

Isaiah

Author:

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, is from an apparently influential and distinguished Jewish family since he seems to know a lot about the royal court even in the reign of Ahaz. He was probably well-educated. He must have been aware of international affairs since he vigorously opposed any entangling alliances with foreign powers (whether with Assyria as against Samaria and Damascus, or with Egypt as against Assyria). An old tradition relates that he was martyred at some time in the reign of Manasseh, possibly by being sawed in two inside a hollow log (possibly what is referred to in Heb 11:37). Since he records the death of Sennacherib in Isaiah 37:37-38, we can assume that Isaiah lived until after Sennacherib's death in 681 BC.

The unity of the book of Isaiah has been challenged by liberal critics who hold that a "Deutero-Isaiah" wrote chapters 40-66 after the Babylonian captivity. Concerning the various viewpoints of the critics, Ryrrie writes.

Much dispute has arisen over the authorship of chaps. 40-66. Some assign the entire section to a "Deutero-Isaiah," who lived around 540 B.C. (after the Babylonian captivity). Others see a "Trito-Isaiah," who wrote chaps. 56-66. Still others see insertions and editing as late as the first century B.C., a position difficult to maintain in view of the discovery of the Qumran Isaiah scroll dated in the second century B.C.

These suggestions attempt to eliminate the supernatural element necessary for predictive prophecy. Hence, the Babylonian captivity and the return under a Persian king (specifically named Cyrus) are not viewed as being predicted 150 years in advance, but as happenings recorded after the events. But even if one were to grant such a conclusion, it would not invalidate predictive prophecy. The name of King Josiah was predicted by a prophet three centuries before his time (1 Kings 13:2), and Bethlehem was named as the birthplace of Messiah seven centuries before the event (Mic. 5:2). In addition, there is predictive prophecy in chaps. 1-39 of Isaiah (see 7:16; 8:4,7; 37:33-35; 38:8 for prophecies soon fulfilled and 9:1-2; 13:17-20 for prophecies of the more distant future).

If "Deutero-Isaiah" lived in Babylon, as is claimed, he shows little knowledge of Babylonian geography but great familiarity with Palestine (41:19; 43:14; 44:14). Further, it is asserted that differences in language and style can only be accounted for by assuming different authors, a theory which, if applied to Milton, Goethe, or Shakespeare, would force us to conclude that many of their writings were spurious. On the contrary, one can point out 40 or 50 sentences and phrases that appear in both sections of the book and that therefore argue for single authorship (cf. 1:20 with 40:5 and 58:14; 11:6-9 with 65:25; 35:6 with 41:18, etc.).

To claim two or more authors for this book is also to contradict the evidence of the New Testament. Quotations from chaps. 40-66 are found in Matthew 3:3; 12:17-21; Luke 3:4-6; Acts 8:28; Romans 10:16, 20, and all are attributed to Isaiah. Moreover, in John 12:38-41, quotations from Isaiah 6:9-10 and 53:1 appear together, and both are ascribed to the Isaiah who saw the Lord in the Temple vision of chap. 6. We must therefore conclude that the same author was responsible for the entire book and that no part of it was written at the time of the Babylonian captivity. (from study by J. Hampton Keathley III.)

Date: During the reigns of Uzziah (790-739 BC), Jotham (739-731 BC), Ahaz (731-715 BC), and Hezekiah (715-686 BC), kings of Judah. Gentile rulers of the time were Tiglath-pileser (745-727 BC) and Sennacherib (705-681 BC), kings of Assyria.

