which the Lord made for Israel was still a very strong reason for encouragement in Israel's current situation? The Lord's miraculous delivery of Israel when He parted the waters of the Red Sea was still a very strong encouragement.

B. His Reminder of Past Destruction 43:17

Q - What past deliverance of Israel from chariots and horses was intended to encourage Israel in the hands of a powerful enemy empire? The destruction of the powerful army of Egypt which the Lord "extinguished" in the waters of the Red Sea was intended to encourage the people of Israel in the face of their captivity by Babylon.

C. His Anticipation of Delivery in the Desert 43:18-19

Q - Why was the Lord challenging His people no longer to look to their amazing past divine deliverance? The Lord was promising to do "something new" - "a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert" - which would eclipse even His past protection of His people.

D. His Provision for His People 43:20

Q - How did the Lord describe the provision He was promising to His people in the future? He described His provision as "waters in the wilderness" and "rivers in the desert" which would quench His people's thirst - and cause desert animals to glorify Him.

E. His Praise from His People 43:21

Q - What response did the Lord anticipate would come from His people in response to His future provisions on their

behalf? The Lord anticipated that His people would declare His praise in response to His future provision for their needs.

Think About It: Just as the Lord delivered His people from the Egyptian Pharaoh, He announced plans in Isaiah's day to deliver them from captivity in Babylon.

Apply It: No enemy of the Lord's people can match His protection and provision for the people He has chosen.

“Postponed Blessings”

Isaiah 43:22-28

Q - When have you seen promised blessings delayed by current conditions?

The Lord has promised to bless His people Israel, as well as His church, but some of the blessings He has promised are yet to be realized because of sinful choices on the part of many of those who claim to be His people. It was evident in the experience of the people of Israel throughout their history as recorded in the pages of the Old Testament, and the history of the church has provided evidence of failure to follow the Lord at many points since the time of Christ. But humanity's failure to follow faithfully the Lord's instructions will not nullify the promises He has made to bless His people as He has said that He will.

I. Israel's Failed Response to the Lord 43:22-24

A. Israel's Failure to Respond 43:22

Q - How did the Lord accuse His chosen people of Israel of failing to respond to His call upon them? He accused them of failing to call upon Him, and of becoming weary of Him.

B. Israel's Failure to Worship 43:23

Q - What failings with respect to the worship of Israel did the Lord identify in verse 23? He identified the failure of His people to bring their burnt offerings and to honor Him with their sacrifices.

Q - Why could the Lord say He had not burdened Israel in

calling for their offerings and their use of incense in their worship practices? The offerings His Law required and the incense His people were to burn were intended to free them of the burden of their sins and focus their attention on Him in their prayer life, but He did not require these offerings during their captivity and absence from their land and temple.

C. Israel's Fouled Response 43:24

Q - How had the people of Israel failed the Lord by their failure to offer sweet cane and money and the fat of sacrificial animals? Rather than worshiping the Lord as the Law called them to do, they had burdened the Lord with their sinful practices.

II. The Lord's Promised Response to Israel's Failings 43:25-28

A. His Intention to Address Israel's Failings 43:25

Q - What reason did the Lord give to His people Israel for "wiping out" their transgressions? The Lord said that He was wiping out His people's transgressions and forgiving their sins for His own sake.

B. His Challenge to Engage in Debate 43:26

Q - Why was the Lord on safe ground in challenging His people to engage with Him in debate? The Lord had never been wrong before and He wasn't in any danger of being on the wrong side of any debate His people might take up with Him.

C. His Reminder of Failings of the Past 43:27

Q - What was there about Israel's history which made it unlikely they would fare well in any argument they might offer

in debate with the Lord? Like all human beings, the people of Israel had a history of sinful behavior - evident even in the performance of their spiritual “spokesmen.”

D. His Promise to Call Israel to Account 43:28

Q - Though the Lord promised eventual forgiveness of the transgressions of Israel (v. 25), what were the prospects on the more immediate horizon for the people of Israel? The Lord promised to “pollute” (*chalal* - to pollute, defile, profane) the princes of the sanctuary and consign Jacob to the ban (cf. Daniel 9:11) and Israel to revilement (cf. Ezekiel 5:15).

Think About It: The Lord challenged His people to recall their failed past, His intended goodness to them, and their coming judgment in view of their failings.

Apply It: Though the Lord has good intentions for His people’s future, He will not bless their past and present failings.

“Help on the Way”

Isaiah 44:1-8

Q - When have you been encouraged in a time of need by the promise of help on the way?

The people of Israel during Isaiah’s prophetic ministry were facing some very difficult times. The northern kingdom had been devastated by Assyria, and the southern kingdom was being threatened by the Babylonian empire. So there wasn’t much reason for optimism on the near horizon. But Isaiah had some encouraging words for his people as he looked beyond the near horizon for Israel to the more distant horizon where he could prophesy encouraging words regarding help on the way.

I. Israel’s Secure Future 44:1-5

A. The Lord’s Call to Listen 44:1

Q - What encouraging words did Isaiah include in his report of the Lord’s call for His people to listen to His message? He addressed Israel as “Jacob, my servant,” and He reminded them that they were His “chosen” people.

B. The Lord’s Promise to Help 44:2

Q - Why did the Lord assure His people that they had no reason to fear, even though His reference to them as “Jeshurun” hearkened back to a discouraging reminder from their past (Deuteronomy 32:15)? The Lord said that Israel did not need to fear, in spite of their sinful past of forsaking Him, because having made them and formed them from the womb, He intended to help them.

C. The Lord's Prediction of Blessing 44:3-4

Q - How did the Lord predict, in verse 3, that He was going to bless the people of Israel at some future time? He predicted that He was going to satisfy their "thirst" with streams of water on their dry ground when He poured out His Spirit and His blessing on their offspring.

Q - What picture of future prosperity did the Lord provide through Isaiah in verse 4? He provided the prospect of poplars springing up among grasses by streams of water.

D. The Lord's Anticipation of Trust 44:5

Q - What signs of future trust on the part of His people did the Lord anticipate in their future? He anticipated a day when His people would claim Him as their LORD and would call on His name and would be recognized again as an honorable nation.

II. Israel's Solid Rock 44:6-8

A. The Lord's Uniqueness 44:6

Q - What did the Lord say it is that set Him apart from the many "gods" of the nations? He said that He is the first and the last, and that He is the only real God in existence.

B. The Lord's Awareness of the Future 44:7

Q - How did the Lord propose a challenge to the so-called "gods" of other nations? He challenged them to provide an orderly explanation of things which have occurred in the past history of nations, and of what is going to take place in the future.

C. The Lord's Challenge to Trust 44:8

Q - Why did the Lord say His people had no reason to tremble or be fearful? He said they had no reason to tremble or be fearful because He had already revealed His people's future long ago, and they were His witnesses that He alone is God.

Think About It: The Lord, who knows the future, has blessings in store for Israel at a time when they will turn to Him in trust.

Apply It: Trust in the Lord is the pathway to blessing for every people in every age.

“The Emptiness of Idolatry”

Isaiah 44:9-20

Q - When have you witnessed someone expressing their devotion to a material object?

The world is full of material objects which receive more attention than they actually deserve. In many instances people around the world imagine that material objects are actually worthy of worship as if they were divine. In the nation of India, for example, there are tens of thousands of idols which receive the veneration of those who are devoted to the Hindu religion. Because the ancient people of Israel were surrounded by idol worshipers, the Lord spoke through the Prophet Isaiah (and others) to address the foolishness of idolatry.

I. The Futility of Idolatry 44:9-11

A. The Futility of Idolaters 44:9

Q - What was the Lord’s assessment of those who engage in the creation and worship of graven images/idols? The Lord observed that those who create and worship idols are futile because they are engaged in activities which are of no value.

B. The Future for Idolaters 44:10-11

Q - What did the Lord say idolaters should anticipate as a result of their idolatry? The Lord said that idolaters should expect to be put to shame.

Q - How did the Lord identify the futility of the creators of idols? He observed that the creators of idols are merely men.

II. The Folly of Idol-Making 44:12-17

A. The Efforts of the Idol Maker 44:12-14

Q - What kinds of idols did the Lord picture the idol-maker creating by his efforts in verses 12-14? He pictured the crafting of idols out of wood with cutting tools of iron - often idols shaped in the image of human beings.

Q - What was the Lord's description of the efforts of the idol-maker intended to communicate? It was intended to communicate how dedicated the idol-maker is to his foolish efforts in crafting "gods" which look like the men who make them.

B. The Effects of the Idol Maker's Work 44:15-17

1. The Creation of Firewood 44:15a, 16

Q - How does the idol-maker's use of some of the wood he is working with for firewood clearly demonstrate the folly of his efforts? The fact that the same wood used to create "gods" can also be used for firewood reveals the actual value of the "gods" the idol-maker is making.

2. The Creation of a False-God 44:15b, 17

Q - Why would it never occur to the idol-maker, or to those who worship the idols he makes, to worship their firewood? No one ever imagines that firewood - destined to be burned - is worthy to be worshiped or capable of answering their prayers.

III. The Foolishness of Idol Worship 44:18-20

A. The Ignorance of Idolaters 44:18

Q - How did the Lord account for the irrationality of those who make and who worship man-made idols? He explained that He judges those who practice idolatry by “smearing over their eyes,” preventing them from seeing how foolish their practices actually are.

B. The Options for Idolaters 44:19

Q - What did the Lord say should make it obvious to those who worship idols that what they are doing is sheer folly? He observes that those who worship idols are actually worshiping, in many cases, a “block of wood,” not unlike the wood they use to make a fire.

Q - What strong word did the Lord use to characterize the actions of those who engage in idolatrous practices in verse 19? He characterizes their actions as “abominations.”

C. The Blindness of Idolaters 44:20

Q - What descriptive phrases did the Lord use in His assessment of idolatry in verse 20? He refers to those who “feed on ashes,” who are turned aside by “a deceived heart,” and who hold a “lie” in their “right hand.”

Think About It: Idolatry, and the efforts of those who make idols, is an exercise in spiritual futility.

Apply It: What are the chances we have placed empty “idols” ahead of the Lord in our lives?

“The Promise of Restoration”

Isaiah 44:21-28

Q - When have you been involved in restoring something which had fallen into disrepair?

The Lord chose Abraham and his descendants, the people of Israel, to be blessed and to bless their world. At Mt. Sinai, under the leadership of Moses, He entered into a covenant with His people - promising to bless them if they obeyed the covenant, but to punish them if they disobeyed. Though they promised “all that the LORD has said we will do,” Moses hadn’t even gotten down from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments written by God’s hand on tablets of stone before the people were breaking the first commandment by their worship of the golden calf Aaron had constructed. And that was just the beginning of a long history of violating Israel’s covenant with the Lord. But the Lord assured the Prophet Isaiah of His plans to restore His people to favor.

I. The Lord’s Favor Toward Israel 44:21-23

A. His Choice of Israel as His Servant 44:21

Q - What was the Lord’s assurance to His people Israel in view of His having chosen them as His servant? It was His assurance that He had not forgotten His chosen people.

B. His Redemption of Israel 44:22

Q - What was the Lord’s description of the obstacle to the restoration of His people to favor? He described their sinful condition as a “thick cloud” of transgression and a “heavy mist” of sin.

Q - What was the Lord's call to His sinful people in view of His act of redemption on their behalf? It was His call that His people return to Him in view of their redemption.

C. His Call to Rejoicing by Israel 44:23

Q - Who did the Lord call to participate in rejoicing in view of His act of redemption on behalf of His people? The Lord called on the heavens, the lower parts of the earth, the mountains, and every tree in the forest to rejoice in view of His redemption of His people Israel.

II. The Lord's Promise to Restore Israel 44:24-28

A. His Role as the Creator 44:24

Q - How did the Lord remind His people of His ability to restore them to favor by His redemption? He recalled His role in not only forming Israel "from the womb," but of making all things - including the heavens and the earth - with assistance from no one.

B. His Control Over False Religion 44:25

Q - What did the Lord cite regarding His control over the efforts of those engaged in various forms of false worship? He cited His ability to cause the omens of boasters to fail; to make fools out of diviners; to cause "wise men" to draw back; and to turn their supposed knowledge into foolishness.

C. His Promise to Restore Judah 44:26

Q - How did the Lord contrast His control over various forms of false worship with His plans for His own people of Israel? The Lord assured His people of His plans to confirm

the word of His servant; to perform the purpose of His messengers; to raise up the ruins of Israel so that Jerusalem would again be inhabited and the cities of Judah would be rebuilt.

D. His Reminder of Miracles Past 44:27

Q - What miracles He had performed in Israel's past did the Lord cite as evidence of His ability to do what He was planning to do for His people? He cited the miracle of drying up the Red Sea and the Jordan River so His people could pass through on dry ground to their destinations.

E. His Use of Cyrus to Rebuild in Jerusalem 44:28

Q - What was significant and surprising of the Lord's plans for Cyrus with respect to the people of Israel? It was significant and surprising that the Lord would name Cyrus, a Medo-Persian ruler not yet in place as a ruler, as His "shepherd" who would declare the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the laying of the foundation for the rebuilt temple there.

Think About It: The Lord promised a role for Medo-Persian King Cyrus in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple following the Babylonian exile, in spite of Israel's sins.

Apply It: The Lord is merciful and forgiving - and sovereign - in His dealings with the sins of His people.

“Using Cyrus”

Isaiah 45:1-8

Q - What should a person reasonably conclude about the mention by name of the Persian King Cyrus in Isaiah’s prophecy centuries before Cyrus came to power?

We are not surprised to learn from the Scriptures that the Lord is involved in the lives of His chosen people Israel (and, in our day, the church). But His involvement reaches far beyond His chosen people. The Lord addressed Himself to the pagan Persian King Cyrus, long before he was born, to reveal through the Prophet Isaiah that he would be an instrument in His hands for fulfilling His purposes in human history.

I. The Lord’s Message to Cyrus 45:1-7

A. The Supremacy of Cyrus 45:1

Q - What is somewhat surprising about the Lord’s reference to the Persian King Cyrus as His “anointed”? The word is used in the Old Testament of the Lord’s appointment of Jewish prophets and priests and kings and, most notably, of His Son Jesus as His Messianic (anointed) king, but not normally used with reference to foreigners.

Q - How did the Lord intend to use Cyrus as His anointed? He intended to use him to dominate kings and their nations and to open doors and prevent gates from being shut by His own enablement.

B. The Enabler of Cyrus 45:2

Q - What was the Lord promising to do (v. 2) to enable

Cyrus as His servant? He was going to make rough places smooth, to shatter doors of bronze, and to cut through iron bars.

C. The Realization of Cyrus 45:3-4

Q - What was Cyrus going to realize (vv. 3-4) because of the Lord's enablement? He was going to realize that the Lord was his source - using him to favor His people of Israel and calling him by name even though he did not know the Lord.

D. The Realization of All Peoples 45:5-7

1. His Enabling of Cyrus 45:5

Q - What did the Lord intend for people to realize because of His girding of Cyrus (vv. 5)? He intended for Cyrus and others to realize that He alone is God - the only God!

2. His Uniqueness as God 45:6

Q - How far did the Lord intend for the realization of His reality and deity to extend (v. 6)? He intended for men from all around the world to know about Him - from the rising to the setting of the sun.

3. His Control of All Things 45:7

Q - What truths about the Lord did He intend for all peoples to come to realize (v. 7)? He intended for them to realize that He is the creator of light and darkness and the controller of the affairs of men - for good or for evil.

II. The Lord's Message to the Heavens 45:8

Q - What was the Lord calling on the heavens to "drip

down” upon the earth? He was calling them to drip down righteousness and the fruitfulness of salvation.

Think About It: The Lord had plans to use the Persian King Cyrus to advance His plan on earth centuries before King Cyrus was born and reigned.

Apply It: The Lord’s ability to use Cyrus to accomplish His purposes assures us of His ability to fully accomplish His purposes in the lives of those who know and trust in Him.

“Sovereign Lord”

Isaiah 45:9-17

Q - What is the most empty example of worship you have ever witnessed?

The Prophet Elijah challenged the followers of the supposed deity of the Canaanites in his day to a contest on Mt. Carmel in Israel. He proposed that they build an altar and offer a sacrifice to their “god” and pray for him to light their altar on fire; he would do the same with respect to his own God. The followers of Baal went first - praying for their “god” to send fire from heaven. When there was no reply from Baal, they intensified their worship, but there was no reply. If you have ever witnessed the tribal dances of modern day animists you may have some sense of the futility of worshiping a “god” who can’t light a fire because he doesn’t exist!

I. The Lord’s Sovereignty Over Opponents 45:9-10

Q - Why is it so futile to quarrel with the Lord? It is futile because He is our Maker.

Q - How did the Lord, through Isaiah, illustrate the futility of quarreling with Him? He spoke of the absurdity of a pot speaking against the potter who makes him, and the foolishness of a child questioning the parents who brought about his birth.

II. The Lord’s Sovereignty Over Israel and Cyrus 45:11-13

Q - How did the Lord know so much about the future for Israel - His “sons” (vv. 11-12)? As the holy God and creator of the entire universe, He was also the creator and controller of the affairs and the fate of His chosen people Israel.

Q - How did the Lord intend to use Cyrus in the life of His people Israel (v. 13)? He intended to move Cyrus to set Israel free from exile and to assist in the rebuilding of His city - without receiving any payment or reward for His efforts.

III. The Lord's Sovereignty Over Egypt and Cush and the Sabeans 45:14-17

Q - How will the sovereignty of the Lord be made evident over Egypt, Cush and the Sabeans? The day will come when Israel's enemies and their products will be under the control of Israel, acknowledging Israel's God as the only God.

Q - Why would Isaiah describe God as a "God who hides Himself" in verse 15? God's plans and His paths are often a mystery to man - evident by the fact that much of the world is clueless regarding the Lord and His ways in spite of such clear revelation in the world (creation) and in His word.

Q - When will the nations who are manufacturers of idols be finally shamed and humiliated (v. 16)? They will be finally shamed and humiliated when the Lord establishes His kingdom on earth.

Q - In what sense has Israel been saved with an everlasting salvation - never to be shamed or humiliated again (v. 17)? In the sense that Israel is God's chosen people who, having endured (in spite of deficiencies and difficulties) through the ages, will become preeminent in the kingdom and present forever in the eternal state.

Think About It: The Lord, who created all that exists on the earth and throughout the universe, is sovereign in the affairs of not only His own people but the affairs of all the other people who inhabit the earth.

Apply It: Are we able to so fully trust the Lord that we never question His dealings in our lives and in our world?

“Too Good to Ignore”

Isaiah 45:18-25

Q - When have you been faced with an opportunity which was too good to pass up?

Though the earth is filled with many forms of the worship of the many so-called “gods” of its inhabitants, there is only one true God who is worthy of the worship of the peoples of the earth - which should be recognized as too good to pass up. So the Lord spoke, through the Prophet Isaiah, of His intentions for the world and for His chosen people of Israel, inviting everyone to turn to Him for the salvation only He has to offer. His invitation was established on the reality that He is the only God there is - the God who created the heavens and the earth, and the God before whom every knee will one day bow, and every tongue swear allegiance to His reality as the LORD (*Yahweh* - the one who is).

I. The Lord’s Sovereignty Over All of Creation 45:18-19

A. His Plan for His Creation 45:18

Q - How did the Lord speak through Isaiah to establish His sovereignty over all of creation? He identified Himself as God, the creator of the heavens, who made and established the earth.

Q - What did the Lord reveal as His intention for the earth which He created? He revealed His intention that the earth be inhabited.

Q - How did the Lord emphasize His right to rule over the heavens and the earth which He created in the last line of verse 18? He emphasized the significance of His divine name and

the uniqueness of His divine being.

B. His Plan for His People 45:19

Q - What did the Lord say was not true of His message regarding His people? He said that He had **not** spoken in secret, and that His word did not arise out of some dark place - as was/is often true of the so-called revelations of pagan religion.

Q - What did the Lord say was **not** His intention for the land which He chose as a habitation for His people Israel? He said that it was not His intention that His people live in a “waste place.”

Q - How did the Lord contrast His word with the words of false “gods” which are frequently spoken in secret and arise from some “dark land”? He characterized His word as a word which is righteous and upright.

II. The Lord’s Salvation Offer to All 45:20-25

A. His Call to the Idolatrous Fugitives of Earth 45:20-21

Q - What is the Lord’s challenge to the spiritual fugitives of the earth? He challenges spiritual fugitives to turn from empty and ignorant wooden idols which cannot save.

Q - How did the Lord contrast Himself from the worthless idol-“gods” of earth’s spiritual fugitives? He described Himself as the only real and righteous God and Savior who has demonstrated His reality by revealing the future from long ago.

B. His Call to All the Ends of the Earth 45:22-24

Q - What is the Lord’s gracious invitation to all the ends of

the earth in verse 22? It is His gracious invitation that all the ends of the earth turn to Him, the only true God, to be saved.

Q - Why is it highly advisable that all the ends of the earth turn to the Lord for righteousness and strength? The day is coming when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is the only source of righteousness and strength.

C. His Call on the Offspring of Israel 45:25

Q - What provision does the Lord offer to all the offspring of Israel? He offers justification and glorification to all the offspring of Israel who are found “in the LORD.”

Think About It: The Lord called for all the people of the earth to turn from empty things and trust in Him as the only source of righteousness and strength.

Apply It: Are we trusting fully the only God who exists, or do we pay undeserved respect to any of the many other options offered by materialism and the futile religions of the peoples of the earth?

“Incomparable God”

Isaiah 46:1-7

Q - What stands out in your thinking as evidence that the Lord, God of Israel, is superior to the so-called “gods” of the pagan peoples who have surrounded Israel?

For people who are open to the evidence, there have been numerous times down through the ages (as recorded in the Scriptures) when evidence has been provided to the effect that the Lord is the true and only God. The Bible highlights the folly of trusting in the many alternative “gods” which have been and, in many places, still are being worshiped by the peoples of the earth - and the Prophet Isaiah is about as caustic as any author in Scripture when it comes to accentuating the foolishness of trusting in false “gods” and the idols which represent them.

I. The Captivity of Pagan Deities 46:1-2

A. The Carriers of Pagan Deities 46:1

Q - How did Isaiah point out the inability of two of the chief “gods” of Babylon to care for even their own needs? He wrote of Bel bowing down and Nebo stooping over when being carried by beasts of burden in some procession (e.g. the New Year’s festival) or, perhaps, in the deportation of Babylon’s deities by enemy nations following their defeat.

Q - How did Isaiah depict the impact of Babylonian “gods” on the animals which were assigned to carry them? He depicted the “gods” as a wearisome burden for even the strong animals who were assigned to carry them - “a load for the weary beast.”

B. The Capture of Pagan Deities 46:2

Q - Why did Isaiah say the Babylonian “gods” were unable to provide the rescue their worshipers would have hoped to receive from them? He observed that the “gods” of Babylon were not able to rescue their worshipers because the “gods” themselves were taken into captivity by enemy forces.

II. The Call of the Lord to Israel 46:3-4

A. The Past Support for Israel 46:3

Q - What was the Lord’s claim regarding His relationship with the nation of Israel from their beginning? It was His claim that He had borne the nation of Israel from their birth.

Q - What are some historical examples to substantiate the Lord’s claim of carrying Israel from their birth? His calling and blessing of Abraham; the miraculous birth of Isaac; the fruitfulness of Jacob; the blessing in Joseph’s unusual career; etc.

B. The Promise of Support for Israel 46:4

Q - What was the Lord’s encouragement for Israel in spite of looming defeat and deportation in Isaiah’s day? It was His promise that He would continue to be Israel’s God and continue to bear them and deliver them during their “old age.”