Comparison of the Four Major Prophets (from study by J. Hampton Keathley III)				
	Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel	Daniel
Prophesied To:	Jews in Judea	Jews in Judea and captivity	Jews captive in Babylon	Jews captive in Babylon and Gentile kings
Concerning:	Judah and Jerusalem (Isa. 1:1; 2:1)	Judah and Nations (Jer. 1:5, 9-10; 2:1-2)	The whole house of Israel (Ezek. 2:3-6; 3:4-10, 17)	Israel and Gentile Nations (Dan. 2:36ff; 9)
During the reigns of:	Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah (kings of Judah)	Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah (kings of Judah)	Zedekiah (king of Judah); Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon)	Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah (kings of Judah). Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon)
Dates:	740-680 B.C.	627-585 B.C.	592-570 B.C.	605-536 B.C.
Historical Setting:	2 Kings 15-21; 2 Chronicles 26-30	2 Kings 22-25	Daniel 1-6	Daniel 1-6

Outline (from study by J. Hampton Keathley III)

I. Prophecies of Denunciation and Judgment (1:1-39:8)

A. Prophecies Against Judah (1:1-12:6)

1. The Condemnation of Judah (1:1-5:30)
2. The Commission of the Prophet (6:1-13)
3. The Coming of Messiah (7:1-12:6)

B. Prophecies Against Gentile Nations (13:1-23:18)

1. Against Babylon (13:1-14:23)
2. Against Assyria (14:24-27)
3. Against Philistia (14:28-32)
4. Against Moab (15:1 - 16:14)
5. Against Damascus and Her Ally, Israel (17:1-14)
6. Against Ethiopia (18:1-7)
7. Against Egypt (19:1-20:6)
8. Against Babylon (21:1-10)

9. Against Edom (21:11-12)

10. Against Arabia (21:13-17)

11. Against Jerusalem (22:1-25)

12. Against Tyre (23:1-18)

C. Prophecies of the Day of the Lord (24:1-27:13)

1. Judgments of the Tribulation (24:1-23)

2. The Triumphs and Blessings of the Kingdom (25:1-27:13)

D. Prophecies Against Israel and Judah (Woes and Blessings) (28:1-35:10)

1. Woe on Samaria (28:1-29)

2. Woe on Judah (29:1-31:9)

3. Behold Messiah and His Kingdom (32:1-20)

4. Woe to Assyria, the Spoiler of Jerusalem (33:1-24)

5. Woe to the Nations (34:1-17)

6. Behold the Coming Kingdom (35:1-10)

E. Prophecies Against Sennacherib (36:1-39:8)

1. The Taunt from Assyria (36:1-22)

2. The Truth from God (37:1-7)

3. The Threat from Assyria (37:8-35)

4. The Triumph over Assyria (37:36-38)

5. The Sickness of Hezekiah (38:1-22)

6. The Stupidity of Hezekiah (39:1-8)

II. Prophecies of Comfort or Consolation (40:1-66:24)

A. Prophecies of Israel's Deliverance and the Greatness of God (40:1-48:22)

B. Prophecy of Israel's Deliverer; the Salvation of the Suffering Servant (49:1-57:21)

C. Prophecies of Israel's Glorious Future; God's Program for Peace (58:1-66:24)

Historical Setting:

Tiglath-pileser had conquered all of northern Syria by the time of Uzziah's death in 740 BC. He forced all small kingdoms, like Israel under Menahem (2 Kings 15:19f) and Judah under "Azariah" (Uzziah) to pay tribute. He entered Palestine in 734 BC and established his base of operations at the River of Egypt. Many small states rebelled against him, including Israel, during the Syro-Ephraimite war (733 BC).

Judah refused to participate in the Syro-Ephraimite war coalition, so the coalition attempted to overthrow Judah's king and appoint someone who would join the coalition (2 Kings 15:37; 16:5; Isa 7:1). Isaiah exhorted Ahaz, king of Israel, to trust in God but he refused and put his trust in Assyria (Isa. 7; 2 Kings 16:7-9).

Tiglath-pileser invaded Israel in 732 BC and came close to Judah's borders (Isa. 15:29). So Israel paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser. When Tiglath-pileser died in 727 BC, Hosea (who succeeded Pekah as King of Israel) refused (along with Pharaoh So of Egypt) to pay tribute to Shalmaneser V who succeeded Tiglath-pileser (2 Kings 17:4). Assyria attacked Israel and after a three year siege, captured the capital in Samaria (722 BC) and dispersed the people throughout the land of Assyria so they could no longer be a threat.

Although Assyria had captured all of Israel down to the northern boundary of Judah, they left Judah alone when they put down a rebellion of Syria, Egypt, and the area of Palestine in 720 BC. In 713 BC, Judah (under Hezekiah) joined an uprising along with Egypt, Edom, and Moab against Assyria. Assyria, under Sargon, took Ashdod and Gath leaving Judah vulnerable. Sargon's death in 705 BC led to a revolt by many including Judah under Hezekiah along with Babylon (2 Kings 20:12-19; Isa. 39:1-4).

Assyria, under Sennacherib, retaliated in 701, defeating Sidon, and started receiving tribute from Ashdod, Ammon, Moab, and Edom. They subjugated Ashkelon and Ekron, and surrounded Hezekiah and forced him to pay tribute (2 Kings 18:13-16).

Chapter 1

Verse 1. This announces what is written is the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Verses 2 – 31. God begins by indicting the nation of Judah for breaking their covenant with him. He says the northern kingdom of Israel, unlike an animal, doesn't even know its master, but has rejected him and consequently has been punished by neighboring nations. God rejects the external worship of the people because their treatment of the poor and needy betray that it is strictly ritual. He warns the people to repent and find forgiveness and blessing or else expect judgment. Because Jerusalem is filled with people doing evil, God declares that he will bring judgment upon the sinners, but gracious restoration to the city for the sake of the righteous that are there.

Chapter 2

Verses 1 – 5. In Isaiah's vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem, God says that in the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple (Mt. Zion) will become the most important and all nations will come to it. People will come to learn the ways of the Lord (Jesus) and his law will go out from Jerusalem and he will judge between nations and settle their disputes. People will turn their weapons of war into implements to further life and will not train for warfare anymore.

Verses 6 – 22. Speaking of Judah, God says that they have abandoned the people and thus their role as leader. The people are full of superstitions from the East and join in pagan practices. They put their trust in material things and weapons of war. They bow down to idols made by their own hands. So they will be brought low and humbled. Then the people will hide in the rocks and caves trying to hide from God. But God says that all

of the worldly things that people exalt will be humbled before the Lord and all idols will totally disappear. (That has not happened, but it will when Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation and takes control of the world.) Again, he says that men will flee to caves in the rocks to hide because of their dread of the Lord. They will even throw their gold and silver and their idols to the rodents. And God exhorts people to stop trusting in mere men.

Chapter 3

Verses 1 – 7. God says he is going to take away everything that Jerusalem and Judah see as their glory and protection. He will humble them to the point that children will govern them. As a result, people will oppress each other and no one will want to be in a leadership position.

Verses 8 – 12. God describes Jerusalem and staggering and Judah as falling because their words and deeds are against him. The look on their faces testify against them and they parade their sin like Sodom. They bring disaster upon themselves. But God promises the righteous that they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds, but he pronounces “woe” upon the evil because they will be paid back for what they have done.

Verses 13 – 17. God says he will take his place in court and judge the people. It is the elders and leaders who have ruined everything, stolen from the poor, and crushed the people. Even the women have acted like prostitutes and made themselves up to entice. But God says he will bring sores upon their heads so that their beautiful hair falls out.

Verses 18 – 26. God declares that in that day (when Jesus returns) he will take away all the finery. Instead, fragrance will be replaced with a stench, fine clothing with sackcloth, and beauty with branding. The men will fall by the sword and the gates of Zion will lament and mourn because the city is destitute.

Chapter 4

Verse 1. In this continuation from chapter 3, God says that seven women will take hold of one man and implore him to take them as part of his family to take away their disgrace.