III. The Comparison of the Lord with Idols 46:5-7

A. The Question for Idols 46:5

Q - What was the Lord’s withering challenge for idols and those who construct them? It was His challenge that they find

someone or something which could be favorably compared to Him.

B. The Construction of Idols 46:6

Q - What was the Lord's revelation of the folly involved in the construction and worship of idols? It was His revelation that idol makers make use of silver and gold to construct the objects to which they then bow in worship.

C. The Impotence of Idols 46:7

Q - How did the Lord accentuate the impotence of idols? He observed that they have to be carried by their makers; that they cannot move on their own from the places where their makers put them; that they cannot respond with an answer to those who cry out to them; and that they cannot deliver their worshipers from their distressing situations.

Think About It: The idol "gods" of Babylon fall flat when they are compared or contrasted with the incomparable God of Israel.

Apply It: What practical evidence can we cite that we are placing our trust in the Lord as the incomparable God He is?

“Only the Lord”

Isaiah 46:8-13

Q - What is it that sets the Lord apart in your thinking as the supreme being He is?

There have been challengers to the Lord’s unique identity as the only true God since the time of creation! The desire of Satan to “be like the Most High” became evident soon after his creation, and his suggestion to Eve in the garden of Eden that she could “be like God” are the earliest known challenges to God’s unique status as God, and there have been and still are countless others contending for mankind’s trust. So the Lord assured His people Israel, through the Prophet Isaiah, that He alone is God, and He provided strong evidence that He is.

I. The Lord’s Sovereign Identity 46:8-11

A. The Assurance of His Uniqueness 46:8-9

Q - Why did the people of Israel need the reminder of Isaiah 46:8? They needed the reminder because they had strayed from their trust in the Lord by their transgressions.

Q - What are some “former things long past” which should have assured the people of Israel that only the Lord is God? The Lord’s creation of everything in the universe, and His dealings in the history of Israel should have assured them that He is the only true God.

Q - Who might have challenged the Lord’s status as the only true God in the thinking of Israel? The many so-called “gods” of Israel’s pagan neighbors may have seemed like challengers in the minds of many in Israel.

B. The Evidence of His Uniqueness 46:10-11

1. His Prophetic Insight 46:10b

Q - What example comes to your mind of the Lord's ability to declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done? The Lord's predictions in the garden of Eden (as in Genesis 3:15) provide early examples of the Lord's prophetic insight.

2. His Purpose Assured 46:10b

Q - How does the Lord's prophetic word provide evidence of His sovereign control in the affairs of mankind? When men see the Lord's predictions of future things come to pass they have evidence that the Lord knows and means what He has said.

3. His Plan for His Servant 46:11a

Q - What "bird of prey from the east" may the Lord have had in mind as the man of His purpose from a far country? It is generally agreed among many Bible students that Cyrus, King of Persia, is in view - as a follow-up to Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1, which identify him by name.

4. His Promise of Fulfillment 46:11b

Q - How did the Lord put His "exclamation point" on his prediction concerning the "bird of prey from the east" in the last part of verse 11? He stated His intention two times to do as He had just said He would do.

II. The Lord's Salvation for Israel 46:12-13

A. His Call to Attention 46:12

Q - What two reasons did the Lord give for calling His people Israel to listen to Him? He noted that they were stubborn-minded, and that they were far from righteousness.

B. His Assurance of Salvation 46:13

Q - What four surprising assurances did the Lord give to His people immediately after calling attention to their spiritual shortcomings as a nation? He promised to bring His own righteousness to them (in view of their lack of it); to bring them His salvation without delay; to grant salvation to Zion; and to provide glory to Israel.

Think About It: The Lord assured His sinful people of His uniqueness as God on the basis of His prophetic insight and His plan for their salvation.

Apply It: Only the Lord can predict the future and provide salvation for sinful people.

“More Bad News for Babylon”

Isaiah 47:1-7

Q - What are some descriptive words which come to your mind when you think of the Babylonian empire?

When the Lord depicted Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom as a head of gold in the king's dream, recorded in the second chapter of Daniel, He was acknowledging the power and prestige of the Babylonian empire in Daniel's day. Many middle-eastern nations, including Israel, were dominated by Babylon at the height of its power. But the Lord spoke through both Daniel and Isaiah of coming judgment upon the Babylonian empire - and the fall of Babylon is well-known in our day as historical fact.

I. The Lord's Warning of Babylon's Fall 47:1-5

A. His Call to Humiliation 47:1

Q - How did the Lord depict Babylon - pictured as a lady - in Isaiah 47:1? He pictured her sitting on the ground after the loss of her throne, no longer viewed as a tender and delicate young lady.

B. His Call to Servitude 47:2

Q - What further indications of Babylon's humiliation are seen in Isaiah 47:2? She is pictured using a millstone to grind meal, her veil and skirt removed and her leg exposed as she crossed over a river.

C. His Plan to Take Vengeance 47:3

Q - How did the Lord intend to take vengeance against the Babylonian empire? He intended to expose Babylon's nakedness as He carried out vengeance against every man in the nation.

D. His Identity as Redeemer 47:4

Q - Whose interests were the Lord pursuing in His intended judgments upon the Babylonian empire? He was pursuing the interests of His chosen people Israel in His status as the Holy One of Israel and the nation's Redeemer.

E. His Demotion of Babylon 47:5

Q - What was the Lord's destination for Babylon which had previously been described as "the queen of kingdoms"? The Lord said that Babylon was going to head silently into the darkness.

II. The Lord's Defense of His People 47:6-7

A. His Former Anger at Israel 47:6a

Q - How had the Lord made His anger against the sins of His people Israel very clear? He had "profaned" His chosen people by delivering them into the hands of Babylon.

B. His Objection to Babylon's Treatment of Israel 47:6b

Q - What was the Lord's objection to the treatment His people received from the nation to whom He had delivered them? The Lord objected to the fact that Babylon had shown no mercy to His people as evidenced by the heavy yoke they had placed on those who were old among His people.

C. His Negation of Babylon's Claim 47:7

Q - What delusion on the part of Babylon did the Lord promise to negate in view of their treatment of His people Israel? The Lord promised to negate Babylon's delusional claim that they would be a "queen forever."

Think About It: Though the Lord used Babylon to judge His people Israel, He also judged Babylon for the way in which they did it.

Apply It: The Lord will "balance the books" regarding justice for all people when all has been said and done.

“No Hope for Babylon”

Isaiah 47:8-15

Q - How are current conditions in America making you feel about a hopeful future for the country?

The United States of America has often been described as “the greatest nation on God’s green earth.” In its relatively short history (compared to some older nations) America has been blessed to enjoy stability and wealth and influence far beyond many other nations on earth - leading many to identify with the lyrics of the song “I’m Proud to be an American.” But not unlike ancient Israel, America has lost much of its luster in the minds of many others, leading some even to call for its destruction. So there are some important lessons which might be learned from the experience of the once powerful and prosperous Babylonian empire!

I. The Lord’s Prediction of Babylon’s Humiliation 47:8-11

A. Babylon’s Boastful Claim 47:8

Q - What deficiencies did the Lord observe through the Prophet Isaiah of the Babylonian empire? He observed their “sensual” tendencies and their boastful self-confidence.

B. Babylon’s Certain Demise 47:9

Q - What spiritual resources did the Lord assure Babylon were going to prove insufficient in view of His prediction of their sudden demise? Their sorceries and the imaginary great power of their spells would prove insufficient to prevent their loss of children and their widowhood - in just one day!

C. Babylon's False Security 47:10

Q - What additional failings of Babylon did the Lord identify through His prophet in verse 10? He identified Babylon's folly in supposing that their wickedness was not noticed and in supposing that they were secure in their unequalled status among the nations.

D. Babylon's Sudden Destruction 47:11

Q - How did the Prophet Daniel record the fulfillment of the Lord's prediction in the fifth chapter of his prophecy? He told of the sudden defeat of Babylon when Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed as he feasted with his nobles and his nation was conquered by Darius the Mede as recorded in Daniel 5 (specifically verse 30).

II. The Lord Challenge to Babylonian "Deliverers" 47:12-15

A. His Challenge to Babylon's Religious Practices 47:12

Q - What was Isaiah's mocking challenge to the nation of Babylon in verse 12? It was his challenge that they keep pursuing their foolish pagan religious rituals as if they could do them any good.

B. His Challenge to Babylon's "Prophets" 47:13

Q - What inability did the Lord highlight on the part of the prophets of Babylon who were predicting the nation's success? He highlighted their inability to "stand" in the face of impending disaster in spite of their many counsels and astrological predictions.

C. His Caution Regarding Coming Fires 47:14

Q - How did the Lord characterize Babylonian counselors in the warning of verse 14? He characterized them as “stubble” which would be burned up in the power of the flame.

D. His Certainty of their Hopeless Condition 47:15

Q - What prospect did the Lord say Babylon might expect from nations with whom they had done business since their early years as a nation? The Lord stated that Babylon’s former business partners had gone in other directions, providing no hope of help in Babylon’s time of need.

Think About It: The Lord assured the Babylonian empire of coming destruction with no prospect of help from their false religion or from their former allies.

Apply It: There is no future hope for those who trust in false religion and fickle friends.

“Patience with His People”

Isaiah 48:1-11

Q - When have you felt your patience stretched in dealing with someone in your life?

Because all people are sinners by nature they can often be exasperating to get along with. Parents have frequently been heard to say to their children “am I going to have to give you a spanking?” because of their frustrations in getting their children to do as they have been instructed to do. And because the Lord is a “father” to His sinful people, He has often found it necessary to exercise divine discipline in order to encourage His children to “behave” - as well as to defend His reputation as the glorious God He is!

I. The Lord’s Call to Israel 48:1-2

A. Their Empty Profession 48:1

Q - What did the Lord say He found frustrating about the performance of His chosen people Israel? He found it frustrating that the people of Israel claimed Him as their God but failed to live in conformity with His truth and righteousness.

B. Their Lofty Claims 48:2

Q - What did the people of Israel fail to recognize when they claimed Jerusalem as their holy city and claimed to lean on the Lord as their God? They failed to conform their lives to the nature of the Lord as the Lord of hosts and as the holy God He is.

II. The Lord’s History with Israel 48:3-5

A. His Predictions Realized 48:3

Q - What powerful reason did the Lord give His people through Isaiah for trusting and obeying Him? He reminded His people that He had much earlier predicted many things which by their time had come to pass just as He said they would.

B. His Awareness Declared 48:4

Q - What was the Lord well-aware was true of His chosen people of Israel? He was well-aware that they were an obstinate people with necks seemingly of iron and foreheads of bronze.

C. His Purpose Declared 48:5

Q - What conclusion were the people of Israel intended to have come to in view of the Lord's fulfilled predictions? They were intended to have come to the conclusion that it was the Lord who had fulfilled His predictions, not their idols.

III. The Lord's Prediction for Israel 48:6-11

A. His Prediction of New Things 48:6-7

Q - What were the Lord's predictions of "new things" intended to bring about for the people of Israel? His predictions of new things were intended to cause Israel to realize that what He was predicting would as surely come to pass as things He had previously predicted and brought to pass as predicted.

B. His Understanding of Israel 48:8

Q - Of what had the Lord been well-aware from the beginning of His dealings with His chosen people Israel? He had

been well-aware that they were a rebellious people who would deal treacherously with Him as their God.

C. His Patience with Israel 48:9

Q - What was it about the Lord which caused Him to refrain from acting in anger toward sinful Israel and cutting them off? It was for the honor of His name and the praise of His goodness which caused Him to refrain from destroying His people.

D. His Defense of His Glory 48:10-11

Q - Who was intended to benefit from the Lord's refining acts with respect to the people of Israel? Both Israel and the Lord were to benefit: Israel, because refining fires remove impurities from the lives of sinful people; and the Lord, because His glory was to be defended as He confronted the sinful behavior of the people of Israel.

Think About It: The Lord has dealt patiently with the nation of Israel for their own good and in defense of His own glory.

Apply It: We invite problems into our lives when we do not obey and glorify the Lord as we should.

“Listen to the Lord”

Isaiah 48:12-22

Q - When have you seen someone experience difficulties for failing to listen to good advice or instruction?

The Lord has always been the best source of instruction any person will ever encounter. Beginning in the garden of Eden, He provided life-giving advice to Adam and Eve regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but humanity has paid a stiff price for their failure to do as the Lord instructed them to do. And so it has often been down through the years of human history. It is always sad to see what happens when divine instruction is ignored - especially when it is God's chosen people who ignore it, as so often happened in the history of the nation of Israel.

I. The Lord's Call to Listen 48:12-13

A. His Authority to Call 48:12

Q - What excellent reasons did the Lord give to His people Israel for listening to what He had to say to them? His reminder that He had called them as His own people, and the fact that He IS, as He always has been and always will be, were excellent reasons for Israel to listen to the Lord.

B. His Credibility in Calling 48:13

Q - How have the heavens and the earth served as examples to the people of Israel in their response to the Lord, their maker? The heavens and the earth have always done what the Lord intended them to do - serving as a challenge to His people who should always do the same.

II. The Lord's Plan to Judge Babylon 48:14-17

A. His Opposition to Babylon 48:14

Q - What was the Lord's challenge to His people concerning His plans for Babylon? It was His challenge that they listen to His plans to judge Babylon, using Cyrus as He said He would (cf. Isaiah 45:1ff.) - something no idol-"god" had anticipated.

B. His Call to Cyrus 48:15

Q - What was the Lord's assurance regarding His plans to use Cyrus to judge Babylon? It was His assurance that He had called Cyrus to do His bidding, and that He would make his way successful (cf. 41:2; 45:1-2).

C. His Calling for His Son 48:16

Q - How does the message of verse 16 clearly reveal that the focus of the passage has changed from Cyrus in verse 15 to another person (cf. Isaiah 42:13; 45:19)? The speaker has been around "from eternity" - the same person who claimed earlier not to have spoken in secret.

Q - Who is clearly identified as the voice of verse 16 in its last line? The fact that He has been sent by the Lord and by His Spirit points clearly to God the Son.

D. His Role as Israel's Leader 48:17

Q - What important leadership roles and descriptive titles of God's Son (the speaker of verse 16) are identified in verse 17? His role as Israel's Redeemer, His identity as "the Holy One of Israel" and as "the LORD your God," and his role as

Israel's leader are identified.

III. The Lord's Intentions for Israel 48:18-22

A. The Possibilities of their Past 48:18-19

Q - What rich blessings had Israel of Isaiah's day forfeited by their failure to pay attention to the Lord's commandments? They had forfeited well-being like a river, righteousness like the waves of the sea, descendants as numerous as grains of sand, and the security of their name before the presence of the Lord.

B. The Prospects for their Future 48:20-22

Q - What bright prospect did the Lord hold out to Israel in Isaiah's day in verse 20? He held out the prospect of Israel's departure from Babylonian captivity with joyful shouting in view of His plan to redeem His servant Jacob.

Q - What assurance did the Lord provide for Israel in view of the unlikelihood of the delivery He had predicted from their Babylonian captivity? He provided the reminder that He had miraculously supplied water for them out of a rock during their wilderness wanderings after He delivered them from Egyptian slavery.

Q - What challenge did the Lord set before His people as He announced His plan to redeem them from Babylonian slavery? He reminded them that they should not expect to experience peace in their future unless they abandoned wickedness which had gotten them into the trouble they were experiencing.

Think About It: The Lord called His people Israel to listen to what He intended for both their mismanaged past and their

brighter future.

Apply It: It is always in the best interests of God's people to listen carefully to anything He has to say to them.

“Consider This Challenge”

Isaiah 49:1-4

Q - What would you say your toughest challenge has been so far in life?

Though people have risen to the challenge of many difficult assignments down through the centuries, the toughest assignment ever was given by the Lord to His Servant, our Savior Jesus.

I. The Servant’s Call to Attention 49:1a

Q - How would you explain the importance of the call to earth’s islands and peoples to listen in this verse? The call comes from the “Servant of the Lord” par excellence - the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Servant’s Calling by the Lord 49:1b-3

A. The Timing of the Call 49:1b

Q - What is known about the Lord’s call from the womb to His Servant, Jesus? We know not only the Lord’s predictions for His Son to Mary and Joseph prior to His birth but also prophetic anticipations of His calling and ministry in many prophetic passages e.g. Isaiah 11:2ff. and 61:1ff.

Q - What name or names did the Lord assign to His Servant before He came to birth on earth? He was assigned such names as Son of God, Messiah, Redeemer, and the names found in Isaiah 9:6 - “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

B. The Features of the Call 49:2

Q - In what sense would you say Jesus' mouth is "like a sharp sword"? The mouth of Jesus is the source of divine judgment which is compared in Scripture (e.g. Revelation 2:12,16) to a sharp two-edged sword.

Q - Where would you say the Lord's concealing hand has shadowed His Servant? Jesus has been secure in the hand and plan of His Father from intense opposition which Satan and his servants have mounted against Him on numerous occasions.

Q - In what sense do you see Jesus as the Lord's "select arrow"? Jesus will wipe out all who oppose Him as if He was a select arrow from the bow of the Lord by the mere word of His mouth.

Q - How would you say the Lord hid His Servant in His quiver? Jesus, God's "select arrow" for judging the devil and his followers, has been active in the plan of the Lord since before the foundations of the world were laid, but He was not clearly revealed to mankind until His incarnation occurred.

C. The Purpose of the Call 49:3

Q - How do we know the mention of Israel in this verse is actually a designation for God's "other Servant" Jesus? Because the Father ("He") speaks to His Servant Son ("Me"), it is clear that He is addressing Him as Israel in the sense that the Lord claims both Jesus and the nation as His Son and Servant (Exodus 4:22; Isaiah 41:8; 63:16; Luke 1:54).

Q - What did the Lord reveal as His "assignment" for His Servant Jesus? It was His assignment that Jesus "show [His] glory."

III. The Servant's Assessment of the Call 49:4

Q - Why might God's Servant have felt as if He toiled in vain and spent His strength in vain? Christ's ministry was largely rejected by the people of Israel (John 1:11) - leading to His death by crucifixion as if He had been a criminal.

Q - When can God's Servant be assured of the justice due Him and the anticipated reward? Jesus has already been exalted to the right hand of God the Father, where He continues to serve His people, until He is rewarded with millennial rule and the full recognition of His authority, when every knee bows to Him and every tongue confesses that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).

Think About It: God will richly reward His Servant/Son for honoring His name in a difficult assignment.

Apply It: Because God the Father Himself is honoring the Lord Jesus, His Servant/Son, it is important for His people to honor the Son as well.

“To the Jews, Then To the World”

Isaiah 49:5-7

Q - In what sense is the Gospel (as Paul put it, Romans 1:16) “the power of God for salvation, to the Jew first, then to the Greek”?

Because the “Servant of the Lord” was born as a Jew, it should not surprise anyone that the Lord had a specific mission for Him to accomplish among His own people. But the ministry of Jesus among His own Jewish people was only the launching pad for a ministry to the entire world!

I. The Servant’s Ministry on Behalf of Israel 49:5

A. His Formation in the Womb

Q - What set apart the formation of God’s Servant Jesus in his mother’s womb from the formation of other human babies? He was set apart in the sense that his mother’s pregnancy was caused by the Holy Spirit, not a man; and He was set apart in the sense that He had a special calling as God’s Son and Messiah of Israel from before He was born.

B. His Calling from the Lord

Q - Where had “Jacob” gone that the Lord commissioned His Servant to bring him back and gather Israel to Him? Jacob (Israel) had strayed from the leading of the Lord in sin; and, because of their rejection of God’s covenant, they were dispersed around the world by Assyria and Babylon and Rome.

C. His Status Before the Lord

Q - In what sense was the Servant of the Lord to be honored in His sight? He was acknowledged by God the Father as His “beloved Son” in whom He was “well-pleased” (Matthew 3:17; 17:5); He was empowered by the Father in the works He did during His earthly ministry; He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18); He ascended to the right hand of the Father where He continues His ministry for the saints by His intercession (Romans 8:34); and He has been exalted by the Father to be honored by all of creation in His roles as Messiah and Savior and Lord (Philippians 2:9-11).

Q - How was Isaiah’s prophecy to be fulfilled that God Himself would be His Servant’s strength? The words which Jesus spoke, and the works which Jesus did, He did by the direction and with the help of His Father (cf. John 14:10-11).

II. The Servant’s Expanded Ministry to the World 49:6

A. His Initial Assignment

Q - What would it mean for the Lord’s Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved ones of Israel? He provided salvation for “the preserved ones of Israel,” and He will restore and raise up the nation of Israel to prominence during His millennial kingdom.

B. His Expanded Assignment

Q - What would it mean for the Servant of the Lord to be a “light to the nations”? It would mean that He would enlighten many souls, Jew and Gentile, as “the Light of the World” - causing those who follow Him to leave behind the darkness and walk in the light which He gives (John 8:12, 9:5).

III. The Servant’s Exalted Status 49:7

A. His Early Rejection

Q - What surprising response was ahead for the Servant sent by God to restore Israel and shine a light to the ends of the earth? He would be despised by many - even abhorred by His own people - taking a place of subservience to rulers who condemned and abused and crucified Him (John 1:11; Acts 4:24-28).

B. His Later Exaltation

Q - How would the Lord's once-despised Servant be vindicated before all was said and done? Having provided salvation from sin's penalty by His death on the cross, Jesus would be exalted to the right hand of His Father in Heaven, ultimately seeing every knee bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).

C. His Divine Selection

Q - What would assure the ultimate vindication of the Servant of the Lord? The faithfulness of God the Father in choosing Him and fulfilling His purposes through Him would assure His ultimate vindication.

Think About It: The Lord's Servant - first rejected, then exalted - has been chosen to rescue and restore the people of Israel and to extend God's salvation to the end of the earth.

Apply It: Are you trusting Jesus as God's provision for your rescue and salvation from sin and death?

“Comfort My People”

Isaiah 49:8-13

Q - What is your understanding of what it will mean for the Lord to comfort His people?

Though Isaiah prophesied at a time when things were not going well for Israel, and though the Lord revealed through Isaiah and other prophets that things were going to get worse, Isaiah was given reason to be encouraged as the Lord instructed him (Isaiah 40:1) “‘Comfort, O comfort My people,’ says your God.”

I. The Lord’s Favor Through His Servant 49:8

Q - When would you say the Lord’s “favorable time” is for His people Israel? Anytime the Lord extends His saving mercy and grace is a favorable time - as when He was about to deliver Israel from Babylonian captivity; when He sent His Servant to live among men and save them; and when He will send His Servant to reign over redeemed and restored Israel in the millennial kingdom.

Q - When does the Lord give His Servant as a “covenant of the people”? He gave His Servant as a covenant of the people at the cross; and He will give Him again when He institutes the new covenant in the millennium.

II. The Lord’s Message Through His Servant 49:9-11

A. His Message of Freedom, Light and Nourishment 49:9

Q - When should we expect to see freedom, light and nourishment from the ministry of the Servant of the Lord?

They were seen during His earthly ministry, and they will be seen again during His millennial kingdom ministry (cf. Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18).

Q - What would the people's ability to feed (as sheep do) "along the roads" and to find pasture "on all bare heights" indicate? They would be indicative of a people living in conditions of peace and prosperity, as they will during the millennial kingdom (cf. Isaiah 41:18 and context).

B. His Message of Refreshment, Protection and Guidance
49:10

Q - When should Israel expect to see refreshment and protection and guidance from the ministry of the Servant of the Lord? Israel should expect to see these things most fully during the millennial kingdom (cf. Isaiah 14:1; 40:11).