Verses 2 – 6. God says that in that day (when Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation) the Branch of the Lord (Jesus) will be beautiful and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors. After God has judged, those who are left will be called holy and he (Jesus) will cleanse everything. Then he will produce over the people and the city a cloud of smoke by day and a flaming fire by night that will be a canopy of glory over them, a shelter and shade from the heat of the day and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain. This is a reminder of how God protected the people from Pharaoh’s army and for 40 years in the wilderness.

Chapter 5

Verses 1 – 7. Through Isaiah, God sings a song about his vineyard and his garden of delight. He identifies the vineyard as the nation of Israel (house of Israel = descendants of Jacob) and the garden of delight as the tribe of Judah. He planted his vineyard with the choicest vines but when he looked for a crop of good grapes, he found only bad fruit. He calls the people of Jerusalem and Judah to judge whether he could have done anything more for them. So he promises to remove his protection from his vineyard so that it will be a trampled wasteland where briars and thorns grow – all because he looked for justice and righteousness but only found bloodshed and cries of distress.

Verses 8 – 30. God pronounces a woe upon them for adding house to house and field to field to make mansions and yet living alone (amassing wealth for power and prestige). So God declares that the great houses will become desolate and the mansions without occupants and the fields will only produce a meager harvest. Then he pronounces a woe upon those who run after partying (drunk) and idleness (no respect for work of hands). He

declares his people will go into exile. He says mankind will be humbled but God will be exalted by his justice and will show himself as holy. Then he pronounces a woe on those who call evil good and good evil; a woe upon those who are wise in their own eyes; a woe upon those who are heroes of drinking, take bribes, and deny justice to the innocent. He declares that they will dry up and blow away like dust because they have rejected God and spurned his Word. God announces that he will bring distant nations to overrun the land like darkness.

Chapter 6

Verses 1 -13. This is God's call to Isaiah to go to the people and speak to them for him.

From 1 Chronicles 26, we learn that Uzziah became king in 790 BC when he was 16 years old and that he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord just as his father, Amaziah, had. The passage tells us about all the successful things he did as long as he sought the Lord. But after he became powerful, pride got the best of him and he decided that he would enter the temple sanctuary and burn incense. As he entered, Azariah and 80 other priests followed him, confronted him, and told him that it was not right for him to burn the incense because that was reserved by the Lord for the descendants of Aaron. They warned him to leave the sanctuary and that because he had been unfaithful, the Lord would not honor him. Uzziah became angry and while he was raging at the priests in front of the altar of incense leprosy broke out on the temple of his head (forehead). He was hurried out of the temple and for the rest of his life lived separated from people while his son, Jotham, governed for him.

We don't know how long Uzziah lived with leprosy, but we know he died in 739 BC, 52 years after becoming king. Isaiah says that in that year, he had a vision of the Lord seated on his throne in heaven and that he was surrounded overhead by creatures called seraphs which have six wings. As the seraphs called to each other about the holiness and glory of the Lord, the temple shook and was filled with smoke. We know from Jesus' statement in John 12:41 that it was Jesus that Isaiah saw on the throne. When Isaiah sees and hears this, he is overcome with his own uncleanness and the uncleanness of the entire nation, so he cries out, "Woe to me!" God wouldn't let Moses look directly at his face because it would have killed him. So Isaiah is terrified that he is going to die because he has looked upon the Lord. But one of the seraphs takes a coal from the heavenly altar and touches it to Isaiah's lips. As he does this he says that Isaiah's guilt is taken away and his sin atoned for. Then Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord asking whom he should send and who will go to the people for him with his message for them. Isaiah volunteers and then the Lord tells him to warn the people about their sin even though they won't listen to him. Isaiah asks how long he is to tell this to the people and God says until the nation is sent far away in judgment. God says that even if a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste, but a remnant will survive to be the holy seed.

Chapter 7

Now Isaiah begins to give a series of prophecies concerning the deliverance of the nation.