C. His Message of Accessibility 49:11

Q - What would roads on mountains and raised up highways signify for the people of God's Servant? They would signify prosperity and mobility - because roads which are well-built and which go to inaccessible places are not constructed during difficult times.

III. The Lord's Promise to His Servant 49:12-13

A. The Promise of Worldwide Impact 49:12

Q - What would be the significance of distant peoples gathering themselves to the Servant of the Lord? It will signify the elevation of the Lord's Servant to broad recognition far beyond the proper recognition of only His chosen people Israel (cf. Matthew 8:11).

B. The Promise of Joy and Comfort 49:13

Q - Who is called to join in the rejoicing to take place over God's comfort and compassion on His people, and why? All of heaven and earth are called to rejoice over God's comfort and compassion on His people Israel (cf. Isaiah 44:23).

Think About It: Though God's people Israel have wandered far from the Lord, His Servant's calling is to comfort and restore them.

Apply It: Jesus is God's provision for the restoration and comfort of all who place their faith in Him as God's Son and Savior.

“Brighter Days Ahead”

Isaiah 49:14-26

Q - When have you seen discouraging days turn in a much more encouraging direction with the passing of time?

The nation of Israel was facing significant difficulties in the days in which Isaiah ministered as a prophet among them. The northern half of their nation had been defeated and deported by the Assyrians (who had threatened Judah as well), and the Babylonians were threatening to defeat and deport the people of Judah in Isaiah’s day. So Isaiah’s ministry served both to warn Israel of coming destruction and assure them that the Lord, who predicted their judgment had no intention to permit them to be destroyed. There were going to be brighter days ahead!

I. Israel’s Concern 49:14-15

A. Fear of Abandonment 49:14

Q - What reasons did the people of Israel have for wondering if the Lord had forsaken and forgotten them in Isaiah’s day? As in the time of King Hezekiah, when the Assyrians were camping outside the walls of Jerusalem and threatening their destruction (II Kings 19:1-2), the people had reason to wonder why the Lord was allowing their enemies to threaten them.

B. Assurance of Remembrance 49:15

Q - How did the Lord illustrate His ongoing remembrance of His people? He assured them that, just as a mother is very unlikely to forget her nursing child, He was even more unlikely to forget his chosen people.

II. The Lord's Intentions 49:16-20

A. His Constant Attention 49:16

Q - How did the Lord assure His people that He had not forgotten them in the midst of their trials? He informed them that He had them inscribed on the palms of His hands, and that their walls were constantly on His mind.

B. His Word of Encouragement 49:17

Q - What reason did the Lord give His people to be encouraged about their future prospects? He assured them that their "builders" (lit. "sons" - *banay*) would not be unemployed because their destroyers and devastators would eventually be gone.

C. His Plans for Beautification 49:18

Q - What powerful image did the Lord hold out to Israel concerning their future prospects in v. 18? He spoke of the time when Israel's enemies would wear them like jewels worn by a bride.

D. His Prediction of Propagation 49:19-20

Q - How did the Lord illustrate Israel's future prosperity in verses 19-20? He anticipated a day when their descendants would find even the waste and desolate places of their once destroyed land too crowded for their abundant population.

III. Israel's Regathering 49:21-23

A. Their Surprise 49:21

Q - What reason for their surprise did the Lord anticipate in His people's prosperous future? He anticipated the time when they would have reason to wonder how they could be so many when they had once grieved the loss of their children during times of exile and wandering.

B. Their Supporters 49:22-23

Q - What role did the Lord predict for the nations which had once been hostile to Israel to play in their regathering? He challenged His people to remain hopeful in waiting for Him as He predicted that He would one day cause the nations to carry the sons and daughters of Israel on their shoulders back to their own place, showing deep respect for Israel as they did.

IV. The Lord's Assurance 49:24-26

A. His Question 49:24

Q - How did the Lord illustrate the seeming unlikelihood that the hopeful future He predicted would occur? He asked how likely it was that a tyrannical mighty man could be forced to give up his captured prey.

B. His Assurance 49:25

Q - What unlikely outcome did the Lord assure His people He would bring about in their future? He assured them that He would force tyrannical mighty men to give up His captured people when He contended for them and saved their sons.

C. His Salvation 49:26

Q - When did the Lord predict that all flesh would know that He was Israel's Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of

Jacob? He predicted that all flesh would properly recognize Him when He forced them to live under seige conditions in His rescue of His people.

Think About It: Though Israel had reason to be discouraged in Isaiah's day, the Lord assured them of far better days in their future.

Apply It: The Lord can be trusted to fulfill His promises of better days ahead for all who put their trust in Him.

“Able to Save”

Isaiah 50:1-11

Q - When have you seen someone in need who failed to accept help which was readily available?

The people of Israel (like many others in our world) have often suffered the consequences of foolish choices because they failed to trust the Lord. This was never more clear than when they rejected their Messiah - as Isaiah anticipated they would!

I. The Lord's Interrogation of Israel 50:1-3

Q - What evidence was there, by Isaiah's day and time, that the people of Israel's "mother" had been divorced by the Lord (v. 1)? With the nation divided since the days of King Rehoboam, northern Israel had now been defeated and deported by the Assyrians, and the southern kingdom was being threatened by the Babylonians.

Q - What made it abundantly clear (vv. 2-3) that the Lord was well able to help them in spite of their failings? The miraculous deliverance of the people of Israel at their crossing of the Red Sea on dry land made it clear that the Lord is well-able to help His people.

II. The Lord's Salvation Through His Servant 50:4-9

A. The Servant's Instruction 50:4-5

Q - What did the Servant of the Lord have to offer as sustenance to His troubled people? He had the word of God, received from His heavenly Father, with ears carefully attuned to what the Lord had to say, and an obedient response to Him.

Q - What was the Lord's Servant not doing which the people of Israel (and everyone else!) needed to refrain from doing as well? He was not turning back from the word from His Father, but was obeying His instruction.

B. The Servant's Sufferings 50:6

Q - What difficulties was the Servant of the Lord anticipating as He committed Himself to hear the instruction of the Lord? He was anticipating blows to His back, the pain to His face of the plucking out of His beard, and the humiliation of His enemies spitting in His face Cf. Matthew 26:67; 27:30.

C. The Servant's Perseverance 50:7-9

Q - What would be the surprising outcome (v. 7) of the Servant of the Lord's submission to - and even determination to endure - harsh treatment? He was anticipating the Lord's enablement/exoneration in suffering (which He knew would not actually result in the disgrace it was intended to inflict).

Q - On what was the Lord's Servant going to base His assurance (v. 8) of ultimate vindication? He was basing His assurance of ultimate vindication on the vindication He would receive from His Father.

Q - What word of warning did the Lord's Servant have (v. 9) for anyone seeking to condemn Him? He warned those who sought to condemn Him that, because of the help He was to receive from the Lord Himself, those who opposed Him would wear out like a moth-eaten garment.

III. The Lord's Warning to the People 50:10-11

A. The Invitation to Trust the Lord 50:10

Q - What practical evidence does the Lord seek in the lives of those who genuinely fear Him? He expects them to obey the voice of His servant as they trust in the name of the Lord and rely on Him.

B. The Warning to People Who Fail to Trust 50:11

Q - What should those who insist on walking in the “light” of their own efforts expect at the end of their efforts? Those who insist on walking in the “light” of their own efforts should expect to lie down in torment from the hand of the Lord in the end.

Think About It: The Lord’s Servant offers salvation to all who will put their trust in Him.

Apply It: Anyone who is not trusting in the Lord for the salvation He offers through His Servant, Jesus, is not destined to experience His salvation.

“Hope For Those Who Trust the Lord”

Isaiah 51:1-8

Q - What is man's best hope in view of the Lord's plans to judge both the heavens and the earth?

While there are many people who vainly imagine that conditions on earth are going to get better and better under the diligent management of mankind, there are many signs in our world that conditions are deteriorating rather than improving. A list of nations on earth which are facing leadership crises is hardly reason for encouragement about improving conditions as some people vainly imagine that globalist efforts to establish a one-world government will make everything better. So the Lord called His people Israel in Isaiah's day, millennia ago, to look to Him for the salvation only He will be able to provide.

I. The Lord's Call to Listen 51:1-3

A. His Call to God-Seekers 51:1

Q - What reason did the Lord give to His people to listen to His voice in their pursuit of righteousness? He reminded His people that He was their source as “the rock from which they were hewn.”

B. His Challenge to Look to Abraham 51:2

Q - What encouragement did the Lord offer to His people in looking back to Abraham and Sarah? The Lord reminded His people of the blessings He provided for Abraham in the multiplication of His descendants from just one man and his wife.

C. His Promise to Comfort Zion 51:3

Q - What bright hopes did the Lord promise as comfort to the nation of Israel? The Lord promised to comfort Israel, to turn her wilderness into Edenic conditions, and to provide joy, gladness and thanksgiving for her people.

II. The Lord's Call to Attention 51:4-8

A. His Intention to Establish His Law 51:4

Q - What did the Lord call to the attention of His people in verse 4? He called their attention to His plan to send forth His law to establish justice and light for the peoples of earth.

B. His Offer of Salvation 51:5

Q - To whom did the Lord signal His intention to offer His righteousness and His salvation? He spoke of His intention to extend His righteousness and salvation and judgment to the peoples, including those on distant coastlands.

C. His Hope for a Dying Earth 51:6

Q - When did the Lord indicate that His righteousness and His salvation would be experienced by the peoples of the earth? He indicated that they would be experienced forever after the sky has vanished like smoke and the earth has worn out like a garment - its inhabitants having died.

D. His Encouragement to the Righteous 51:7-8

Q - What was the Lord's encouragement to the righteous, who possessed His Law, in spite of threatening circumstances in Isaiah's day? He encouraged them with the assurance that

they need not fear the reproach and revilings of their enemies in view of their ultimate destruction and the provision of His righteousness and salvation to all generations forever.

Think About It: The Lord challenged His people to trust Him for salvation in view of not only the demise of their enemies but, more importantly, the coming judgment of the heavens and earth.

Apply It: Only those who are trusting in the Lord for their salvation are going to escape the coming judgment of the heavens and the earth.

“The Strong Arm of the Lord”

Isaiah 51:9-16

Q - When have you been most impressed by the strength of someone's arm?

Though we all experience many benefits because of the presence and usefulness of our arms, there are people whose arms are especially impressive for their unusual strength. But there is no human arm, no matter how strong it might be, which is any contest for the strength of the “arm” of the Lord! Many things He has accomplished in His creation of the universe and His management of the affairs on our planet have displayed incomparable strength - as if He were using supernatural arms, far beyond the strength of the arms of the strongest of men.

I. The Call to Awaken the Arm of the Lord 51:9-11

A. The Reminder of God's Strong Arm 51:9

Q - What might the mention of the Lord's victory over “Rahab,” the “dragon,” have called to the mind of the people of Israel? It was probably intended to call to mind the Lord's power over Egypt in delivering them from slavery in the days of Moses.

B. The Rescue by God's Strong Arm 51:10

Q - What amazing miracle from the Lord did He recall as evidence of the additional strength of His arm after defeating the “dragon” of verse 9? He recalled the miracle of His division of the Red Sea as Israel passed through on dry ground in their escape from the pursuing army of Egypt.

C. The Reality of Future Rescue 51:11

Q - What powerful feat of the arm of the Lord was anticipated in the experience of the people of Israel in verse 11? The Lord's ransom of His people was anticipated - when He returns them to Zion with joyful shouting and everlasting joy on their heads at the time of the predicted millennial kingdom.

II. The Call to Trust in the Arm of the Lord 51:12-13

A. The Folly of Fearing Mankind 51:12

Q - What is it that makes looking to the Lord far more sensible than looking to mankind for help? It is the Lord who is eternally able to comfort those who look to Him rather than to a man who cannot comfort and who lives only for a brief time.

B. The Folly of Forgetting the Lord 51:13

Q - What are some significant reasons for which it is foolish to forget the Lord by trusting in man? It is foolish because the Lord is man's creator, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth.

Q - Why does verse 13 imply that it is foolish to fear and live in daily concern over the fury of the oppressor? It implies that the oppressor is soon gone because he is short-lived.

III. The Comforting Word for the Lord's People 51:14-16

A. The Promise of Freedom for the Exiles 51:14

Q - When did the Lord indicate He would provide freedom and provision for the exiles of Israel? He indicated that exiles would soon be set free from their imprisonment and lack of

bread.

B. The Power Providing Freedom for the Exiles 51:15

Q - What encouragement concerning His ability to rescue His troubled people did the Lord provide in verse 15? He provided encouragement by His reminder that He controls the waters of the sea and the armies of heaven and earth as the Lord of Hosts.

C. The Privileges Afforded God's People 51:16

Q - To whom must the Lord be speaking in verse 16 as a source of encouragement for the people of Israel? He must be speaking to His divine Servant, Jesus, because it is Jesus who spoke His words and established the heavens and founded the earth and brought hope to the city of Zion and the people of Israel.

Think About It: The strong arm of the Lord which rescued God's people in the past will awaken to rescue them again in their future.

Apply It: The arm of the Lord is strong enough to rescue all who place their trust in Him from any danger they face.

“A Wake-Up Call for Jerusalem”

Isaiah 51:17-23

Q - What is the most memorable wake-up experience you have ever had?

There are many ways in which a person can be roused from slumber - some very pleasant and some not so pleasant. But when a wake-up call arouses an entire city, like the city of Jerusalem, we are talking about a powerful experience! It could be something as powerful as an earthquake or an enemy attack, but the Prophet Isaiah was commissioned to record a wake-up call from the Lord to Israel's capital city Jerusalem.

I. The Call for Jerusalem to Awaken 51:17-20

A. The Reasons for the Call 51:17-18

1. The Lord's Judgment on His People 51:17

Q - Why did the people of Jerusalem need to hear the repeated wake-up call from the Lord through Isaiah? The city of Jerusalem had drunk from the Lord's hand the cup of His anger, draining to the dregs the chalice of reeling He had sent to them by the hand of enemy nations (i.e. Assyria & Babylon).

2. The Leadership Vacuum Among His People 51:18

Q - Why was it so important that the Lord seek through His prophet to awaken Jerusalem? It was important because there were no human leaders in the city who could provide the guidance the city needed to deliver itself from its spiritual slumber.

B. The Need for the Call 51:19-20

1. The Desperation of God's People 51:19

Q - What was it that had happened to Jerusalem which would make it difficult to bring about any comfort? The city was suffering under the impact of double trouble - the impact of devastation and destruction (the devastation of famine and the destruction of the sword).

2. The Difficulties of God's People 51:20

Q - How did the Lord describe the difficulties Jerusalem was experiencing in Isaiah's day? He described their difficulties in terms of sons who had fainted and of sons lying (helpless) at the head of every street (like an antelope trapped in a net) as a result of His wrath and rebuke toward them.

II. The Consolation for Jerusalem's Future 51:21-23

A. The Call from the Lord 51:21

Q - Why were the people of Jerusalem in need of the call of the Lord which Isaiah was delivering? They needed the call of the Lord because they were afflicted and intoxicated - though not as a result of drinking wine.

B. The Consolation from the Lord 51:22

Q - What assurance did the Lord have about His work on behalf of His people in spite of their sinful past and troubled performance in Isaiah's day? He assured them that He was going to contend for His people as the Lord their God.

Q - What bright future prospect did the Lord have for Jerusalem regarding the "cup of reeling" and "the chalice of [His] anger?" He assured His people that He had taken the cup of

reeling and the chalice of His anger out of their hand, never to drink it again. Though Jerusalem would experience future judgments, it would not come from the Assyrians or Babylonians.

B. The Contention of the Lord for Jerusalem 51:23

Q - What degrading treatment did the Lord say His people had endured from their tormenters? He said that their tormenters had walked over their backs as if walking on the ground.

Q - What did the Lord say He had in mind for those who had tormented Jerusalem? He said that He would place the “cup of reeling” and the “chalice of [His] anger” into the hand of Jerusalem’s tormenters - referring to His judgment against the Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

Think About It: The Lord challenged Jerusalem to awaken to the reality that, though they were experiencing desperate days, He had plans for a far better future.

Apply It: The Lord always has encouraging plans for those who trust in Him as their God and Savior.

“The Lord Remembers and Assures”

Isaiah 52:1-6

Q - How would you rate the chances that the city of Jerusalem is going to enjoy peace and prosperity in today's middle east political and spiritual climate?

Perhaps no city on planet earth has more often been the focus of hostilities than the city of Jerusalem since it was captured by King David and made the capital of the Jewish nation. Since that time it has endured hostility from Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, the Greeks, Syria, the Romans, and various nations which fought over it throughout the middle ages during the Crusades and afterward. Even though it is under Israeli control today, various middle eastern countries have it in their sights as Iran and its proxies have vowed to destroy the Jewish nation. But the Lord is well aware of its enemies and He has plans for a secure future for Jerusalem.

I. The Lord's Call to Jerusalem 52:1-2

A. His Call to Awaken 52:1a

Q - Though Isaiah 51:9 recorded the call for the Lord to awaken and act on behalf of Jerusalem as He has in the past, who does 52:1 suggest it is that needs to awaken? In Isaiah 52:1 it is the Lord who is calling on the city of Zion to awaken to His plans for the future of Jerusalem.

B. His Challenge to Strength and Beauty 52:1b

Q - What was the status of the strength and beauty of Jerusalem during the life of the Prophet Isaiah? The city of Jerusalem was ransacked by the Babylonians during Isaiah's lifetime

and its people subjected to slavery and to wearing the garments worn by enslaved peoples.

C. His Word of Encouragement 52:1c

Q - What was the Lord's encouragement for the city of Jerusalem in the last lines of verse 1? It was His prediction that the days were coming when the uncircumcised and the (ritually) unclean would no longer be passing through the city.

D. His Call to Rise Up Out of Captivity 52:2

Q - What would Israel's ability to shake off its dust, rise up, and loose the chains around its neck suggest about their status? It would suggest that they were going to be in a position to find relief from their captive condition.

II. The Lord's Assurance of His Remembrance 52:3-6

A. His People's Redemption without Money 52:3

Q - Why would there be no monetary exchange with respect to either the people's captivity or their redemption? They were not paid for when they were captured, and they would not have any need to pay in order to be released from captivity.

B. His Remembrance of Egyptian and Assyrian Captivity 52:4

Q - How did it happen that Israel was at one time enslaved by the Egyptians and the Assyrians? Israel was enslaved in Egypt when the Pharaohs who followed Joseph's leadership in Egypt enslaved them in order to keep them under control as they grew to a sizable nation, and the Assyrians enslaved Israel as their captives in battle.

C. His Remembrance of the Blasphemy of Enemies 52:5

Q - In what sense did Israel's captors howl and blaspheme the name of the Lord during their dominance over Israel? Their rulers boasted loudly about their might as Israel's captors, and they ridiculed the thought that the Lord was in any position to win in any contest with their own pagan deities (cf. Exodus 5:2; II Kings 18:35; Psalm 59:5-7).

D. His Assurance of His Presence with His People 52:6

Q - What is the significance of the Lord's assurance that the day was coming when His people would know His name, and what is significant about the Lord's statement "Here I am"? The name of the Lord (*Yahweh* - i.e. "He IS") reveals His reality as the "I Am," a truth reaffirmed by the Lord's statement "Here I am."

Think About It: The Lord called His people to strength and beauty as He recalled their sufferings and assured them of His presence among them.

Apply It: The Lord has the final say in the affairs of all of His people, no matter what obstacles they face.

“Joy over the Restoration of Jerusalem”

Isaiah 52:7-12

Q - What is the most memorable experience you have had celebrating some significant milestone or accomplishment in an organization or community of which you were a part?

After all of the difficult times and experiences the city of Jerusalem has gone through down through the centuries since it became the capital of Israel, it will certainly be a significant time of celebration when the Lord fulfills His promises to restore and redeem and save the residents of the city of Jerusalem in the sight of all surrounding nations! Many have seen the liberation of Jerusalem during their lifetimes since the Lord brought about the rebirth of Israel and restored His people to their land in 1948, but a far greater restoration is in store as described by the Prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 52:7-12.

I. The Lord's Encouragement for Jerusalem 52:7-10

A. The Prospect of Good News 52:7

Q - What good news did Isaiah anticipate for Zion (Jerusalem) in verse 7? He anticipated the good news of peace and happiness and salvation for Jerusalem as the Lord establishes His kingdom reign there.

B. The Prospect of Restoration 52:8

Q - Why would Zion's watchmen especially have cause to shout joyfully together over the events described in verse 8? Watchmen are most often assigned to be on guard for dangers to the cities to which they are assigned, but the watchmen in this case are rejoicing as they personally witness the Lord's

work in restoring Zion after millennia of bad news for the city.

C. The Prospect of Comfort and Redemption 52:9

Q - What is significant about who is specifically instructed to break forth and shout joyfully over the Lord's actions in comforting and redeeming His people? Waste places in any city are generally least likely to have reasons for rejoicing in view of their damaged condition, so it is significant that the Lord is challenging Jerusalem's "waste places" to break forth and shout joyfully over their restoration.

Q - How do you envision the Lord comforting and redeeming in the waste places He addresses in verse 9? The Lord will have paid the full cost involved in comforting even the most needy parts of the city of Jerusalem - following all the damage which will have been done during the years of earth history, then the damage of the tribulation and the infamous battle of Armageddon which will be focused against Jerusalem.

D. The Prospect of Salvation 52:10

Q - Why will the Lord have needed to "bare His holy arm" in order to provide salvation for the people of Jerusalem in the sight of all the nations? The Jewish people have been highly resistant down through the centuries to the Lord's many efforts to draw them to Himself, so their salvation will be the cause of celebration for all the nations which will be aware of God's power to save His resistant people.

II. The Lord's Prediction of Freedom 52:11-12

A. His Prediction of their Departure 52:11

Q - From where will the people of Israel be departing as

they return to the city of Jerusalem? They will be departing from the nations (v. 10) to which they were scattered during their dispersion.

Q - From what uncleanness will Jews returning to their inheritance need to be cleansed? They will need cleansing from the uncleanness of foreign ways and foreign religious influences to which they have been exposed in their dispersion.

Q - Who would be assigned the task of carrying the vessels of the Lord? The members of the tribe of Levi, who were assigned the responsibility for temple implements, would be carrying any vessels which need to be put to use in the restored worship of the people of Israel.

B. His Prediction of His Presence 52:12

Q - How will Israel's departure from the nations to which they were dispersed differ in this case from previous departures from captivity? Israel's departure from the nations will be more carefully planned and executed and longer lasting as the Lord leads their return to their land and follow up on those who are the last to return.

Think About It: The Lord anticipated rejoicing and peace for His people when He restores Jerusalem in the sight of all the nations.

Apply It: The Lord's future plans for Jerusalem demonstrate His ultimate control over the earth and its citizens.

“The Long-Range View”

Isaiah 52:13-15

Q - When have you seen circumstances in your life which looked like nothing but “bad news” turn out, in the end, to be far better news than you expected?

The limited perspective of man is only one of many reasons why we need to grow in our ability to put our confidence in the Lord. Though life is full of surprises for **us**, it doesn't hold any surprises for **Him**! While we often can't distinguish “bad news” from “good news” because of our inability to see around the next bend in life's road, He doesn't share that disadvantage because He isn't limited by time and He isn't limited in His perspective.

I. Messiah's Prosperity Predicted 52:13

A. His Prosperity

Q - How will the experience of the Lord's Messianic Servant differ during His second coming from the experience He had during His first coming? The Lord's Servant will prosper in view of earth's embrace of His person and His ministry - in contrast to the rejection He received at His first coming.

B. His Exaltation

Q - What will be the explanation for Isaiah's prediction that the Lord's Servant will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted? The Lord's servant will return to earth as the Messianic King anticipated in many parts of Biblical prophecy (e.g. Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:32-33; Philippians 2:9-11), righteously ruling over the earth from His throne in Jerusalem.

II. Messiah's Suffering Predicted 52:14-15a

A. His Disfigurement 52:14

Q - What is the explanation for the radical difference between the exalted Messiah of verse 13 and the disfigured Messiah of verse 14? The exalted Messiah of verse 13 tells of His role as Messianic King at His second coming, while the disfigured Messiah of verse 14 tells of the suffering and death He experienced at His first coming.

B. His Work of Purification 52:15a

Q - What may Isaiah have been anticipating by his reference to the Messiah sprinkling many nations? He may have been anticipating the Messiah's sacrificial death and the sprinkling of His life-giving blood for the salvation of many people in many of the nations of earth - like the ritual purification which was accomplished by the sprinkling of animal blood on the altar of the tabernacle and the temple (cf. Leviticus 16:19;- Ezekiel 43:20).

III. Messiah's Supremacy Predicted 52:15b

A. The Silence of Kings

Q - What would be the significance of kings shutting their mouths on account of the Servant of the Lord? It would signify their awareness that they are His inferiors, with nothing to say to Him of which He is not already well-aware and no reason to offer any suggestions regarding His leadership of the world.

B. The Knowledge of Kings

Q - What might kings now be seeing that they had not

previously seen or heard or understood? They might now be seeing clearly how the Lord's Servant was brutally mistreated and misunderstood at His first coming in order to provide the cleansing from sin which they now enjoy as His subjects and worshipers (cf. Romans 15:21; Ephesians 3:5).

Think About It: Isaiah predicted both the suffering and the glory of God's Servant, the Messiah.

Apply It: With the earthly ministry of Jesus at His first coming behind us we have every reason to love and appreciate and serve Him for the significant sacrifice He made on our behalf.

“God’s Surprising Servant”

Isaiah 53:1-3

Q - Who is a favorite “super-hero” who captured your attention during your childhood years?

When the people of ancient Israel thought of their Messiah - the future king whom God had chosen and anointed to rescue them from all of their problems and to rule the whole world in righteousness from His headquarters in Jerusalem - they thought in terms of a hero. And they had good reason to think in those terms because God had revealed some very glorious truths about the Messiah. But when the people of Christ’s day considered the possibility that He might be the long-awaited Messiah most of them didn’t see Him as their hero - in spite of the fact that Isaiah (and others) had predicted a suffering Messiah as well as a glorious Messiah.

I. The Anticipation of the Savior 53:1

A. A Surprising Message 53:1a

Q - What was there about the Servant of the Lord which was met with unbelief when He appeared as a man on earth as Isaiah (and others) predicted that He would? The fact that Jesus, coming to earth in such humility, was God’s Son and Savior and Messiah was met with unbelief by the majority of even the people of Israel among whom He lived and served.

B. A Waiting Revelation 53:1b

Q - How was the arm of the Lord revealed in the prophetic message regarding the Servant of the Lord? It was clearly predicted that He would provide both the power of the Lord to

save the sinful and the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6) to rule the world.

II. The Description of the Savior 53:2

A. His Tender Beginning 53:2a

Q - What was Isaiah anticipating by His statements that Jesus grew up like a tender shoot and like a root out of parched ground? He was anticipating the simple birth conditions, home environment (raised as a carpenter’s son), and training (not educated in Pharisaic tradition).

B. His Humble Appearance 53:2b

Q - What was apparently true of Christ’s physical appearance? He was apparently very ordinary in His appearance - not particularly handsome or strong-looking.

III. The Rejection of the Savior 53:3

A. His Repudiation 53:3a

Q - In what sense was Jesus despised and forsaken of men? There were relatively few who believed Him to be God’s Son and Messiah (not even His own brothers), and He was hated and hounded by Israel’s spiritual leadership and political leaders.

B. His Suffering 53:3b

Q - In what sense was Jesus a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Though Jesus gathered crowds because of His teachings and miracles, most in the crowds did not become His followers, and He lived a very simple life (“nowhere to lay His

head”) as He faced almost constant opposition from the Jewish authorities who decided early in His ministry that He had to be destroyed - leading to his cruel suffering and death.

C. His Devaluation 53:3c

Q - Who was it that would hide their faces, despise Jesus, and fail to esteem Him? The majority of the people of Israel were indifferent at best (John 1:11), while His enemies in the religious establishment hated Him and belittled Him and tried to trap Him and refused to acknowledge Him as God’s Son and Messiah.

Think About It: Contrary to Israel’s expectations, the Messiah came to birth on earth under humble circumstances (at His first coming) to be rejected and to suffer at the hands of His people.

Apply It: The simplicity of Christ’s appearance on earth at His first coming must not be allowed to obscure His true significance as God’s Son, Israel’s Messiah, and our Savior.

“God’s Suffering Servant”

Isaiah 53:4-6

Q - What is one of your favorite Old Testament Scripture passages about the ministry of God’s Messianic Servant?

Isaiah 53 is a Bible passage which has received a variety of responses because of its prophetic message concerning the suffering of God’s Messianic Servant Jesus.

- On the one hand, many Jews have avoided even the reading of it in synagogue services because of the way Christians have applied it to Christ.

+ On the other hand, the church has marveled at its beauty and the specific accuracy with which it describes the situation of the Savior.

Though it was written 700 years before the events it describes, it reads like an eye-witness account of the sufferings which Christ endured to accomplish our salvation!

I. The Sorrowing Messiah 53:4

A. His Undeserved Sorrows

Q - What were some of the “griefs” (illnesses) and “sorrows” (pains) which Jesus bore which were not His own but those of His people? Jesus healed many physical and spiritual illnesses during His public ministry, and He spent so much time and energy serving the needs of His people that he sometimes didn’t have a chance to eat.

B. His Undeserved Scorn

Q - What comes to mind of a time when Jesus was stricken? He was struck by an officer in the presence of the high

priest (John 18:22), physically abused and even scourged by Roman guards (Matthew 27:26) during the hours of His trials, and put to death by crucifixion.

Q - When was Jesus considered “smitten of God” by His people? The Jews sought to kill Jesus because He was considered a Sabbath breaker and making Himself equal with God (John 5:18). And in John 19:7 the Jews told Pilate that they had a law which said Jesus ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.

II. The Suffering Messiah 53:5

A. The Nature of His Suffering

Q - How did Isaiah’s prophecy precisely predict the nature of the suffering Jesus was going to endure? Isaiah predicted that He was to be “pierced through for our transgressions,” an accurate description of the nailing of Jesus to the cross and the piercing of His side by a soldier to demonstrate that He really was dead. And His prediction that Jesus would be “crushed for our iniquities” accurately anticipated the crushing experience of crucifixion and the emotional pain of separation from His Father.

B. The Reason for His Suffering

Q - What was both the cruel irony and amazing act of God’s love which Jesus was to endure in the things He was to suffer? It was cruel irony that Jesus suffered so fully for sins He did not commit, and it was amazing love that His sufferings paid the price for sinful humans who were guilty of the sins for which Christ suffered and died.

Q - What “well-being” of humanity resulted from the chas-

tening of Jesus, and who was to experience healing, and how, by the scourging Jesus endured? The chastening of Jesus made possible the spiritual well-being of those who trust in Him for their salvation from sin, and the scourging of Jesus led to the spiritual healing from the curse of sin and death for people who did not have to endure what Jesus endured on their behalf.

III. The Substitution of Messiah 53:6

A. The Sinfulness of Man

Q - What makes sheep a fitting comparison for mankind? The tendency of sheep to wander astray without the care of a good shepherd makes them a fitting comparison for mankind in his tendency to stray off the path the Lord has prescribed for healthy living.

B. The Solution of the Lord

Q - What provision has the Lord made for mankind's wandering ways? He has laid the iniquity of mankind on His Servant, the Messiah, by having Him pay the price of death for the sins of all who will place their trust in Him.

Think About It: God allowed His Messianic Servant to suffer for the sins of mankind in order to provide the salvation man needs if they will trust in Him.

Apply It: Are we trusting Jesus for the salvation He provides by the suffering and death He experienced at His first coming?

“The Sinless Substitute”

Isaiah 53:7-9

Q - Why might Philip Yancy and Paul Brand have chosen *Pain, the Gift Nobody Wants* as the title for their book?

If very few people enjoy even **seeing** the pain of suffering, there are even fewer who would voluntarily submit to the pain of suffering. Almost no one chooses to suffer pain if they have any reasonable alternative. But the Lord Jesus lived among men knowing that He was going to experience the pain of suffering because, centuries before it took place, the Prophet Isaiah clearly predicted that the Messiah would suffer, die, be buried and return to life as a sinless substitute for sinners.

I. Messiah’s Silent Suffering 53:7

A. His Affliction 53:7a

Q - What are some of the ways in which the Lord Jesus was “oppressed and afflicted” in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy? He was wrongfully arrested in Gethsemane, illegally tried in an overnight “kangaroo court,” brutally mistreated by soldiers, and crucified on a cross.

B. His Silence 53:7b

Q - How do Matthew 26:6-3; 27:12-14 and Luke 23:9 demonstrate the accuracy of Isaiah’s prophecy in v. 7? They each cite instances when, as Isaiah predicted, Jesus did not “open His mouth” in response to those who questioned Him.

II. Messiah’s Substitutionary Suffering 53:8

A. His Captivity 53:8a

Q - In what sense was Jesus “taken away” by oppression and judgment - as Isaiah predicted? He was captured by a Roman guard and taken as a prisoner to injustice at the hands of those who were responsible for just judgment.

B. His Death 53:8b

Q - What was Isaiah anticipating by His prediction that Jesus would be “cut off out of the land of the living”? He was anticipating the death of Jesus at the hands of His persecutors.

C. His Substitution 53:8c

Q - What was the reason for which the Lord permitted the unjust treatment and death of His Servant Jesus? He permitted it to pay the wages of sin (death) for the transgressions of His people Israel (and others) who were deserving of all the complications of death because of their failings.

III. Messiah’s Sinless Suffering 53:9

A. His Burial 53:9a-b

Q - What could have been the fate of the body of Jesus because “His grave was assigned with wicked men”? His body could have been thrown out unburied as was sometimes the fate of the bodies of wicked men.

Q - What surprising development occurred to the body of Jesus in view of God’s attention to the significance of His Son (Matthew 27:57-60)? Jesus was buried by the efforts of a “rich man” (Joseph of Arimathea) in a stone tomb which had been prepared for the burial of its owner.

B. His Innocence 53:9c

Q - What do the final two lines of verse 9 anticipate concerning the inappropriateness of the penalty of death to which Jesus was subjected? They anticipate that there was no cause either with respect to His works nor His words which made His death appropriate.

Think About It: Just as Isaiah predicted (some seven hundred years before it happened), Christ suffered, died, and was buried as a sinless substitute for sinners.

Apply It: How have you responded to the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus?

“From Suffering to Sovereignty”

Isaiah 53:10-12

Q - What has been one of the most memorable experiences you have had with the pain of suffering?

Because we live on a sin-cursed earth - a planet which is still reeling under the impact of the fall of man from complete fellowship with the Lord - no one gets through this life without some measure of suffering. We know that the Lord even used suffering in the life of Christ to perfect His purposes for our salvation! And both the suffering and the supremacy of the Lord Jesus were predicted centuries before His birth on this earth by the prophet Isaiah.

I. The Lord's Pleasure 53:10

A. Messiah's Pain 53:10a

Q - How did the painful suffering of Jesus fit into the plans of the Lord for His Messianic Servant? The Lord was “pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief” in order to provide salvation from sin for those who trust in Him (cf. Acts 4:27-28).

B. Messiah's Prosperity 53:10b

Q - What surprising turn of events did Isaiah anticipate for the Lord's Messianic Servant following His death and burial? He anticipated that, having offered Himself as a guilt offering, the Lord's Servant would “see His offspring” and “prolong His days” with the good pleasure of Lord prospering in His hand.

II. The Lord's Provision 53:11

A. Messiah's Suffering 53:11a

Q - What did Isaiah anticipate that the Lord would see and find satisfying? He anticipated that the Lord would see and be satisfied with the "anguish of [the] soul" of His Servant.

B. Messiah's Salvation 53:11b

Q - How does Isaiah's prophecy more fully explain the satisfaction of the Lord as a result of the anguish of His Servant's soul? He explains that by His knowledge His righteous Servant would justify many as He took upon Himself the iniquities of the many.

III. The Lord's Plan 53:12

A. Messiah's Portion 53:12a

Q - What did Isaiah's prophecy anticipate as the reward of the Lord for His righteous Messianic Servant in view of His self-sacrifice on behalf of sinners? His prophecy anticipated that God would allot His Servant "a portion with the great" and a share of the "booty with the strong."

B. Messiah's Path to Reward 53:12b

Q - How does Isaiah's prophecy more fully explain the reason for the Lord's plan to prosper His Messianic Servant? It explains that God's Servant poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with transgressors, as He bore the sins of many and interceded for the transgressors.

Think About It: God uses even suffering in order to perfect His purposes, as He did in the life of His Messianic Servant Jesus.

“Rejoicing to Come”

Isaiah 54:1-8

Q - When have you experienced a time of significant relief after a time of some difficulty?

Though the people of Israel responded to the Lord’s revelation of His covenant under the leadership of Moses with the promise “All that the LORD has spoken we will do!” (Exodus 19:8), they have failed on many counts to keep their promise - as Moses said they surely would (cf. Deuteronomy 31:27,29). So the people of Israel have often lived with the sad consequences of their failure to keep their covenant with the Lord. But Isaiah could prophetically anticipate much better days ahead for his people - as he does in Isaiah 54:1-8.

I. The Lord’s Call to Shout for Joy 54:1

A. The Reason for Rejoicing 54:1

Q - What reversal of fortunes for Israel did Isaiah anticipate in verse 1? He anticipated the joyful shouting of once-barren Israel because of her future family expansion under the Lord’s blessing on the nation.

B. The Process of Rejoicing 54:2-3

Q - How did the Lord picture the people’s preparation to receive His promised blessing in their future state? He pictured His people expanding the size of their “tent” (as their forefathers actually would have done) to accommodate the growth of their nation.

Q - How does the message of verse 3 help our understand-

ing of the time which Isaiah's prediction anticipated? The expansion described in verse 3, with Israel's possession of nations and her resettlement of desolate cities, looks forward to a future time of blessing not yet experienced by the nation.

II. The Lord's Call to Fearlessness 54:4-8

A. The Reason for Fearlessness 54:4

Q - What made Isaiah's anticipation of Israel's future freedom from fear particularly encouraging in his day? Israel was living in times when enemy nations were providing numerous reasons for the people of Israel to live in fear.

B. The Prospects for Israel 54:5

Q - What prospects from the Lord provided Israel with bright hope regarding their future? The promise from the Lord that, as their Maker, He was to be their husband, and that, as the God of all the earth and the Holy One of Israel, He was to be their Redeemer.

C. The Call to Israel 54:6

Q - Why was the Lord's call to His people Israel an encouraging call in Isaiah's day? In Isaiah's day the nation of Israel was "like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit" (cf. 50:1) - like a young wife rejected by her new husband (cf. 49:14).

D. The Reversal of Fortunes 54:7-8

Q - What explanation did the Lord give to Israel for their difficulties in 54:7a and 8a? He explained that He had forsaken them "for a moment" (cf. 26:20) and that He had hidden His face from them "for a moment" in an outburst of divine anger.

Q - What reasons for improvement in Israel's situation did the Lord offer in 54:7b and 8b? The Lord promised that He was going to gather the nation with compassion (7b), and that He was going to have compassion on them as their Redeemer with everlasting compassion.

Think About It: Though Israel has endured the Lord's judgment for her failings, the nation is destined for rejoicing as a result of His plans for their restoration as their husband and Redeemer.

“From Anger to Compassion”

Isaiah 54:9-17

Q - When have you seen someone's anger melt away into compassion?

Because, as the Apostle Paul so famously said, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 2:23), the people of Israel have collected the wages of sin on numerous occasions down through the millennia of their existence because, like the rest of humanity, they have frequently failed to live righteously. But the Lord established the nation in the days of Abraham with promises of blessing for and through His chosen people, so - in spite of their spotty record of righteous behavior - God assured Israel through His Prophet Isaiah that He still has plans to bless them because He is a compassionate God who keeps His promises.

I. The Lord's Assurance to Israel 54:9-10

A. The Passing of His Anger 54:9

Q - How was the flood of Noah's day a helpful reminder to Israel of the Lord's ability to move beyond His anger at sinful human behavior? Though the world was severely judged by the flood because of God's anger, He followed the flood with the promise never again to flood the earth with water.

B. The Persistence of His Compassion 54:10

Q - Though the Lord did not promise a trouble-free future for earth and for His people Israel, what encouraging promise could He make to the people of Israel? He could promise that His lovingkindness and compassion would not be removed from Israel and that His covenant of peace for Israel could not

be shaken.

II. The Lord's Plans for Israel 54:11-17

A. His Plan for a Firm Foundation 54:11

Q - What interesting contrast did the Lord present to His people in verse 11? He presented the contrast of their current condition as afflicted, storm-tossed, and not comforted, with His plans to set their stones in antimony and their foundations in sapphires.

B. His Plan for Prosperity 54:12

Q - How did the Lord further brighten His prospects for Israel in verse 12? He predicted that He would make their battlements of rubies, their gates of crystal, and their walls of precious stones.

C. His Plan for Divine Direction 54:13

Q - What bright future did the Lord anticipate for the sons of Israel? The Lord anticipated that all of Israel's sons would be taught of the Lord, resulting in great well-being in their lives.

D. His Plan for Security 54:14-17

1. Freedom from Fear 54:14

Q - What significant changes in Israel's conditions did the Lord predict in verse 14? He predicted a time when Israel would be established in righteousness, be far from oppression and fear, and be far removed from terror.

2. Freedom from Defeat 54:15-17

Q - What was the Lord promise concerning assailants in Israel's future? He assured them that any assailants would not be sent by Him, and that any who assailed Israel would fall because of them.

Q - What products of His creation did the Lord identify in verse 16? He identified the smith who creates weapons and the ruin of destroyers as His own creations.

Q - What heritage of His servants did the Lord describe in verse 17? He described the heritage of a failure of any weapon formed against Israel to harm them and of their success in condemning any tongue which would accuse them in judgment.

Think About It: Though the Lord judged His people Israel in His anger over their failings, He loves His people and has plans to establish and prosper and direct and protect His people as their divine heritage.

“Plans for Spiritual Impact”

Isaiah 55:1-5

Q - When have you witnessed significant investments and interest in spiritual pursuits of no lasting value?

The world is filled with spiritual pursuits which are “dead-end roads” for those engaged in them. As King Solomon stated it (not only once, but twice) “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25). Except for genuine Christianity, world religions are all designed around the idea that human beings need to work their way to eternal reward in one way or another. Even the people of Israel, blessed as they have been with divine revelation, have committed themselves to the pursuit of righteousness on the basis of keeping the law which was given to Moses - a law given by God not to produce salvation by its observance, but to tutor God’s people (Galatians 3:24) regarding their need to trust in the Lord (as their “father” Abraham did when he “believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness” according to Genesis 15:6).

I. The Lord’s Invitation to the Thirsty 55:1-2

A. His Invitation to the Water 55:1

Q - Who is the Lord inviting, through His Jewish Prophet Isaiah, to accept His offer of water and wine and milk? He is inviting everyone who is thirsty - not only His chosen people in Israel.

Q - What is unusual about the invitation to “buy” at the price announced? It is unusual for anyone to be offered to buy anything without money or cost.

Q - What does the repeated word in the offer reveal about the Lord's offer? The repeated "come" (three times) reveals the seriousness of the Lord's invitation.

B. His Question About Wasteful Spending 55:2a

Q - In what sense do people frequently spend monetary wages for spiritual things which "are not bread" and "do not satisfy"? Much of the fortune people spend in pursuit of spiritual satisfaction is wasted on things which provide no hope of salvation or spiritual satisfaction.

C. His Invitation to Satisfying Food 55:2b

Q - How can a person "eat what is good" and "delight [themselves] in abundance" when it comes to true and satisfying spiritual nourishment? Nourishment which is good and abundant comes to those who listen carefully to the Lord as He speaks through His word and His trustworthy messengers.

II. The Lord's Invitation to Spiritual Impact 55:3-5

A. His Offer of an Everlasting Covenant 55:3

Q - What is the Lord's first offer in verse 3 to the person who listens and goes to Him, and what does it mean? The person who listens to the Lord's invitation and goes to Him for what He offers will live eternally, but will also find every aspect of his life improved by what the Lord is offering.

Q - What made the offer of an everlasting covenant an attractive offer to the people of Israel in Isaiah's day? The "old covenant" Israel entered at Mt. Sinai had been broken and, as a result, was becoming obsolete and needing to be replaced (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-32; Hebrews 8:13).

B. His Intentions for King David 55:4

Q - What made the Lord's intentions for King David somewhat surprising for the people of Israel who had not heard other predictions of a similar nature from other prophets? The people of Israel knew that David was to be their king in the kingdom age predicted in Scripture, but it probably occurred to very few of them that David would be a witness and a leader and a commander for other peoples beyond Israel.

C. His Plan for International Impact 55:5

Q - What was surprising about the Lord's prediction for His people Israel in view of their problems in the days of Isaiah? It was surprising that Israel was going to be sought out by other nations in the future because of the Lord's work in glorifying them far above any status they had ever experienced and were experiencing during the days of Isaiah (cf. Isaiah 45:45, 22-24; 49:6, 12, 23).

Think About It: The Lord invited His people Israel to turn from their empty spiritual pursuits to His plans for their everlasting and international spiritual impact.

Apply It: People today also need to turn from empty spiritual pursuits to the Lord's plans for their actual benefit.

“God’s Sure Word”

Isaiah 55:6-13

Q - What is a promise you find particularly encouraging from the pages of God’s word?

Israel has had some very tough times - and its tough times are not over yet. But, with all of its past and present promises, the nation of Israel has an unbelievably bright future to look and to move toward. If, as has often been said, “The future is as bright as the promises of God,” then Israel’s future is very, very bright, because the Scriptures contain some almost unbelievable promises concerning the future of Israel - especially in view of what we know of Israel’s past and present.

I. The Invitation to Fellowship 55:6-9

A. The Challenge to Seek the Lord 55:6-7

1. The Lord’s Invitation 55:6

Q - What does it mean to seek the Lord, and why might there come a time when He cannot be found? To seek the Lord is to believe in Him and choose to pursue His ways as revealed in His word. There might come a time when He cannot be found because someone has failed so long to seek Him that they run out of time to do it.

Q - When is the Lord not near so that calling on Him is not an option? The Lord is not near to those who spend their money on that which is not bread, and their wages on that which does not satisfy (v. 2) because they are pursuing false “gods” or are living in disobedience to God’s word and are not willing to repent.

2. The Lord's Requirement 55:7a

Q - What does the Lord require of those who seek Him and successfully call on Him? He requires that they forsake wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts and return to the Lord.

3. The Lord's Forgiveness 55:7b

Q - What is amazing about the Lord's offer of forgiveness for those who meet His requirements in 7a? When the Lord forgives sin He treats it as if it had never happened, though there may be some consequences resulting from sins committed.

B. The Comparison Between God and Man 55:8-9

1. The Assertion 5:8

Q - How does verse 7 illustrate the assertion of verse 8? The Lord's offer of forgiveness for the sins of His people is an example of His ability to do what many human beings find it difficult, if not impossible, to do.

2. The Illustration 55:9

Q - How did the Lord illustrate the assertion of verse 8 that His ways and His thoughts are much higher than the ways and thoughts of man? He illustrated His assertion by comparing His thoughts to the heights of the heavens from the perspective of earth.

II. The Revelation of Future Glory 55:10-13

A. The Certainty of God's Word 55:10-11

1. The Illustration 55:10

Q - What benefits did the Lord call to His people's attention from the rain and snow which He graciously sends upon the earth? He called to their attention the fact that rain and snow refresh the earth with water, causing plants to flourish, and providing food for the sustenance of man.

2. The Application 55:11

Q - How did the Lord compare His word to the benefits which come to earth by means of rain and snow? He observed that His word, like rain and snow, does not proceed in a futile way from His mouth without doing what He intended it to do, but always succeeds in the matter for which He sent it.

B. The Prophecy of Israel's Joy 55:12-13

1. The Promise of Joy 55:12a

Q - What did the Lord predict would become the experience of His people, Israel, in their future? He predicted that His people would "go out with joy" and be "led forth with peace" in their future - perhaps referring initially to their deliverance from captivity by their enemies, but eventually to their entrance into His promised kingdom.

2. The Promise of Change in Nature 55:12b-13a

Q - What exuberant response from nature did the Lord anticipate as a result of His people's future blessing? He anticipated mountains and hills breaking forth in shouts of joy, and the trees of the field "clapping" their hands and healthy plants replacing unhealthy plants, his way of describing the conditions on the new earth referred to in Isaiah 65:17 ff.

3. The Permanence of Blessing 55:13b

Q - What does the phrase “**it** shall be a memorial to the LORD” refer to in the third line of verse 13? It refers to the refreshing of nature in the “new heavens” and “new earth” of Isaiah 65:17.

Q - In what sense will the renewed conditions of the “new heavens and new earth” be “an everlasting sign which will not be cut off”? Though the reign of the Lord’s Messiah and the renewed conditions which will accompany His reign will be briefly opposed in the futile rebellion which takes place at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:7-9), the Jewish people and the refreshed version of the “new heaven” and “new earth” (Revelation 21:1-4) will continue throughout the eternal state which will follow the kingdom age.

Think About It: God promises to bless those who seek Him on His terms - and His promise is certain!

Apply It: What are the prospects for your blessing by the Lord on the basis of your response to Him?

“Hope for All”

Isaiah 56:1-5

Q - What is the thing you most look forward to as a result of your experience in this life?

Human life on a sin-cursed earth is often complicated by the lack of justice and righteousness. People who have been wronged in one way or another, as everyone on earth will be at one time or another, often live with frustration over the fact that they fail to see the wrongs they have endured made right. And people who seek, to the best of their ability, to do what is right are often frustrated by the presence of so many others who seem to find satisfaction in doing what is wrong. So it is encouraging to learn from the Prophet Isaiah of the Lord’s plan to reward those who are serious in their pursuit of justice and righteousness.

I. The Lord’s Call to Justice and Righteousness 56:1

A. The Preservation of Justice and Righteousness 56:1a

Q - What was the Lord’s clearly-stated challenge for His people through the Prophet Isaiah? It was His clearly-stated challenge that His people work to preserve justice and to do what is righteous.

Q - How does Isaiah 1:17 help the reader understand some of the practical steps involved in responding to the Lord’s challenge? Isaiah 1:17 explains that pursuing justice and righteousness involves such practical steps as reproofing the ruthless, defending the orphan, and pleading for the widow (cf. Jeremiah 22:3).

B. The Promise of Salvation and Righteousness 56:1b

Q - What was the Lord's plan to bring about righteousness for those who seek it? It was His plan to provide salvation and to reveal His righteousness.

Q - What would be the difference between the justice and righteousness the Lord called His people to pursue and the justice and righteousness He promised to provide? His people's pursuit of justice and righteousness would result in only partial success at best, so He had a plan to provide salvation for sinful humanity and to impute His own righteousness to those who responded to His promise of salvation.

II. The Lord's Blessing on Justice and Righteousness 56:2

A. The Promise of Blessing 56:2a

Q - To whom do the first two phrases of verse 2 promise the blessing of the Lord? The first two phrases promise the blessing of the Lord to those who take hold of the challenge to "preserve justice and do righteousness" (v. 1).

B. The Process of Blessing 56:2b

Q - What were some very practical steps the Lord sought in the lives of His people who were serious about preserving justice and practicing righteousness? The Lord was seeking for His people to keep from profaning the sabbath and to keep their hands from doing anything evil.

Q - How does Isaiah 58:13 help the reader understand what is involved in profaning the sabbath? Isaiah 58:13 explains that the Lord intends for His people to treat the sabbath as a holy day - set apart to the Lord - by refraining from pursuing

their own projects and pleasures so they can delight in the sabbath as a day of rest and worship in honor of the Lord.

III. The Lord's Hope for the Foreigner and Disadvantaged 56:3-5

A. The Prospect of Hope 56:3

Q - Why might a foreigner who had joined himself to the LORD fear that the LORD might cut him off from God's people? The people of Israel were not normally welcoming to foreigners (Gentiles) because most Gentiles were not committed to Israel's God or to their spiritual perspective. The Prophet Jonah's resistance to the Lord's instruction to go to Nineveh is an illustration of Jewish resistance to foreigners.

Q - Why might a eunuch describe himself as a "dry tree"? Eunuchs were prohibited by the law from entering the assembly of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:1), so he would view himself as a spiritual "outsider" to the people of Israel. And, because a eunuch would be incapable of fathering children, he might consider himself a "dry tree" because of his lack of descendants.

B. The Promise of Hope 56:4-5

1. The Conditions to Be Met 56:4

Q - What conditions did the Lord say He would require of a eunuch, who was formerly prohibited by the Law from entering His assembly, in the day of salvation which is in view in this passage? The Lord would require a eunuch to keep His sabbaths, and to choose to do what pleases the Lord, and to hold fast to His covenant (the "new covenant" anticipated by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31:31ff).

2. The Conclusion to Be Realized 56:5

Q - What would be the significance of the memorial in God's house and within the walls of His city which is promised to the eunuchs in view in verses 3 and 4? The memorial promised would replace the ongoing memory of such a person through descendants in view of their inability to produce them.

Q - What would make the memorial anticipated by the Lord better than the memory a eunuch might have experienced as a result of the birth of sons and daughters? While sons and daughters might preserve the memory of their father for a period of time, the memorial promised by the Lord was promised to be an everlasting name which will not be cut off.

Think About It: The Lord's call to justice and righteousness will be richly rewarded to all - including foreigners and the disadvantaged - who pursue His offer of salvation.

“Welcome to Foreigners”

Isaiah 56:6-12

Q - When have you seen foreigners thriving in contrast with citizens who are not thriving?

The Lord’s covenant with His people Israel at Mount Sinai assured them of rich blessings if they would keep its terms, but it also assured them of trouble if they failed to keep them (cf. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28). In view of Israel’s frequent failures to abide by the terms of their covenant with the Lord, He extended His lovingkindness to foreigners through prophets like Isaiah and through the ministry of His own Son, Israel’s Messiah.

I. The Lord’s Plan for Foreigners 56:6-8

A. Their Association with the Lord 56:6

Q - What response was the Lord looking for on the part of foreigners who might experience His blessing? He was looking for those who would join themselves to Him, minister to Him, love His name, be His servants, keep from profaning His sabbath, and who would hold fast His covenant.

B. Their Arrival at God’s House 56:7

Q - What are some of the blessings the Lord had in mind for foreigners who would meet the conditions of verse 6? The Lord would bring such foreigners to His holy mountain, make them joyful in His house of prayer, accept the offerings and sacrifices they would bring to His altar, and make His house a house of prayer for all peoples.

C. Their Inclusion with Israel 56:8

Q - What gathering of the people of Israel might the Lord have had in mind as He anticipated the addition of foreigners to their number (cf. 11:11-12; 60:3-11; 66:18-21)? He most likely had in mind the regathering of Israel and the inclusion of foreigners as His true worshipers in the coming millennial kingdom age.

II. The Lord's Assessment of His People 56:9-12

A. His Call to the "Beasts" 56:9

Q - Why would the Lord have Isaiah call on the beasts of the field and of the forest to come and eat? Unless the beasts are a reference to enemy nations the Lord would use to judge His sinful people (cf. Jeremiah 4:5-7; 50:17), the call may have been intended for animals of the field and forest to come to Israel's depopulated land as they did following the deportation of Northern Israel at the hands of the Assyrians (cf. II Kings 17:25-26; Jeremiah 2:14-15).

B. His Description of His "Watchmen" 56:10-12

Q - How would verses 10-12 provide justification for the Lord's call to lions (v. 9) to come and eat in Israel? Verses 10-12 detail some of the failings of Israel's spiritual leaders which would adversely affect the spiritual lives of the Jewish people in general.

1. Their Blindness 56:10a

Q - What makes the blindness of spiritual leaders described in verse 10 such a serious condition? Spiritual leaders are supposed to be the spiritually enlightened members of society,

watching out for the good of those who depend on them, so if they are spiritually blind they are not as they should be because they cannot keep watch for their followers, and all who follow blind leaders are also blinded as a result.

2. Their Laziness 56:10b

Q - What problems result when dogs are mute and dreaming in their slumber? Mute dogs can't bark, so they are not useful as watchdogs, and mute dogs which are also asleep are not alert to the dangers they could warn about if they were awake and able to sound an alarm by their barking. And so it is with silent and sleepy spiritual leaders.

3. Their Failings 56:11

Q - What further problems did the Lord identify through Isaiah among the spiritual leaders of Israel? He identified their greed and their dissatisfaction in their important role as spiritual shepherds - lacking understanding to do their job well, and intent on having their own way and pursuing gain unjustly.

4. Their Drunkenness 56:12

Q - What characteristics of a drunkard did the Lord observe in the lives of His people's spiritual leaders? He observed their fixation on alcoholic drinks to the point where they were dysfunctional with respect to their spiritual leadership responsibilities.

Think About It: The Lord has plans to include spiritually attuned foreigners as guests in His house in view of the failings of Israel's spiritual leaders.

“Reward or Regret?”

Isaiah 57:1-10

Q - When have you seen someone experience a regrettable outcome from which they could easily have been delivered by better behavior on their part?

Because the author of the epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that there are pleasures to be experienced in the pursuit of sinful behavior, there are many people in the world who are committed to sinful ways. The problem with their pursuit, as Hebrews 11:25 indicates, is that the pleasures experienced by those who live in sin are “passing” pleasures. So, for example, the prophets of Baal may have experienced something of a spiritual “high” as they danced around their altar at Mt. Carmel in the days of Elijah, but their foolish pursuit of false gods led within hours to their death! So the Prophet Isaiah challenged the people of Israel to pursue the rewards of righteousness rather than the regrets which come with sinful behavior.

I. The Reward of the Righteous 57:1-2

A. The Irony of the Death of the Righteous 57:1

Q - What interesting twist did the Prophet Isaiah introduce regarding the death of the righteous? He introduced the twist that the death of the righteous is an escape from the presence of evil in their world.

B. The Experience of the Righteous in Death 57:2

Q - What did Isaiah identify as the destiny of the righteous in their death? Isaiah identified peace and rest as the destiny of those who walked in life in their upright way.

II. The Comparison with the Unrighteous 57:3-

A. The Description of Those Addressed 57:3

Q - What unsavory terms did the Prophet Isaiah (for the Lord) use of those to whom he addressed his thoughts? He described them as “sons of a sorceress” and “offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute.”

B. The Folly of Those Addressed 57:4

Q - What foolish behavior did the prophet identify in the lives of those he addressed? He identified the folly of jesting and opening their mouths wide to stick out their tongues as offspring of deceit as children of rebellion.

C. The Apostasy of Those Addressed 57:5-10

1. Their Involvement in Pagan Worship 57:5-6

Q - What pagan practices did the Lord identify through His prophet in verse 5? He identified the pagan practice of worshiping false gods in the groves - including the sacrifice of their children in the ravines and under rocky clefts.

Q - What additional pagan practices did the Lord reveal He would not relent for bringing to light in verse 6? He revealed His people's choice of “smooth stones” (symbols of fertility gods?) as objects of their drink offerings and grain offerings.

2. Their Perversion in Pagan Worship 57:7-8

Q - What pagan worship practices did the Lord identify on the part of His people on the high places of the land in verse 7? He identified the making of their beds on high and lofty moun-

tains where they offered sacrifices to false gods.

Q - What perverse practices of pagan worship did the Lord identify on the part of His people in verse 8? He identified their secretive (behind the door and the doorpost) practices of distancing themselves from Him by uncovering their nakedness on beds made wide to accommodate their immoral acts with pagan worshipers.

3. Their Devotion to Pagan Worship 57:9-10

Q - What indications of His people's devotion in pagan worship did the Lord identify - and to what destination? He identified their gifts of oil and perfumes, delivered by envoys to a foreign king far removed from their land, leading them to (death) in Sheol.

Q - What signs of His people's devotion in their pagan worship did the Lord identify in verse 10? He identified their persistence in lengthy travels which might have seemed hopeless apart from their strong and un-fainting commitment to their foolish pursuits.

Think About It: The Lord contrasted the peaceful and restful deliverance the righteous experience in death with the deadly devotion to false gods experienced by spiritually adulterous sinners.

Apply It: The "wages of sin" are devastating to all who pursue them - to "death" in all of its forms (Romans 6:23) - so it is always far better to pursue the rewards of righteousness.]

“From Self-Righteous Sickness to Spiritual to Health”

Isaiah 57:11-15

Q - When have you seen a case of sinful self-righteousness turned into spiritual health?

People who erroneously believe that they will earn saving favor in the sight of the Lord as a result of their own efforts to live by what they consider righteous standards (whether found in the word of God or in man-made religions) are in for a sad surprise. As the Prophet Isaiah stated of his people's pursuit of righteous standing in Isaiah 64:6, “all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.” So, based on human performance of “good works,” there is no hope of salvation from sin and death before the Lord. But, for sinners who turn from sin to trust in the Lord, there is hope, because the Lord has promised to respond to the contrite and lowly of spirit (Isaiah 67:15, 18) and build them up.

I. The Lord's Challenges to Israel 57:11-13

A. His Challenging Questions 57:11

Q - Of whom were the people of Israel fearful in the days of Elijah, forgetting to hope in the Lord? They were fearful of foreign enemies, primarily the Assyrians and Babylonians.

Q - How did the Lord account for the failure of His people to fear Him as they should have? He observed that He had been silent for a long time (as His people turned to foreigners for help against their enemies), enabling His people to forget His promises to help them if they would trust Him to do it.

B. His Challenging Declaration 57:12

Q - Why would the righteousness and the deeds of the people of Israel, which the Lord was well aware of, not bring them any profit? Their righteousness and deeds were done on the assumption that they would earn merit in the eyes of the Lord, but they were not done on the basis of saving faith in the Lord. They were done on the assumption that the people of Israel could work their way into the Lord's favor on the basis of human effort.

C. His Challenging Reminder 57:13

Q - Who did the Lord suggest His people had been trusting instead of trusting Him? He suggested that they had been trusting in a "collection" - a collection of false gods represented by the idols of surrounding pagan peoples.

Q - What did the Lord say would come of Israel's cries to their "collection"? He stated that the wind would carry away their cries to worthless "gods" and to the images which depicted them.

Q - Who did the Lord promise to reward in the face of Israel's devotion to their "collection"? He promised to reward those who were taking refuge in Him by permitting them to inherit His land and His holy mountain.

Q - How could Jews who were facing defeat and deportation by enemies inherit the land and God's holy mountain? They would eventually be resurrected to inhabit the land and to worship at the temple in the millennial kingdom.

II. The Lord's Encouragement to Israel 57:14-15

A. His Plans to Build Up 57:14

Q - What bright prospect did the Lord hold out to His people in verse 14? He held out the prospect of the building up of His people, preparing the way for their rebuilding by the removal of every obstacle before them.

B. His Lofty Dwelling 57:15

Q - What qualifications did the Lord claim which would enable Him to rebuild the fortunes of His people? He claimed to be the high and exalted eternal God whose name is holy - dwelling on a high and holy place (in heaven).

Q - What did the Lord, possessing such lofty qualifications as He does, say He seeks in the lives of those He chooses to dwell with Him? He said that he seeks people who are contrite and lowly in spirit (cf. Matthew 5:3).

Q - What did the Lord say He will do in the lives of those who will dwell with Him? He said that He will revive the heart and spirit of those who are lowly and contrite.

Think About It: In spite of His people Israel's empty self-righteous past, the Lord promised to revive their sinful hearts and build them up once again.

Apply It: There is always hope from the Lord for people who turn from self-righteous pursuits to genuine faith and trust in Him.

“Promised Health and Peace for Israel”

Isaiah 57:16-21

Q - What should people who have sinned and been judged for their sin expect from the Lord?

When the Lord entered into a covenant relationship with the people of Israel, His chosen people, at the foot of Mount Sinai in the days of Moses, He promised to bless them richly if they would keep the terms of His covenant - but He also warned of serious judgment if they failed to keep the covenant. The history of Israel has often recorded their failures to keep their end of the covenant, so they have suffered the consequences down through the centuries which the Lord promised for their sins. But the Lord assured His people, through the Prophet Isaiah (and others), that He still has plans to heal them and bless them with peace.

I. The Lord's Patience with His People 57:16-19

A. His Passing Anger 57:16

Q - What was the cause of the Lord's anger toward His chosen people Israel? His anger was caused by their failure to keep His covenant by worshiping and serving Him as they should have done.

Q - What would have been the outcome for Israel if the Lord had contended with them forever in view of their failures? The spirit of His people would have fainted and their life as a nation would have been in jeopardy for weakness of breath.

B. His Past Judgment 57:17

Q - What was the Lord's past response to the failures of His people? His response was to hide His face in anger and to bring about the defeat and domination of Israel by a variety of foreign enemies down through the centuries.

Q - What was the response of the people of Israel to the Lord's judgments in view of their sins? Their typical response was to continue turning their hearts away from the Lord.

C. His Plan to Heal 57:18-19

Q - What was the Lord's plan to deal with His people's persistence in sinful behavior? It was His plan to heal them, to lead them, and to restore comfort to them and to those among them who were mourning.

Q - What did the Lord predict as the outcome of His response to the persistent failings of His sinful people? He predicted that His people would praise Him as they experienced peace both near (for Israel in particular) and far (for Gentile nations as well) because of His actions in healing sinners.

II. The Lord's Pronouncement on the Wicked 57:20-21

A. The Condition of the Wicked 57:20

Q - What colorful illustration did the Lord provide of the outcome which can be expected for those who are wicked (as Israel has frequently been)? He cited the illustration of the storm-tossed waters of the ocean, tossing up refuse and mud, as the outcome to be expected by those who are wicked.

B. The Condemnation on the Wicked 57:21

Q - What is noteworthy in the context of this passage in

Isaiah regarding the Lord's observation of the normal expectation on the part of those who are wicked? It is noteworthy that the Lord had just promised to provide peace in the experience of His people Israel, in spite of past wickedness on their part, and in spite of the fact that there is normally no prospect of peace for those who are guilty of wicked behavior.

Think About It: In spite of Israel's sinful past and the Lord's judgments on their sins, He promised to heal them and lead them to peace which the wicked normally cannot experience.

“The Lord’s Call to Genuineness”

Isaiah 58:1-7

Q - When have you been keenly aware of empty religious ritual?

The world is filled with religious activity which is devoid of any true spiritual value. Any religious activity which is not directed toward the Lord God, who is revealed in the Bible, is an exercise in futility because, as the opening command of the Ten Commandments states, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” But even religious activity which is directed toward the Lord can be an exercise in futility if it is not genuine - as much of the “worship” of Israel was viewed by the Lord in the days of the Prophet Isaiah!

I. The Lord’s Call to Declare Israel’s Sins 58:1

Q - What was the Lord’s call to His prophet regarding the spiritual transgressions of the people of Israel? It was his call to “cry loudly,” like the sound of a trumpet, regarding the sins of the people of Israel.

II. The Lord’s Exposure of Israel’s Empty Ritual 58:2-5

A. Their Pretended Righteousness 58:2

Q - What “tongue in cheek” assessment did the Lord make regarding His people’s righteousness? He spoke sarcastically of Israel’s pursuit of Him, their delight in knowing His ways, their righteous performance, their commitment to His ordinances, their pursuit of just decisions, and their delight in the nearness of God - none of which were true.

B. Their Phony Fasts 58:3-5

Q - What were the people of Israel clearly expecting to receive when they fasted and pretended to humble themselves (v. 3a)? They were clearly expecting to be rewarded for their supposed piety.

Q - What were the people of Israel apparently desiring if they drove their workers hard on days of supposed fasting (v. 3b-4a)? They were apparently desiring to make money if their workers were required, even with physical force, to work on days of fasting - when some would be weakened from hunger.

Q - What normal reason for fasting was not resulting from the way the people of Israel were in the habit of fasting in Isaiah's day (v. 4b)? The way they were fasting was not causing their voices to be heard on high - the normal reason for fasting.

Q - Why did the Lord not find the fasting of the people of Israel in Isaiah's day acceptable (v. 5)? The fasting He questioned was an outward show of piety (bowed heads, the use of ashes and sackcloth) which was not accompanied by the change of heart needed by the nation of Israel (cf. Matthew 6:17-18).

III. The Lord's Preferred Fasts 58:6-7

A. Fasting From Wickedness 58:6

Q - What actions was the Lord seeking in the "fasting" of His people Israel? He was looking for the loosening of the bonds of their wickedness, undoing of the bands of the yoke (of religious tradition), and the freedom of people oppressed by religiosity - ending worthless religious rituals which were akin to the lack of freedom on the part of animals confined to yokes (cf. Matthew 11:28-30).

B. Fasting From Callousness 58:7

Q - What charges of callousness were included in the Lord's challenge in verse 7? His challenge included the charge of indifference to the hunger and the homelessness of the poor, indifference to those lacking adequate clothing, and indifference to even the needs of the members of one's own family.

Think About It: The Lord rebuked His people for insincere fasts, clarifying His intention that they fast from wickedness and indifference toward the needs of people who were hungry, homeless and lacking adequate clothing.

“God’s Blessings Upon True Worship”

Isaiah 58:8-14

Q - What stands out in your mind as an example of the Lord’s ability to richly reward true worship among His people?

Much of the book of Isaiah is a divine commentary on the folly of worthless worship on the part of the people of Israel and many of the nations which surrounded them during the days of Isaiah - like the earlier part of Isaiah 58 which focused on empty worship practices among the people of Israel. But there is another side to the coin! If worthless worship is worthy of condemnation, true worship is worthy of praise. And it will be richly rewarded by the Lord! So, though ancient Israel’s empty fasting and worship practices were problematic, the Lord assured them that fasting and worshiping in the right way for the right reasons could be a source of rich reward!

I. The Lord’s Response to Real Fasting 58:8-12

A. The Prospect of Recovery 58:8

Q - When could the people of Israel expect their “light to break out like the dawn” and their recovery to “speedily spring forth”? They could expect such blessings when they met the conditions the Lord spelled out in the preceding two verses (vv. 6-7).

Q - What could be expected for Israel when (as Isaiah expressed it) their righteousness preceded them and the glory of the Lord was guarding them from behind? Israel could expect to experience the Lord’s blessing on their national life, protected from harm on the part of their enemies by the presence and protection of the Lord.

B. The Prospect of Responsiveness 58:9-10

Q - What was the Lord eager to do for His people under the right conditions? He was eager to answer their calls upon Him with the important and comforting message “Here I am.”

Q - What conditions was the Lord asking Israel to meet if He were to answer their calls with His presence in their national life? He was asking them to remove from their midst the yoke (of bondage which resulted from their empty religious traditions), to stop pointing their finger at others and speaking violence, to respond compassionately to the needs of the hungry, and to satisfy the desires of the afflicted.

Q - What outcome was the Lord predicting for His people if they met His conditions? He was predicting that the light of their nation would arise in the midst of the darkness they were facing - turning their gloom into midday.

C. The Prospect of Divine Blessing 58:11

Q - What blessings was the Lord desiring to send into the experience of His chosen people? He was desiring to provide divine guidance for them, satisfy their desire even in scorched places, strengthen their bones (bodies), make them like a watered garden and like a spring of consistent water.

D. The Prospect of Rebuilding 58:12

Q - Why was the prospect of rebuilding an important prospect for the people of Israel in Isaiah's day? Enemy nations had been successful (and would be successful yet) in destroying ancient cities even to the point of damaging their foundations, tearing down parts of the security walls in the process, and damaging the streets of Israel's cities.

II. The Lord's Response to Sabbath Observance 58:13-14

A. The People's Proper Response to the Sabbath 58:13

Q - What was it that made it so important for the people of Israel to respond properly to their sabbaths? Sabbaths were to have been set aside not only for rest from labors, but for the worship of the Lord. But Israel had turned sabbaths into opportunities for pursuing their own pleasure.

Q - What attitude did the Lord want His people to have toward the sabbath day? He wanted His people to take delight in the sabbath as a day set apart to honor Him - a day for hearing His word rather than speaking their own words as they pursued their personal agendas in search of pleasure.

B. The Divine Response to Sabbath Keeping 58:14

Q - What could Israel expect from the Lord if they once again recognized the sabbath as a day to delight in the Lord? The people of Israel could expect the Lord to enable them to "ride on the heights of the earth" (i.e. be exalted above other nations) and to be fed with the heritage of their father Jacob (i.e. to be refocused on the Lord's promises to bless Jacob and make his descendants very numerous and a blessing to all the families of the earth in the land of Canaan which was promised to Abraham and Isaac, cf. Genesis 27:28-29; 28:13-15).

Think About It: The Lord promised, through the Prophet Isaiah, to reward His people for sincere worship practices and faithful sabbath observance with national blessing and international significance.

“Rejecting the Lord’s Help”

Isaiah 59:1-8

Q - When have you seen someone reject the help of the Lord in a time when His help was needed?

No one ever faces a difficulty in life for which the Lord is not able to provide help, but many people continue to face the difficulties in their lives because they don’t seek the help available to them from the Lord. The problem started early in human history when Eve, then Adam, knowingly rejected the Lord’s instruction not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and humanity has been reaping the consequences of that unfortunate decision ever since! The problem was still very evident in the life of the nation of Israel in Isaiah’s day.

I. The Sufficiency of the Lord 59:1

Q - Why should the people of Israel have been well-aware that the Lord’s hand was not incapable of helping them in times of difficulty? The Lord had clearly demonstrated His ability to perform miracles on behalf of His people since their earliest times as a people (e.g. the birth of Isaac, as promised, to Abram and Sarai beyond the time in their lives when child-bearing should have been possible for them).

Q - What is an example of the Lord’s ability to hear the voices of His people Israel when they called out to Him in a time of need? His ability to provide water out of a rock in their wilderness wanderings clearly illustrated His ability to hear their voices - even voices of complaint against Him!

II. The Sinfulness of Israel 59:2-8

A. Iniquities Which Separated 59:2

Q - What is it about iniquity which separates the person who is guilty from the Lord? All unholy behavior separates mankind from God who is perfect in holiness (cf. I John 1:6-7).

B. Hands and Lips Which Sinned 59:3

Q - What are examples of sinful behavior which would defile hands with blood or fingers with iniquity or lips or tongues with wickedness? Murder or even the sacrificial blood of pagan worship would defile the hands of Israel; and fingers used in theft or even deception (cf. Proverbs 6:13) would be used for iniquity, and every form of dishonesty or false worship would be wicked uses of lips and tongues.

C. Court Proceedings Which Were Dishonest 59:4-5

Q - How would the dealings of Ahab and Jezebel with Naboth (I Kings 21) illustrate the Lord's accusations concerning justice among the Israelites? Jezebel falsely accused Naboth of cursing God and the king so she could have him killed and claim the vineyard Ahab wanted to use as a garden plot.

D. Works Which Were Worthless 59:6

Q - What problems did the Lord identify through Isaiah regarding the works of the people of Israel? He noted that they were as flimsy as a spider's web (v. 5), insufficient to "cover" themselves, characterized by iniquity - including violence.

E. Wrongdoing Which Was Pursued Eagerly 59:7

Q - What indications of zeal on the part of Israel in doing the works they were doing did the Lord identify? He identified

their speed in running toward evil, their haste in shedding innocent blood, their thoughts focused on iniquity, and the devastation and destruction resulting from their pursuits.

F. The Way of Peace Which Was Ignored 59:8

Q - What prevented the zeal of Israel in their works-based pursuit of righteousness from ending in peace? The people's failure to understand the way to peace, the lack of justice in the paths they traveled, and the crooked nature of the plans they made were not heading them to an experience of peace.

Think About It: Though the Lord was well able to address their nation's needs, the people of Israel in Isaiah's day chose to separate themselves from the Lord by their zealous but sinful behavior.

“Bad News and Good News”

Isaiah 59:9-21

Q - How are you likely to respond when someone tells you that they have both some bad news and some good news and they ask which you would like to hear first?

The Prophecy of Isaiah in general, and the second part of the 59th chapter of Isaiah more specifically, contain both bad news and good news for the people of Israel - as well as many others. Israel was facing grave dangers in Isaiah's day, primarily from the Assyrian empire and then the Babylonian empire. So God's people needed God's help, though their spiritual condition did not make them prime candidates for help from the Lord. But they **were** still God's chosen people! So the Lord spoke to His people through the prophet Isaiah to assess their unhealthy spiritual condition, then to assure them that He still had great plans to bless them with future salvation and significance.

I. Isaiah's Assessment of Israel's Condition 59:9-15a

A. The Spiritual Darkness of Israel 59:9

Q - What deficiencies in the life of Israel were contributing to their spiritual darkness in Isaiah's day? The absence of justice and righteousness were creating spiritually gloomy days in the experience of Israel.

B. The Spiritual Blindness of Israel 59:10

Q - What problems were resulting from the spiritual blindness of the people of Israel as Isaiah described them? The people were groping for direction as if they had no eyes, stumbling

in the middle of the day as if it were twilight, and seemingly dead by comparison with others who were vigorous.

C. The Spiritual Sadness of Israel 59:11

Q - How did Isaiah describe the sad condition of Israel in view of the absence of justice and salvation? He described their condition like growling bears and mourning doves.

D. The Spiritual Transgressions of Israel 59:12-13

Q - What multiplied transgressions did Isaiah identify in the life of his people? He identified the transgressions of denying and turning away from the Lord, speaking oppression and revolt, and conceiving and uttering lying words.

E. The Social Ills of Israel 59:14-15a

Q - What social ills in Israel's national life did Isaiah repeat from verse 9? He repeated his concern over the lack of justice and righteousness in the life of Israel.

II. The Lord's Response to Israel's Condition 59:15b-21

A. The Lord's Awareness of Israel 59:15b

Q - What was it that the Lord found particularly troubling as He observed the life of His people? The Lord was displeased by the lack of justice among His people.

B. The Lord's Intervention for Israel 59:16-17

Q - How did Isaiah describe the Lord's amazing response to the spiritual deficiencies of His people? He described the Lord's action in bringing salvation to Israel by His strong arm

and by means of His own righteousness - clothing Himself for spiritual battle with a breastplate of righteousness, a helmet of salvation, garments of vengeance for clothing, and a mantle of zeal as His covering.

C. The Lord's Justice for Everyone 59:18-19

Q - On what basis did Isaiah say the Lord would respond to His adversaries? He said that the Lord will respond to His adversaries "according to their deeds."

Q - What did Isaiah anticipate as the response of the Lord's adversaries to His coming to them "like a rushing stream which the wind of the Lord drives"? He anticipated that the name of the Lord will be feared from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun.

D. The Lord's Redeemer for Israel 59:20

Q - Who did Isaiah predict will benefit from the arrival of the Lord's Redeemer in Zion? He predicted that those who turn from transgressions in Zion will benefit from the arrival of the Lord's Redeemer.

E. The Lord's Covenant with Israel 59:21

Q - How does Hebrews 8:7-11 (cf. Jeremiah 31:33-34 and Romans 11:25-27) help clarify the message of Isaiah 59:21? The Hebrews passage explains that the covenant made at Mt. Sinai was broken by Israel's failure to keep it, so the Lord has promised a new covenant with the people of Israel which will result in salvation for the entire nation (as the millennial kingdom of Christ begins).

Think About It: Though the Lord was well-aware of the spirit-

ual failings of the people of Israel with regard to the Old Covenant (established at Sinai), He announced His intention to save them by means of the Redeemer who would come forth from Zion to place His Spirit within them and His words in their mouths forever.

Apply It: Because of the Lord's mercy there is still hope for His blessing even in the lives of those who are undeserving.

“Bright Prospects for Israel”

Isaiah 60:1-9

Q - How would you characterize the prospects for Israel's immediate future in the days of the Prophet Isaiah?

The prophecy of Isaiah takes a look at the future of Israel with a very broad perspective in view. During his lifetime the Assyrian Empire was expanding its reach in the middle east with aspirations which included their domination over the nation of Israel - north and south. When the Assyrian Empire, which conquered northern Israel, was succeeded by the Babylonian empire the prospects for Judah were as challenging as northern Israel's prospects had been at the hands of the Assyrians. So the immediate future for the people of Israel, both north and south, was hardly promising. But Isaiah was able, by the Lord's enablement to see far beyond the immediate future!

I. The Prediction of Israel's Light 60:1-3

A. The Arrival of Light and Glory 60:1

Q - When did the Prophet Isaiah anticipate the rising and shining of the nation of Israel? He anticipated it at the time when the glory of the Lord would rise upon them.

B. The Darkness Preceding the Light 60:2

Q - When were the people of Israel to anticipate the darkness which would cover the earth and the deep darkness which would cover all of the peoples of the earth? They were to anticipate darkness during the tribulation period, predicted in Old and New Testament passages, which will immediately precede the arrival of light upon the people of Israel at the

beginning of the millennium.

Q - What did the Lord say would bring an end to the darkness He predicted would cover the earth? He said that the rising of His light and His glory would bring an end to the darkness predicted in 60:2a.

C. The Nations Seeking the Light 60:3

Q - Where did the Lord predict that nations and their kings would find the light they would be seeking? He predicted that nations and kings would find the light by going to the people of Israel when they are blessed with light.

II. The Prediction of Israel's Prosperity 60:4-9

A. The Re-gathering of the People of Israel 60:4

Q - Why were the people of Israel going to need to be carried in someone's arms from afar? They were going to be dispersed around the world by Assyria and Babylon and, eventually, by Rome and other hostile nations.

B. The Rejoicing of the People of Israel 60:5

Q - What reason for radiant joy did Isaiah anticipate on the part of Israel? Isaiah saw a future time when the abundance of the sea and the wealth of nations would come to the people of Israel.

C. The Arrival of the Flocks and Wealth of Nations 60:6-9

1. The Arrival of Camels from Midian, Ephah and Sheba 60:6

Q - How does Genesis 25:1-4 help us understand Isaiah's prediction of the arrival of Camels with gold and frankincense and good news of the praises of the Lord? Genesis 25 identifies Midian and Ephah and Sheba as descendants of Abraham through his second wife Keturah - people once hostile to the Jews from lands to the east of Israel in Saudi Arabia.

2. The Acceptability of Flocks from Kedar and Nebaioth 60:7

Q - What does Genesis 25:13 tell us about the identity of people from Kedar and Nabaioth? It reveals that they are descendants of Ishmael - son of Abraham through Sarah's Egyptian maid, Hagar - people who historically have been hostile to the people of Israel.

Q - What is surprising about Isaiah's prediction about the flocks from Kedar and Nebaioth? Hostile foreigners and their flocks would not have been acceptable to the Lord in the temple worship of Israel in Isaiah's day - but Isaiah is looking prophetically to the millennial kingdom age.

3. The Approach of "Flights" Like Clouds 60:8

Q - Who might be flying like clouds and like doves to their latitudes as anticipated in verse 8? The mention of ships of Tarshish in verse 9 leads some to think of merchant fleets bringing converts devoted to the Lord, but the mention of flights and clouds could possibly refer to the flights of planes which even in our day are carrying the sons of Israel back to their Jewish homeland and the worship of the Messiah.

4. The Arrival of Israel's Sons from Afar 60:9

Q - How does verse 9 anticipate the Lord's glorification of

the people of Israel? It anticipates the re-gathering of the people of Israel from places where they have been dispersed around the world, bringing their wealth with them to meet their own needs, but also to use in their worship of the Lord.

Think About It: Though the people of Israel were dealing with serious difficulties in Isaiah's day (and beyond), the Lord has plans for their light to shine brightly and prosperously when His glory comes upon them in the future kingdom.

Apply It: The Lord has very good things planned for all who recognize Him in their worship as their God.

“A Bright Future”

Isaiah 60:10-22

Q - When have your current conditions been brightened by the prospects of better conditions in the future?

Some of the difficulties every person experiences in life are made much more bearable by the promise of better days ahead. This has been evident in the experience of some of America's minorities who looked to better days ahead when they sang, as a theme song in their difficulties, “We shall overcome.” So it was very encouraging for the people of Israel in Isaiah's day, faced with divine judgment at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians (with more to come), when the Prophet Isaiah could deliver a message from the Lord of His plans to restore His people to favor at an undated future as he did in Isaiah 60:10-22.

I. Future Favor on Israel 60:10-14

A. The Compassion of the Lord on Israel 60:10

Q - What surprising source of help in building up Israel's walls did the Lord announce would arise when His compassion will be seen after the nation's experience of His wrath? He announced that foreigners will build up Israel's walls and kings will minister to Israel.

B. The Favor of Nations Toward Israel 60:11

Q - How did the Lord anticipate that foreign nations would favor Israel in their future? He predicted that the wealth of nations will be brought by even their kings through gates and doors which will be constantly open.

C. The Judgment Upon Opponents of Israel 60:12

Q - What did the Lord say will be the consequence for nations and kingdoms unwilling to serve His people Israel? He said that such nations and kingdoms would perish in utter ruin.

D. The Restored Glory of Israel 60:13-14

Q - What did the Lord say will be the source of the building materials to beautify the place of His sanctuary in verse 13? He said that the “glory of Lebanon” (i.e. wood from juniper and box and cypress trees) will beautify His sanctuary to “make [His] feet glorious” in that day.

Q - Who did the Lord predict (verse 14) will come bowing at the feet of His people Israel, calling Jerusalem “the city of the LORD” and “The Zion of the Holy One of Israel”? He predicted that the descendants of peoples who have afflicted Israel will come bowing at the feet of Israel.

II. Changed Fortunes of Israel 60:15-22

A. The Changes Anticipated 60:15

Q - What did the Lord promise to make His once-forsaken and hated people “from generation to generation” in their future? He promised to make Israel an “everlasting pride” and a “joy.”

B. The Blessings Anticipated 60:16

Q - What did the Lord predict will make Israel know that He is their “Savior” and “Redeemer” as “the Mighty One of Jacob”? He predicted that Israel will recognize Him as such when they will “suck the milk of nations” and “the breast of

kings.”

C. The Improvements Anticipated 60:17-18

Q - What future blessings did the Lord announce to Israel in verse 17? He announced the replacement of bronze with gold, iron with silver, wood with bronze, and stones with iron when he makes peace their administrators and righteousness their overseers.

Q - What changes did the Lord predict will enable Israel to call their walls “salvation” and their gates “praise” (verse 18)? He predicted that a day will come when violence will not be heard in the land of Israel, nor devastation nor destruction within their borders.

D. The Light and Glory Anticipated 60:19-20

Q - What did the Lord predict will make the light of the sun by day and the brightness of the moon by night unnecessary in Israel’s future? The Lord will be their everlasting light and God their glory (verse 19) when the days of their mourning are over (verse 20).

E. The Permanent Prosperity Anticipated 60:21-22

Q - How will the Lord choose to glorify Himself in the time anticipated by verse 21? He will glorify Himself when all of the people of Israel are righteous and they are in possession of their land forever.

Q - What surprising outcome will result for the smallest and the least among the people of Israel in that day according to verse 22? “The smallest one will become a clan, And the least one a mighty nation.”

Think About It: The Lord has future plans to bless the people of Israel with lasting prosperity in every respect.

Apply It: The Lord is completely able to turn His people's problems into lasting prosperity.

“The Half-Fulfilled Prophecy”

Isaiah 61:1-3

Q - Can you think of a messianic prophecy of Scripture which has only been partially fulfilled?

When the Lord Jesus visited the synagogue in Nazareth, where He had grown up, He was invited to read from the sacred scrolls which were kept at the synagogue. Luke 4:18-19 tells us that He turned to the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-3, but He only read a part of the passage before taking His seat. With the eyes of all who were present in the synagogue fixed on Him - perhaps because they knew He could have read more, and probably because they wondered why He had not chosen to follow His reading with a word of explanation - Jesus added only the words “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” As it turns out, Jesus chose to read only the parts of Isaiah 61:1-3 which were being fulfilled during His earthly ministry at the time. But the passage included predictions of parts of His ministry which are yet to be fulfilled!

I. The Messiah’s Fulfilled Work 61:1-2a

A. His Spirit 61:1a

Q - What role did Jesus claim the Holy Spirit was fulfilling in His life during His earthly ministry? Jesus explained that the Spirit was upon Him as He visited the synagogue in Nazareth on that day.

B. His Selection 61:1b

Q - What was the significance of Isaiah’s prophecy that Jesus was to be anointed by the Lord? The word “anointed” is

the basis for the words Messiah (in Hebrew) and Christ (in Greek). Just as some of Israel's priests and kings were introduced to their public ministry by anointing with oil, so Jesus was anointed with God's Holy Spirit for His public ministry.

C. His Ministry 61:1c-2a

1. To Bring Good News 61:1c

Q - What "good news" did Jesus bring to what afflicted people as He visited His hometown synagogue? He brought good news to his hearers and to all who recognize Him as the long-promised Messiah and Savior from heaven - particularly good news for people who are "afflicted" (anav - poor, humble, meek).

2. To Bind Up the Brokenhearted 61:1d

Q - How does Isaiah 57:15 help us understand what might be involved in binding up the brokenhearted? The Lord speaks in Isaiah 57:15 of His ministry of reviving the spirit of the lowly and of reviving the heart of the contrite - ministries which Jesus carried out in His involvement in the lives of troubled people.

3. To Proclaim Liberty 61:1e

Q - What kind of liberty did the Lord Jesus proclaim throughout His public ministry in Israel? He proclaimed liberty for people who labor under the heavy loads caused by sin in their lives - offering to lighten such loads with His rest as such people take His yoke upon them and discover that His yoke is easy (because He shares the load) and His burden is light (cf. Matthew 11:28-30).

4. To Proclaim the Lord's Favor 61:2a

Q - What "favorable year of the LORD" was anticipated in the opening phrase of Isaiah 61:2? The time of Christ was anticipated, when His offer of eternal life was to be proclaimed to all who would receive Him (cf. John 1:11-12).

II. The Messiah's Future Work 61:2b-3

As the visit of Christ to the synagogue in Nazareth indicated, where He read this passage from Isaiah only up to the first phrase of verse 2 (Luke 4:16-19), Isaiah's prediction of the ministry of Christ included information regarding both His first coming and His second coming! The second phrase in Isaiah 61:2 goes beyond what Jesus read in the synagogue to reveal what Israel is yet to expect.

A. His Vengeance 61:2b

Q - When is the "day of vengeance of our God" of which Isaiah wrote going to be realized? The Lord's vengeance on the sins of His people Israel, as well as the sins of the whole world, will be realized during the seven-year time of the tribulation which will end the current age (cf. Isaiah 2:12; Acts 17:31, etc.).

B. His Encouragement 61:2c-3d

Q - What surprising turn in Isaiah's prophecy takes place between the second phrase of verse 2 and the third phrase of verse 2 with all of verse 3? It is something of a surprise to turn from the vengeance of the Lord upon sin which will occur in the tribulation to the promise of comfort and prosperity for those who mourn in Zion.

Q - How did Jesus echo the prophecy of Isaiah in these verses in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:4? Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who mourn - apparently as a visible sign of their regret and repentance because of past sins.

Q - How did Isaiah depict the future “blessedness” of those in mourning which was referenced by Jesus? Isaiah anticipated the replacement of the ashes of sorrow with a celebratory garland, the replacement of ashes His people used when they were grieving with the oil of gladness, and praise for the Lord instead of the weakness of spirit which results from regret.

C. His Glory 61:3e-f

Q - How did Isaiah anticipate the transition for Israel from mourning over their sins to their status as “oaks of righteousness”? He anticipated the transition resulting from the “planting of the LORD” which will result in His glory.

Think About It: Christ’s ministry at His first coming only partially fulfilled God’s plans for His Messiah and the benefits He will provide for His people, Israel.

“Restored to Favor”

Isaiah 61:4-11

Q - When have you seen someone's difficulties turn the corner to decidedly better times?

The good thing about difficulties people experience in life is that difficulties can often be resolved in favor of far better times. The history of the United States of America serves as a good example because the hardships the nation faced under the oppression of King George of England and the Revolutionary War eventually saw the nation rise to international influence as a free and successful nation. So, although the nation of Israel has endured many very difficult experiences (resulting from its failure to keep their covenant with the Lord), the Prophet Isaiah looked ahead to far better times when the Lord restores His full favor under the reign of His Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Rebuilding of Israel 61:4-9

A. The Need to Rebuild Israel 61:4

Q - How does Isaiah 61:1-3 explain the successes the people of Israel will experience according to verse 4? It tells of the successful ministry of the Messiah on behalf of the nation of Israel.

B. The Support in Rebuilding Israel 61:5

Q - What is surprising about the report that strangers will serve the needs of the nation of Israel in the time anticipated? The fact that strangers, who have so often shown hostility toward Israel, will become helpful to the nation is a surprising and pleasant turn of events.

C. The Supremacy of Israel 61:6-7

Q - What clear signs of the Lord's favor toward Israel are seen in Isaiah 61:6-7? The Lord's favor is seen in Israel's service to the nations as priests and ministers, in the material prosperity of Israel from the wealth of nations, and in their everlasting joy as they receive the double portion of blessing due to a firstborn son instead of the shame and humiliation which have so often been their experience in the past.

D. The Lord's Favor Toward Israel 61:8-9

Q - How was the Lord's love of justice a source of encouragement to the beleaguered people of Israel in Isaiah's day? Though Israel had broken their covenant with God and were being judged by the Assyrians and Babylonians in order to "pay" for their sins at the hands of a God of justice, He could be trusted to deal justly with His chastised people.

Q - How might Israel have been guilty of robbery in their guilt offerings? They may have been guilty of such robbery by failing to offer the required offerings in acknowledgment of their guilt before the Lord.

Q - How was the Lord faithfully giving Israel their recompense in view of robbed offerings and the breaking of their covenant with the Lord? He was doing the things He said He would do in such passages as Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 if they chose to disobey the terms of their covenant with Him.

Q - What was the Lord's plan to remedy the estranged relationship between Himself and His covenant people? It was His plan to enter into a new covenant with Israel once Israel had been justly rebuked for their failings.

Q - What does verse 9 reveal about the outcome of the Lord's just dealings with His people? It tells of the blessed condition which will one day be widely recognized by the people of the earth with respect to the offspring of the people of Israel.

II. The Rejoicing of the Messiah 61:10-11

Who is speaking in verse 10 is a subject of debate. Is it Isaiah, is it Israel, or is it the Messiah. Because chapter 61 began with a focus on the Messiah, and because of what is said in verse 10 concerning the speaker, it is probably best to understand that verses 10 and 11 are the words of the Messiah Jesus.

A. The Reasons for His Rejoicing 61:10

Q - Who is most qualified to say what is said in verse 10 - "He has clothed me with garments of salvation" and "He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness"? As the person specifically born on earth to be the Savior (cf. Matthew 1:21), and the only truly righteous person who has ever lived as a man on earth, it is Jesus who is best qualified to claim to be clothed by His Father with the garments of salvation and a robe of righteousness.

Q - How would the claim to be decked by the Lord with a garland like a bridegroom and to be adorned with jewels like a bride be an appropriate claim for the Messiah? The fact that Jesus will be featured at the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (cf. Revelation 19:7,9) as the central figure of God's plan for His people's future would make His claim to be dressed in wedding attire an appropriate claim.

B. The Results of His Rejoicing 61:11

Q - What makes a healthy garden's prosperity an appropriate picture of the Messiah's future reign over the nations?

Like a healthy garden, the Messiah's reign will result in the fruits of righteousness (cf. Isaiah 9:6-7) and praise (cf. Psalm 67:1-5).

Think About It: The Lord has plans to restore Israel to His full favor when His Messiah rejoices over the nation's righteous status, brought about by His own righteous nature and dealings.

“From Desolation to Delight”

Isaiah 62:1-5

Q - When have you seen someone's prospects in life turn from difficulty to delight because of the Lord's favor?

The history of the people of Israel has frequently been very difficult because of their failure to honor the Lord by keeping the terms of the covenant they entered into under the leadership of Moses at Mt. Sinai. Their best years probably took place during the reigns of King David and King Solomon when they were blessed with spiritual devotion and military might and material prosperity. Low points of their history have included their dispersion by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans, and by their persecution during World War II. But their continued existence is a testament to the Lord's commitment to His chosen people. And the best is yet to come!

I. The Commitment to Speak Up for Israel 62:1

A. The Focus of the Prophet's Speech 62:1a

Q - What was the reason for which the Prophet Isaiah said he could not keep silent? He said that he could not keep silent for the sake of Zion, and that he would not keep quiet for the sake of Jerusalem (two names for the same city, seen in poetic parallelism which is typical of Hebrew poetry).

B. The Reason for the Prophet's Speech 62:1b

Q - What was it about Zion and Jerusalem about which Isaiah was not able to restrain his speech? Isaiah could not restrain his speech in view of his awareness of a day when Israel's righteousness would shine brightly and her salvation

would be as evident as a burning torch.

II. The Brightening Prospects for Israel 62:2-3

A. The Prospect of Righteousness 62:2a

Q - What excited the Prophet Isaiah about the future prospects for righteousness in the life of his people? He was excited about the prospect of righteousness becoming so evident in the life of Israel that foreign nations and their kings would be well-aware of it.

B. The Prospect of a New Name 62:2b

Q - Why might the prospect of a new name assigned by the Lord for the people of Israel be an appropriate and welcome development? Israel's name has been tarnished, ever since it was assigned to Jacob, by the character of both the man to whom it was given and the people who descended from him.

C. The Prospect of Royal Beauty 62:3

Q - What would Israel's likeness to a crown of beauty and a royal diadem anticipate in the experience of the nation? Because both a royal diadem and a beautiful crown picture value and attractiveness and royal authority, they would picture a nation crowned by the Lord with appeal and control during the coming millennial age.

III. The Reversal of Fortunes for Israel 62:4-5

A. The Former Desolations of Israel 62:4a

Q - What was it that caused the nation of Israel to be described as "forsaken" and "desolate"? The nation was forsaken

by the Lord Himself (Isaiah 54:6-7) and considered desolate by humans, even the people of Israel themselves, appalled at the destruction brought about by enemies (Isaiah 60:15,18).

B. The Future Delight for Israel 62:4b-5

1. The Lord's Delight Explained 62:4b

Q - What was going to bring about the change in the Lord's perspective on the nation of Israel? The Lord was going to restore His delight in Israel because of His own lovingkindness and compassion (cf. Hosea 2:19-20), taking the nation to himself as His delightful wife and restoring the love of His people for their land.

2. The Lord's Delight Illustrated 62:5

Q - How did the prophet illustrate the delight that the Lord and His people would have for the nation of Israel and their land? He compared their delight to the delight of a young man marrying a virgin and rejoicing over her as his bride.

Think About It: Isaiah felt compelled to speak out in celebration of the future reversal of his people's condition from the desolation of divine judgment to the delight of His blessing.

“Salvation Assured”

Isaiah 62:6-12

Q - What are some challenges facing those who seek to share the gospel with Jewish people today?

The Apostle Paul described the gospel as “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). Though sharing the gospel with the Jewish people has proved to be a challenging assignment, Isaiah anticipated the day when salvation will come to Israel, and the Apostle Paul announced the time when all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26). Isaiah could see that day in his nation’s future as well!

I. The Lord’s Appointment of Watchmen 62:6-7

A. The Assignment of the Watchmen 62:6

Q - What were the watchmen whom the Lord appointed for Israel to do in their assigned role? They were to keep busy day and night, speaking God’s word to His people and reminding the Lord of His promises to His people (cf. Ezekiel 3:17).

B. The Anticipation of the Watchmen 62:7

Q - What were Israel’s watchmen supposed to press the Lord about as they gave Him no rest? They were supposed to press the Lord to establish Jerusalem and make the city a praise in the earth.

II. The Lord’s Strong Commitment to His People 62:8-9

A. The Lord’s Promise 62:8

Q - What was the prophet's assurance that the Lord was going to fulfill the promise of verse 8? The prophet's assurance was the oath of the Lord by the use of His right hand and His strong arm.

Q - What must be the time to which the Lord's promise to Israel will be fulfilled? It must be the time when the Messiah reigns in the millennial kingdom, because the enemies of Israel and foreigners have frequently taken Israel's grain for their food and have made the new wine of Israel their drink down through the centuries since Isaiah lived.

B. The Lord's Prediction 62:9

Q - What did the Lord predict would take place with respect to Israel's grain harvests and new wine production in the day anticipated in verse 8? The Lord predicted a day when the people of Israel who gathered their grain harvests would eat their harvests, and those who produced new wine would drink it in the courts of the Lord's sanctuary.

III. The Lord's Call to Reestablish His People 62:10

A. Clearing the Way for Israel 62:10a

Q - What would Israel's unobstructed passage through the gates of their cities reveal about conditions for the nation? Their unobstructed passage through their gates would indicate peaceful and prosperous conditions.

B. Exalting the Status of Israel 62:10b

Q - What would built up highways unobstructed by stones and the elevation of a standard over other peoples anticipate for the people of Israel? Built up highways (like modern American

roadways), clear of obstructions, speak of quality construction, and a standard (flag) lifted up above other peoples would speak of exalted status over foreign nations on the part of the people of Israel.

IV. The Lord's Provision of Salvation for His People 62:11-12

A. The Promise of Salvation 62:11

Q - What does verse 11 reveal about the subject of salvation? It reveals that God sent salvation through the Jewish nation ("Lo, **your** salvation comes" - spoken to Israel), and that the salvation was sent by the agency of one person ("Behold, **His** reward is with **Him**, and **His** recompense before **Him**").

B. The Prospect of Spiritual Health 62:12

Q - What does verse 12 reveal about that which results from God's provision of salvation? It reveals that salvation produces holiness through the process of redemption ("They will call them the holy people, The redeemed of the LORD").

Q - What does the Lord's provision of salvation to and through the nation of Israel anticipate about Israel's reputation among the nations? It anticipates that the nation of Israel will be "sought out" as a result of God's provision of salvation to and through them, with the result that their "city" (Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel) will not any longer be considered a "forsaken" city.

Think About It: The Lord assured His once-forsaken people of Israel that He had plans to bring about their full restoration to His favor and to their spiritual health.

Apply It: We cannot intelligently identify with the Lord and His plans for our good without also identifying with the nation of Israel through which His plans for our good have come.

“Salvation or Severity”

Isaiah 63:1-6

Q - When have you memorably seen someone pay a high price for ignoring the Lord’s offer of salvation from sin?

The problem of sin and its serious consequences first entered into human experience in the garden of Eden. With every need provided, and only one restriction on human behavior with respect to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve could hypothetically have trusted the Lord and preferred the tree of life, but we know they failed to do it. As a result, the curse of sin and death has plagued mankind from their time until ours (with more to come). But even in the garden of Eden, the Lord displayed His lovingkindness by providing a covering for human nakedness and sin. Mankind has always had the choice between either salvation or the severity of sin’s penalty.

I. The Identity of the Majestic One 63:1

A. The Question of His Identity 63:1a-d

Q - Why might the person described be seen coming from Edom and Bozrah? Edom, settled by Esau and his descendants who were related to Israel (Jacob and Esau were brothers), was always hostile toward Israel. Edom and Bozrah, a chief city in Edom, are referenced in many places as objects of God’s wrath (cf. Psalm 137:7; Isaiah 34:5-6; Ezekiel 25:12-14; 35:1-15; Obadiah 1-14; Malachi 1:2-5). Edom and Bozrah are probably intended to represent all nations which are hostile to the Lord and His people and His word.

Q - How is the one coming from Edom described in verse

1? He is described as “One who is majestic in His apparel, Marching in the greatness of His strength.”

B. The Revelation of His Identity 63:1e

Q - What clues does the last line of verse 1 provide to help identify the Majestic One? It quotes His self-description - “I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save” - leaving no reason to doubt that He is the Lord, and more specifically the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Question for the Majestic One 63:2-3

A. The Question About His Garments 63:2

Q - What does the description of red apparel like the stained garments of one who treads in the wine press suggest? It suggests (especially for those familiar with New Testament images of Christ in blood-stained garments, as in Revelation 19:13 and 15) garments stained red with the blood of people defeated and killed in acts of divine judgment.

B. The Explanation About His Garments 63:3

Q - What is the explanation of the Majestic One for the red colored garments He is wearing? He explains that His garments are red because He has trodden the wine press alone in His divine anger toward those people whose lifeblood is now sprinkled on His garments.

III. The Vengeance of the Majestic One 63:4-6

A. The Arrival of the Day of Vengeance 63:4

Q - How might the dual themes of the Lord’s vengeance

and the year of His redemption be explained? The Lord's vengeance must be His vengeance on the sinful behavior of those who (like Edom and Bozrah) have rejected Him and His people and His word; while the mention of His redemption must refer to His work in redeeming (buying up) those people who have responded positively toward Him and His people and His word.

B. The Provision of Salvation by the Lord 63:5

Q - Why would the Lord have found no one to help and no one to uphold as He viewed the horizon of humanity? Man's sinful nature makes him unable to assist the Lord in the work of saving His people from their sins because there is no mere human who upholds His righteous standards in their behavior.

Q - How does this verse address the only possible avenue of salvation from the problems brought about as a result of human sinfulness? It speaks of the provision of salvation by God for His people by the strength and actions of His own mighty arm.

Q - How could the Lord's wrath have upheld Him in any sense? Because "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), the Lord permitted His wrath against sin to be exercised toward His own perfect Son as a substitute for sinners who trust in Him - allowing the Lord to be "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:21-26).

C. The Execution of Justice 63:6

Q - What has the Lord trodden or will the Lord tread down the peoples in His anger and made them drunk in His wrath as He poured out their lifeblood on the earth? Any time the Lord has brought judgment in the form of death on sinful people (as in Noah's Flood, in Israel's defeat by enemies like the Philis-

tines and the Assyrians and the Babylonians and the Romans,
etc.) He has trodden down the peoples in His anger - as He will
once again during the tribulation at the end of our age.

Think About It: Though the Lord has graciously provided His salvation for those who trust and obey Him down through the centuries, He has judged and He will again judge those who persist in sin with the wages of sin - i.e. death, often including bloody physical death.

Apply It: Are you choosing salvation or severity from the hand of the Lord on the basis of your response to Him?

“Amazing Love”

Isaiah 63:7-14

Q - If you have raised children, have you found it easier to feel love for them when they were behaving well or when they were rebellious?

The Lord's history with the people of Israel has been a challenging history down through many centuries. He had no sooner issued His famous Ten Commandments, the summary of His law, when Moses returned from meeting with God on Mount Sinai to find Israel breaking the first two of His commandments under the leadership of his brother Aaron. And their failure to honor His covenant with His chosen people has been repeated many times since. But, amazingly, the Lord has continued to love His challenging people - and He always will!

I. The Lord's Lovingkindness Toward Israel 63:7-8

A. Isaiah Recalls God's Lovingkindness 63:7

Q - How many different words did Isaiah use in his attempt to summarize the Lord's response to the people of Israel in verse 7? He spoke of the Lord's lovingkindness, His goodness, His compassion, and (for the second time) His lovingkindness in abundance.

B. Isaiah Recalls God Choosing and Favoring Israel 63:8

Q - How did Isaiah describe the Lord's desire for His people in terms of their response to His amazing love? He observed the Lord's intention that His people not deal falsely with Him (as they had promised they would not) as He became their Savior.

II. The Lord's Affliction with Israel 63:9-10

A. Isaiah Recalls God's Identification with Israel 63:9

Q - In what sense was the Lord afflicted in all of the afflictions experienced by Israel? The Lord had to go to great lengths in His desire to pursue a healthy relationship with a nation which so often complicated the relationship by their foolish and sinful behavior.

Q - How did Isaiah describe the effort required by the angel of the Lord's presence to maintain a healthy relationship with the people of Israel in their past? Isaiah stated that the angel of the Lord's presence saved Israel by extending His love and mercy to redeem them and lift them and carry them during all the days of old.

B. Isaiah Recalls God's Rejection by Israel 63:10

Q - How did Isaiah describe Israel's response to the Lord's significant efforts to maintain a healthy relationship? Isaiah stated that the people of Israel rebelled against the Lord, grieving His Holy Spirit in their response to His efforts on their behalf.

Q - What was sometimes the result of Israel's negative response to the Lord's efforts on their behalf? There were times when the Lord found it necessary to fight against Israel as if He had become their enemy - judging them in various ways.

III. The Lord's Historical Support for Israel 63:11-14

A. Isaiah Recalls Israel's Delivery Under Moses 63:11-13

Q - How did the people of Israel display their failure to

understand and appreciate what the Lord did for them in the miracles they experienced in the exodus? Recalling their deliverance from slavery in Egypt under Moses, the people of Israel asked where the Lord had gone who at one time so miraculously worked on their behalf - as if they now deserved His deliverance in spite of their spiritual failures.

B. Isaiah Recalls Israel's Rest from the Lord 63:14

Q - What interesting illustration does Isaiah cite of the Lord's provision of rest for His people in ancient times? He cites the illustration of cattle moving from the heights to the valley below where terrain is friendly and grazing is more promising.

Q - What resulted from the Lord's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt which Isaiah wished for by a similar deliverance in his day? The name of the Lord was glorified by His miraculous deliverance of Israel during Moses' days.

Think About It: Isaiah recalled the Lord's amazing love for Israel, in spite of their many failings over the centuries.

Apply It: The Lord's love for His people today is like His love for His chosen people of Israel - love extended in spite of His people's failings in sinful behavior.

“Sensing the Lord’s Absence”

Isaiah 63:15-19

Q - When have you ever gone through an experience where you were not feeling the Lord’s presence or interest in your life?

The Lord promised Moses, in Exodus 33:14 - to the great relief of Moses - that His presence would go with the people of Israel as they made their way toward the Promised Land. The Lord had threatened Moses with the possibility that He might not be with Israel in their journey because of their failure to observe His covenant with them. But the day came, during Isaiah’s ministry, when the prophet was no longer sensing the presence of the Lord on behalf of His people. The reason for Isaiah’s concern has already been addressed earlier in his prophecy in Isaiah 48:18-19. The problem which existed in the life of Israel in the time of Moses was still a problem during the time of Isaiah - they were still obstinately resisting God’s word.

I. Israel’s Feeling of Abandonment by God 63:15

Q - What was problematic about Israel’s desire that the Lord look down from heaven to view His “holy and glorious habitation”? The temple was only holy and glorious when the reasons for its construction were being honored - which was not true in Isaiah’s day.

Q - What was it that created the sense of the Lord’s abandonment on the part of the people of Israel and the Prophet Isaiah in his day? The zeal the Lord had once demonstrated on behalf of Israel, as substantiated by His “mighty deeds” on their behalf, was no longer evident to the people and the prophet. They sensed that the stirrings of the Lord’s heart and His com-

passion were restrained toward them.

II. Israel's Claim of Fatherhood by God 63:16

Q - What was the problem with claiming God as their father even as the people and the prophet had to acknowledge that Abraham no longer knew them and Israel (Jacob) no longer recognized them? Because Israel had wandered so far from the faith of Abraham and Jacob, the "fathers" of their nation, they had also wandered away from the Lord they were still claiming as their father.

III. Israel's Plea for Return by God 63:17

Q - What was ironic about the claim that the Lord had caused Israel to stray from His ways, and had hardened their hearts from fearing Him, and their request that He return for the sake of His servants, the tribes of His heritage? The Lord does not cause people to stray from His ways, nor to harden their hearts from fearing Him. It wasn't the Lord who moved away from His people! It was His people who moved away and who needed to return to Him.

IV. Israel's Concern for the Sanctuary of God 63:18

Q - What should the people of Israel have realized and acknowledged about the fact that enemies of Israel had torn down the sanctuary of the Lord which they had once possessed? They should have realized and acknowledged that the Lord Himself had permitted their enemies to tear down the temple because it was no longer serving the purpose for which He had raised it up.

V. Israel's Sense of Separation from God 63:19

Q - What should have been obvious to Israel in view of their sense that they had become like those the Lord had never ruled and like those who had never been called by His name? It should have been obvious that the people of Israel had made very unfortunate choices in rejecting the Lord's rule and in dishonoring and distancing themselves from His name.

Think About It: The Prophet Isaiah wrote about the sense he and the people of Israel had that the Lord was no longer with them as a result of their failure to honor Him and His word.

Apply It: When people feel distanced from the Lord it is never because He has moved away from them, but because they have distanced themselves from Him.

“Longing for Past Blessings”

Isaiah 54:1-7

Q - When have you found yourself in difficult circumstances for having failed to maintain a close walk with the Lord?

The nation of Israel has experienced some of the very best of days and the very worst of days down through the centuries of their history. Spiritual highs like they experienced during their delivery from slavery in Egypt, their safe passage through the Red Sea, and their dominance and spiritual sensitivity during the best days of David's kingdom have been contrasted with defeat at the hands of the Philistines, their deportation by the Assyrians and Babylonians, and their dispersion by the Romans. But their experience provides an important lesson for us all about the priority of maintaining fellowship with the Lord.

I. Israel's Prayer for the Lord's Presence 54:1-2

A. Their Desire that He Come Down from Heaven 54:1

Q - What were the people of Israel depicted as missing in the opening lines of their prayer? They were depicted as missing the powerful display of the Lord's presence when He revealed Himself and His law to them at Mt. Sinai.

B. Their Desire that He Make His Name Known 54:2

Q - In what respect was the answer to Israel's prayer regarding the fame of the Lord's name in their own hands? It was Israel's failure to honor the Lord's name by careful obedience to His commands which kept His name from being made known to the nations as it might have been in Isaiah's day.

II. Israel's Recollection of the Lord's Past Blessings 54:3

A. The Lord's Awesome Presence at Sinai 54:3

Q - What kinds of "awesome things" which Israel did not expect may have been in view as they reflected on their nation's experience at Mt. Sinai in the days of Moses? In addition to the quaking of the mountains at His presence, there was smoke and flame and the sound of a trumpet and the Lord's thunderous response to the prayers of Moses as the Lord made His presence known from the top of Mt. Sinai.

B. The Lord's Powerful Acts for Those Who Trust Him 54:4

Q - What did the people's prayer place in contrast with the Lord's actions on behalf of those who wait for the Lord? Their prayer placed all the so-called gods who cannot perform powerful acts on behalf of those who look to them with the powerful acts of the Lord on behalf of those who wait on Him - as clearly demonstrated, for example, in the Prophet Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel many years later in Israel's history!

C. The Lord's Relationship with the Righteous 54:5a

Q - What can someone always anticipate when they rejoice in righteousness and remember the ways of the Lord by their obedience? Those who rejoice in righteousness and remember the ways of the Lord by their obedience can always anticipate that they will be "met" by the Lord Himself in some significant way.

III. Israel's Acknowledgment of Their Sins 54:5b-7

A. Their Awareness of the Lord's Anger 54:5b

Q - What were the people of Israel forced to acknowledge they had done to contribute to the anger the Lord had shown and was showing to them? The people of Israel were forced to acknowledge that the Lord was angry with them because of their sinful behavior.

Q - What important concern did Israel's lengthy history of sinful behavior raise in their minds? The people of Israel had to wonder whether they could possibly still be saved by the Lord in view of their sinful past and the Lord's anger toward them.

B. Their Confession of their Failings 54:6

Q - What did the people of Israel have to acknowledge about their present condition because of their spiritual shortcomings? They had to acknowledge that they were unclean; that even their supposed "righteous deeds" were like a filthy garment in the eyes of the Lord; and that they were spiritually withered and driven by the wind because of their iniquities.

C. Their Admission of their Desperation 54:7

Q - What spiritual shortcomings did the people of Israel have to confess before the eyes of the Lord? They had to confess that none of them were faithful in calling on the name of the Lord or arousing themselves to take hold of Him.

Q - What was the predictable result of the people's failure to call on the Lord and seek to take hold of Him? It was predictable that the Lord was hiding His face from Israel and had delivered them into the powerful consequences of their iniquities.

Think About It: The people of Israel have learned many times down through centuries that living in sinful rejection of the Lord and His word leads to difficulty and even desperation.

Apply It: Failing to seek the Lord in obedience to His will always leads to spiritual and practical difficulties in our lives.

“Please Be Patient”

Isaiah 64:8-12

Q - When have you had reason to hope for a patient response from someone in authority over you in view of failings on your part?

There will be times in every person's life when there will be reason to hope for a compassionate response from someone in a position of authority. Even someone as commendable as Job - whom the Lord Himself described as “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil” (Job 1:1) - finally had to confess that he had been harder on the Lord than he should have been as he struggled to understand what the Lord had permitted to happen in his life. In Job 42:5-6 he said to the Lord:

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;
But now my eye sees You'
Therefore I retract.
And I repent in dust and ashes.”

The Prophet Isaiah prayed to the Lord that He would “not be angry beyond measure”(Isaiah 64:8) in His response to the failings of the people of Israel in his day.

I. Israel's Claim on the Fatherhood of the Lord 64:8

Q - What were Israel's problems (vv. 5b-7) as they called on the Lord for His fatherly understanding? Israel was guilty of a lengthy pattern of sin, resulting in spiritual defilement and indifference toward the Lord who, as a result, was hiding His face from His people and judging their sins.

Q - What was the point of Israel's recognition of the Lord as not only their Father but their Potter? Israel was acknowledging the Lord's controlling role over their national life as

their Maker and manager.

II. Israel's Call for the Mercy of the Lord 64:9

Q - What was Israel's request of the Lord even as they acknowledged that they were deserving of His anger? It was their request that He not be excessively angry about their spiritually degenerate condition.

Q - What miraculous provision, recognized earlier in Isaiah 43:25, were the people of Israel seeking from the Lord in view of their iniquities? The people of Israel were requesting the Lord's acknowledged ability to wipe out their transgressions by forgetting and forgiving their sins - as if they had never happened.

Q - What claim did the people of Israel have on the Lord in spite of the fact of their numerous and serious failings? The people were reminding the Lord (as if He needed reminding) that they were His people on the basis of His having chosen them, of His own volition, for such a privileged position.

III. Israel's Condition of Judgment from the Lord 64:10-11

A. The Condition of the Cities of Israel 64:10

Q - What claim on holiness could the people of Israel make with respect to their cities, including Zion (Jerusalem)? They could describe their cities as "holy cities" because they were the habitation of the people the Lord had set apart to Himself as His chosen people - distinct in that respect from any other people on the face of the earth.

Q - What was the basis for the people's claim that their holy cities had become a wilderness and their capital city, Jer-

usalem, had become “a desolation”? Though it had not yet happened in Isaiah’s day, it was going to be the conquest of the Babylonians throughout the nation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem which Isaiah was foreseeing in this verse.

B. The Condition of the Temple of Israel 64:11

Q - Who was responsible for burning the house of the Lord in Jerusalem with fire? As I Kings 25:9 reports, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was going to burn the house of the Lord and others in Jerusalem with fire.

IV. Israel’s Concern About Restraint by the Lord 64:12

Q - Why were the people of Israel surprised that the Lord seemed to be restraining Himself in response to the difficulties they were experiencing? The people were surprised that the Lord would permit His chosen people and their holy places, especially the temple, to be devastated as they were going to be after Isaiah’s day.

Q - Of what were the people of Israel aware even as they questioned the Lord’s restraint in the face of enemy atrocities? They were aware that the Lord was behind their afflictions in view of their spiritual failures, as acknowledged in verses 5-7.

Think About It: Like a disobedient child pleading for mercy from his father, Israel claimed the Lord’s fatherhood as they sought His compassion in the light of their failings.

Apply It: There is always hope of the Lord’s help on the part of those who can claim Him as their father - in spite of failures on their part.

“Responding to Unresponsiveness”

Isaiah 65:1-7

Q - When have you been frustrated by someone's failure to respond to an offer you have made for their benefit?

When someone is kind enough to make a generous offer to someone who doesn't even demonstrate the decency to respond to their offer it can be frustrating to be ignored. Unfortunately, it is common among human beings that generous offers frequently receive no response - leaving the person who made the offer wondering how to proceed in the face of silence. As inconsiderate as it is to fail to respond to a generous offer made by another human, it is even more inconsiderate to fail to respond to a generous offer made by the Lord! But this was the situation the Lord was dealing with in His experience with the people of Israel in Isaiah's day. His kind intentions toward His people were being ignored.

I. The Lord's Willingness to Be Found 65:1-2

A. The Lord's Outreach to His People 65:1

Q - Why should the people of Israel have been seeking the help of the Lord during the days of the Prophet Isaiah? They were in a state of spiritual decline (cf. 64:5-7) which was leading them predictably to divine judgment at the hands of the Babylonians.

Q - How does Isaiah 65:1 reveal the people of Israel were responding to the Lord's willingness to help them? The people of Israel were not asking for help from the Lord; they were not seeking Him and were not calling on His name.

B. The Lord's Assessment of His People 65:2

Q - What spiritual failings was the Lord observing in the lives of the people of Israel? He was observing rebelliousness among His people as they walked in ways which were not good, pursuing their own thoughts rather than God's thoughts.

II. The People's Unwillingness to Obey 65:3-6

A. The People's Provocations 65:3-5

Q - What provocations did the Lord see in the life of the people of Israel according to verse 3? The Lord was provoked as His people offered sacrifices in their gardens and burned incense on bricks - as pagans were in the habit of doing.

Q - What provocations did the Lord see in the life of the people of Israel according to verse 4? The Lord was provoked as He observed His people sitting among graves (apparently seeking to communicate with the dead), spending the night in secret places (rather than pursuing the light of His word), and eating swine's flesh, and cooking the broth of unclean meats in their pots (in violation of His law).

Q - What was the provocation the Lord saw in the life of the people of Israel according to verse 5? The Lord was provoked by His people's assertion that their practices, including pagan practices, made them holier than others (which they clearly did not).

Q - How did the Lord describe the impact of His people's provocations on Him in verse 5? He described their impact as that of smoke in His nostrils from fires which were kept burning all day.

B. The Lord's Promise to Repay 65:6

Q - Why should the Lord's promise to repay His people for their evil practices have been no surprise to Israel? The Lord had long before promised in the pages of His law to judge His people when they chose to live in violation of their covenant relationship with Him (cf. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28),

III. The Lord's Intention to Judge 65:7

A. The Range of Israel's Failings 65:7a-c

Q - How is the Lord's patience with His sinful people clearly revealed in the first three lines of verse 7? The Lord was responding to not only the sins of Israel in Isaiah's day but also to the sins which had characterized their fathers before them.

Q - What iniquities of the people of Israel did the Lord identify in verse 7? He identified the sinful practices of burning incense on the mountains (rather than the holy incense which was supposed to be burning constantly in His temple) and of scorning Him on the hills (where Israel worshiped at pagan high places rather than at His temple).

B. The Response to Israel's Failings 65:7d

Q - What was the Lord's predictable promise in view of the spiritual failings of the people of Israel? He promised that He would "measure their former work into their bosom" (i.e. He would judge them for the spiritual failings which had been characteristic for many years).

Think About It: Because the people of Israel persisted in their sinful ways toward the Lord, who was willing to help them,

they were assured of divine judgment for their sins.

Apply It: The Lord has committed Himself to address sinful behavior in the lives of His spiritual children.

“Predictable Futures”

Isaiah 65:8-16

Q - How do you feel about the predictions of weathermen and political pollsters?

We have probably all gotten wet when an unexpected rain came about on a day which the best of weathermen had predicted would be sunny and dry. And we have all seen political pollsters fail to accurately anticipate political outcomes. Human beings never know for certain what is ahead on the path of life because we don't see the future. But the Lord has included hundreds of predictions in His word concerning future events, and we have powerful evidence of His accuracy with respect to many past predictions which have now been fulfilled. So Isaiah has some important revelation for the future of the people of Israel in Isaiah 65:8-16!

I. The Lord's Prediction for Faithful Israel 65:8-10

A. His Preservation of a Remnant 65:8

Q - Who had reason to be encouraged about Isaiah's assurance that the bad grapes in the Lord's vineyard (cf. Isaiah 5:2,7) were not the only ones? The Lord's "servants" who were not going to be destroyed had reason to be encouraged (cf. Isaiah 10:20).

B. His Promise of a Spiritual Heritage 65:9-10

Q - What was the Lord's reference to "offspring from Jacob" and "an heir of My mountains from Judah" intended to reveal? It was intended to reveal that there will be people rescued from destruction from both the northern tribes (offspring

from Jacob) and the southern tribes of Israel (from Judah) at the end of the age (cf. Isaiah 10:20).

Q - What did the Lord's reference to Sharon as a pasture-land for flocks and the valley of Achor as a resting place for herds reveal? His references revealed that the whole land of Israel (from the northwest plane of Sharon to the southeast valley of Achor) will be inhabited by the Lord's servants.

II. The Lord's Prediction for Unfaithful Israel 65:11-12

A. The Failings to Be Judged 65:11

Q - What failings on the part of God's people in Isaiah's day did the Lord point out as the basis for His predictions in verses 12-15? He pointed out the people's forsaking of Him, their indifference toward His holy mountain (Zion, where His temple was located), and their pagan rituals in pursuit of good luck - by setting a table for Fortune (*Gad* - thought to be a minor Canaanite god) and filling cups with mixed wine for Destiny (*Meni* - thought to be a god venerated by Arabs in the pre-Islamic period).

B. The Future to Be Expected 65:12

1. A Future of Destruction 65:12

Q - What reasons did the Lord identify as the reason for His destructive plans for Israel's future? He identified their failure to respond to His call, and their persistence in evil-doing - with the result that they were bowing down to slaughter in the day of His judgment.

2. A Future of Deprivation 65:13

Q - What deprivations did the Lord have in store for the portion of His people who were destined to be put to shame? He predicted unsatisfied hunger in spite of their eating, and unquenched thirst in spite of their drinking.

3. A Future of Despair 65:14

Q - What signs of despair did the Lord predict for His sinning people even as His faithful servants shouted joyfully with a glad heart? The Lord predicted that the sinners among His people would cry out with a heavy heart and wail with broken spirits.

4. A Future of Dishonor 65:15

Q - How did the Lord contrast the fates of His sinful people with that of His chosen ones? He said that the name of His sinful people would be a curse to His chosen ones, and that He would put His sinful people to death, but would designate His faithful servants by another name (cf. Isaiah 62:2).

III. The Lord's Promise for Faithful Israel 65:16

Q - What did the Lord promise as the source of blessing in the earth? He promised that blessing would come from Him, the God of truth (*amen*).

Q - Why might the Lord have referred to the person who swears in the earth as swearing by the God of truth (*amen*)? He may have been contrasting those who swear by His name (cf. Deuteronomy 6:13) with those who swear by the name of false gods such as Baal (cf. Jeremiah 12:16).

Q - How did the Lord promise to deal with the past failings of His people in the day of their blessing? He promised to for-

get about the troubles of the past when they are hidden from His sight.

Think About It: The Lord anticipated vastly differing futures for the people of Israel who have sought Him and for those who have forsaken Him.

Apply It: Every person's future prospects are being decided during their earthly life on the basis of their response to the Lord.

“The Day the Lord Has Made”

Isaiah 65:17-25

Q - Which day do you think of when you think of “the day that the Lord has made”?

The familiar chorus of our day, “This Is the Day,” could be applied to any day - because the Lord has made every day. But the text on which the chorus is based is Psalm 118:24: “This is the day which the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Psalm 118:22-23 set the stage for verse 24: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing: It is marvelous in our eyes.” Anyone who examines the context of the verse from which the chorus was taken should be able to recognize that it is a psalm with messianic and kingdom significance - so the “day” which Isaiah was writing about in Isaiah 65:17-25 is certainly a day which the Lord has made!

I. The Lord’s Re-Creation of Heaven and Earth 65:17

Q - Why might the Lord have plans to create new heavens and a new earth for the millennial kingdom? The present earth and the universe in which it is found have been cursed by the curse of sin and marred by the presence and activity of mankind for thousands of years. As the Apostle Paul explained, in Romans 8:22, since the curse which occurred in the garden of Eden, “the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth until now.”

II. The Lord’s Re-Creation of Jerusalem 65:18-25

A. Rejoicing in Re-Created Jerusalem 65:18-19

Q - What reasons did the Lord predict there will be for being glad and rejoicing in what He is planning to create in the new heavens and earth announced in verse 17? The fact that the Lord is going to create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness will be reason to be glad and rejoice in what He is going to create.

Q - What changes in the restored Jerusalem and people of Israel during the millennium will provide good reason to rejoice and be glad? The fact that the voice of weeping and the sound of crying will no longer be heard in Jerusalem and Israel will be great reasons to rejoice and be glad.

B. Longevity in Re-Created Jerusalem 65:20

Q - What reasons for the absence of the voice of weeping and the sound of crying are revealed in verse 20? The fact that there will be no infant mortality, and that old men will have the opportunity to live out their days - with those who die at the age of one hundred years still being considered youthful, and anyone dying younger than one hundred years of age being considered accursed - are reasons for which the voice of weeping and the sound of crying will be absent in the new heavens and the new earth.

C. Productivity in Re-Created Jerusalem 65:21-24

Q - What is noteworthy about people who build houses and plant vineyards actually being able to benefit from their efforts (vv. 21-22a)? It is noteworthy because Israel's troubled history has frequently prevented people from benefitting from their efforts because of intervention and destruction by hostile forces (like Babylon).

Q - To what time period will life-spans like those of a tree

harken back in human experience (v. 22b)? Lengthy life-spans during the millennium will restore life-experiences like those of early human beings who lived for centuries.

Q - What will it mean for millennial citizens to “wear out the work of their hands”? It will mean that people will be able to accomplish everything they set out to accomplish and be in a position to take on new challenges and careers in view of the longevity of their life-spans.

Q - How does verse 24 demonstrate the blessed condition of millennial Israelis which was referred to in the last part of verse 23? The Lord’s plan to answer his people’s prayers before they have finished making their requests will result in innumerable blessings in the life of the people of Israel (and others as well).

D. Peace in Re-Created Jerusalem 65:25

Q - What unusual evidence of peaceful conditions will prevail in all of the Lord’s holy mountain according to verse 25? The peaceful co-existence of once enemy animal kinds and the absence of evil and harm in human behavior will be part of the peace which will prevail during the reign of the “prince of peace” anticipated in Isaiah 9:6-7.

Think About It: The day of the Lord will be an age of divine blessing on the earth and on the heavens and on Jerusalem and on the people of Israel.

Apply It: The reign of the Lord Jesus throughout the thousand years of His millennial kingdom will finally bring about the peaceful conditions which many people have only dreamed of throughout earth’s troubled history.

“Against All Odds”

Isaiah 66:1-9

Q - When has your seemingly hopeless pursuit of some worthy goal finally been realized because of your own efforts?

The Lord, who created all things, has persistently pursued a healthy relationship with the people He made down through the millennia of human history. Most of mankind, for his part, has strongly resisted the Lord's efforts at establishing a healthy relationship by his sinful behavior. So the Lord has plans to act in divine judgment upon the sinful resistance of humanity. But He also has plans to restore to favor the nation He chose as His own people by a miraculous re-birth which we have privileged to witness in our own time as the end of our age approaches.

I. The Lord's Preference Among Men 66:1-2

A. His Sufficient Habitation 66:1

Q - Why does it seem unimportant that human beings should make an effort to build a house for the Lord to inhabit? The fact that the Lord is the maker of heaven (His throne) and earth (His footstool) makes it seem like He should need no assistance from men to provide a place for Him to find rest.

B. His Search for a Habitation 66:2

Q - Though He is the maker of everything, what is the Lord seeking which could actually be supplied by human beings who have the right approach? The Lord is seeking to find people He can inhabit who are humble and contrite of heart, and who tremble at the revelation of His word.

II. The Lord's Punishment Upon Men 66:3-6

A. His Recall of Abominations 66:3

Q - Searching among His people for a suitable spiritual habitation, what obstacles has the Lord historically encountered? The Lord has encountered abominable man-made efforts to approach Him - sacrifices no more acceptable than murder and cruelty to animals and swine's blood and idolatry.

B. His Response to Insensitivity 66:4

Q - What is the Lord's plan to respond to the abominable man-made efforts insensitive people (including Israel) have attempted in order to establish relations with Him? It is the Lord's plan to punish such people in ways they will dread because of their choice of evil and unsatisfying behavior because of their failure to listen to the things the Lord has said.

C. His Recompense on His Enemies 66:5-6

Q - What two groups of people was the Lord addressing in verses 5 and 6? He was addressing people in Israel who trembled at God's word, on the one hand, and their fellow-Jews who hated them and sought to exclude them from the Lord's favor, on the other hand.

Q - What mocking response were God's faithful servants in Israel receiving from those who hated them? God's faithful servants were mockingly being challenged to join the empty religious rituals of verse three as a way of supposedly glorifying the Lord and bringing joy into their lives.

Q - What were the critics of God's faithful servants to expect from the Lord as a result of their mockery? They should

have been expecting to be shamed, because that is what the Lord had in store for them to experience when He spoke to His enemies from His temple as He rendered recompense to His enemies.

III. The Lord's Prediction for Israel 66:7-9

A. His Plan for Re-birth 66:7

Q - What did the Lord anticipate it was going to take to bring the people of Israel to the place of His favor once again? The Lord anticipated that it was going to take the re-birth of His people and their delivery of a baby boy (cf. Revelation 12:5) to restore His people to His favor.

B. His Miracle of Re-birth 66:8

Q - What miracle of the birth of the nation of Zion "all at once," in one day, was the Lord anticipating in answer to His question in verse 8? The Lord was anticipating the re-birth of the nation of Israel which occurred in 1948, following almost two thousand years of dispersion and distress as a nation following their defeat by the Romans in 70 A.D.

C. His Insistence on Re-birth 66:9

Q - What point was the Lord establishing by the questions He asked in verse 9? He was establishing the certainty of His intention to bring about the miraculous re-birth of the nation of Israel against all obstacles.

Think About It: The Lord's search for a proper response among men will result in His judgment of those who persist in sin and His restored favor upon faithful followers among His chosen people of Israel.

Apply It: The Lord is going to judge spiritual insensitivity and restore the faithful in the nation of Israel to His favor.

“Rejoicing or Regretting”

Isaiah 66:10-17

Q - Who will be rejoicing and who will be regretting the Lord's plans to bless the city of Jerusalem?

The city of Jerusalem has been under attack in one way or another ever since it was conquered by King David and made the capital of his nation. In addition to the foreign enemies who have attempted to conquer the city, the devil himself has done his best to keep the city under spiritual attack in view of its centrality in Israel's worship since the tabernacle was moved there in David's time and the temple was built there during Solomon's reign. As devastating as physical enemies have been to Jerusalem, spiritual enemies have also created serious problems for the city - often led by those who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation! But the Lord has assured the city that better days are ahead.

I. The Invitation to Rejoice 66:10-11

A. The Focus on Jerusalem 66:10

Q - What made the Lord's invitation to rejoice over Jerusalem a particularly encouraging word in Isaiah's day for both those who loved the city and those who mourned for the city? It was soon after the days of Isaiah's ministry that the city was destroyed by the Babylonians (cf. 63:18; 64:10-11), so it was encouraging to hear the Lord's invitation to rejoice because there seemed to be little reason for rejoicing.

B. The Prosperity of Jerusalem 66:11

Q - What did the images of verse 11 suggest about the

future prospects for those who loved and mourned for the city of Jerusalem? The prospect of nursing from comforting breasts and a bountiful bosom are images of well-being for those who are dependent on their mother for their nourishment.

II. The Reason to Rejoice 66:12-14

A. The Lord's Plans for Jerusalem 66:12-13

Q - What encouraging promises did the Lord have for the city of Jerusalem's future in verses 12-13? The Lord promised to extend to Jerusalem peace like a river, the glory of nations like an overflowing stream, and motherly comforts including being nursed, being carried on the hip, and being fondled on the knees.

B. The Lord's Plans for Jerusalem's Supporters 66:14a-c

Q - What good news did the Lord project for those who rejoice in the fortunes of Jerusalem? He projected gladness in their hearts, bones flourishing like new grass, and the support of His hand for those who are supportive of Jerusalem.

III. The Reason to Fear 66:14d-17

A. The Arrival of the Lord's Judgment 66:14d-15

Q - How does verse 15 describe the indignation (v. 14d) which the Lord has in store for His enemies? Verse 15 predicts the fiery judgment the Lord has in mind for His enemies - described in terms of whirlwinds and the fiery rebuke of His anger and fury.

B. The Victims of the Lord's Judgment 66:16-17

Q - What will the Lord's judgment bring about for His enemies? His judgment will be executed with the destructive power of fire and sword which will result in the death of many of His enemies.

Q - How does verse 17 describe the spiritual failings of those who will come to their end as a result of the judgment of the Lord? Verse 17 speaks of pagan worship rituals conducted by persons in the center of gardens - rituals which are intended to sanctify and purify those who eat swine's flesh and detestable things and even mice.

Think About It: The Lord has good plans for the future of the city of Jerusalem, but He also has fearful plans for the future of His spiritual enemies.

Apply It: The future fate of human beings will be either bright or bleak depending on whether they can rejoice over Jerusalem or they choose the pursuit of worthless worship.

“Universal Worship”

Isaiah 66:18-24

Q - What is the most diverse worship experience you have ever witnessed or perhaps participated in?

The Lord has in mind to gather people of all nations and tongues - including the people of Israel - in united worship experiences in the ages to come. In preparation for that worship, the final verses of Isaiah picture a “sign” from the Lord which will propel people to go to distant lands where they will declare His glory among the nations and assist the people of Israel to return from distant places to their “promised land.”

I. The Plan to Gather the Nations 66:18

Q - Whose works and thoughts are in view in the opening line of verse 18? The works and thoughts of people engaged in pagan worship practices (v. 17) are in view.

Q - What far more pleasant subject does the second part of verse 18 direct our attention to? It directs our attention to the time when people of all nations and tongues will be gathered together to witness a display of the glory of the Lord.

II. The Plan to Re-gather Israel 66:19-21

Q - What will “survivors” from the nations have survived in order to be gathered to witness the glory of the Lord referred to in verse 18? They will have survived the horrors of the tribulation period which will immediately precede the millennial kingdom which must be in view in verse 18.

Q - What “sign” from the Lord might propel survivors from

peoples of all nations and tongues to go to the nations in the distant places mentioned in verse 19 (Tarshish - possibly Spain; Put [Greek] or Pul [Hebrew] - north Africa; Lud - ancient Lydia in modern Turkey; Meshech - central Turkey; Tubal - northern Turkey; Javan - Greece; and distant coastlands)? Probably the “sign” promised in Isaiah 7:14, the sign of the virgin-born Lord Jesus Christ.

Q - Who (described as “your brethren) might the emissaries in verse 20, going throughout the earth in response to God’s “sign,” be bringing to the Lord’s holy mountain as a grain offering on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels? The brethren being brought to the Lord’s holy mountain probably refers to the people of Israel returning to their “promised land” with the help of Gentile believers.

Q - How does verse 21 help in our understanding of those being brought to the Lord’s holy mountain by those who will respond to God’s “sign”? The fact that some of those brought to the Lord’s holy mountain will serve as priests and Levites affirms the likelihood that those brought are Israelites because, according to the law, Israelites were the only ones qualified to serve as priests and Levites.

III. The Permanency of Re-gathered Israel 66:22

Q - Where has Isaiah referenced the “new heavens and new earth” which the Lord is assuring His people will endure before Him - as Israel and their descendants will as well? Isaiah has written of the new heavens and new earth of the millennial kingdom which he referenced in the previous chapter, Isaiah 65:17 ff.

IV. The Prospect of Universal Worship 66:23

Q - What reveals the Jewish nature of the worship which all mankind will participate in according to verse 23? The fact that worship will take place from new moon to new moon and sabbath to sabbath reveals the Jewish nature of the worship which will occur throughout the millennial kingdom.

V. The Plight of Transgressors 66:24

Q - Where could millennial saints be enabled to see the corpses of men in unquenchable fire who transgressed against the Lord? They would need to be enabled by miraculous vision from the Lord to see beyond the Hinnom Valley in eastern Jerusalem, where trash was consistently burning in ancient times, to Gehenna (hell) which the Hinnom Valley pictured in the minds of ancient Jews.

Think About It: The Lord anticipated His gathering of the nations and the re-gathering of the people of Israel for universal worship, worship rejected only by transgressors who will be punished.

Apply It: How might we participate in the Lord's plan to use nations to restore His people to their land where all except for transgressors will participate in universal worship?