Verses 1 – 9. During the reign of Ahaz (731 – 715 BC) who was the son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah, Pekah, the king of Israel, aligns himself with Rezin, the king of Aram, and attack Jerusalem in an attempt to get him to join with them against Assyria. This occurs at least 8 years after Uzziah dies (after 731 BC). Isaiah has a son named Shear-Jashub (which means "a remnant will return") and God tells Isaiah to take him out to meet Ahaz and to tell Ahaz not to be afraid of Pekah and Rezin because their attempt to capture Jerusalem will not happen. He says that within 65 years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people. In 722 BC, Assyria overthrows the kingdom of Israel and scatters the people throughout the kingdom. In 671 BC, Assyria moves people from throughout the kingdom into Israel so that the Israelites become indistinguishable as a people.

Verses 10 – 25. Through Isaiah, God tells Ahaz to ask him for a sign. Ahaz refuses, saying he will not put the Lord to the test. So, through Isaiah, God asks why he is trying his patience. So the Lord gives him a sign even though he refuses to ask for one. The sign is that a virgin will give birth to a child and will call him Immanuel

(God with us). There is no evidence that a virgin gave birth to a son during the reign of Ahaz. Some scholars suggest that this was not a promise of a virgin birth in Ahaz's life but one that would occur many, many years later. Because it would happen many years later they think it made a stronger sign for Ahaz.

Based on his statement about his own son in 8:4, some scholars think Isaiah indicates that before his son with him is old enough to reject wrong and choose right, the Lord will bring upon the nation a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah (the split into northern and southern kingdoms after Solomon died). God says he will bring the king of Assyria and also Egypt against them so that they will be devastated. Everyone who remains in the land will eat curds and honey (indicating poverty) and that the abundance of grape vines will be turned into briars and thorns where cattle are turned loose and sheep run.

Chapter 8

Verses 1 – 4. God tells Isaiah to write the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz on a scroll and have it witnessed by Uriah the priest and Zechariah, the son of Jeberekiah. The name means “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil” and is the phrase warriors would often use to encourage each other as they went into battle. The Zechariah mentioned here is not the writer of the book by that name even though the names of the fathers are similar (Jeberekiah and Berekiah) because the writer of the book lived and wrote in 520 BC, over 200 years after this, during the time of Darius, the King of Babylon. This is probably the Zechariah that instructed Uzziah. Then Isaiah's wife conceives and gives birth to a son and God tells Isaiah to name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz because before the boy can say “my mother” or “my father” Damascus and Samaria (areas in the kingdoms of Aram and Israel) will be plundered and carried off by the king of Assyria. In 732 BC Damascus falls and in 722 BC Samaria falls.

Verses 5 – 10. Again, the Lord speaks to Isaiah and tells him that because the people don't trust him (shown by rejecting the gentle waters of Shiloah which provided water to Jerusalem from the Gihon spring) but trust Aram and Israel (Rezin and Remaliah), he is about to bring Assyria against them. And he will even allow Assyria to spread throughout Judah, but Judah will keep its head above water (Assyria doesn't destroy Judah like they do Israel and in 701 BC they leave after defeating Egypt).

Verses 11 – 15. God warns Isaiah not to follow the way of the people. Don't call everything a conspiracy like them and don't fear what they dread. Fear (have awe of) the Lord Almighty and he will be a sanctuary, but for both houses of Israel (northern and southern kingdoms) he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. They will stumble and fall because they won't trust God. Consequently, many will be captured.

Verses 16 – 22. Isaiah says he will trust God because he and his children are signs and symbols from God. When men encourage seeking knowledge of the future from the dead through mediums and spiritists, Isaiah says they should be consulting their God. Anyone who doesn't speak according to the law and testimony have no light but distressed and hungry, they will roam throughout the land, become enraged and curse God and be thrust into utter darkness.

Chapter 9

Verses 1 – 7. Regardless of what is going to happen to the people, God says there will be hope for them in the future as he honors Galilee. Then he gives a prophecy about the coming of the Messiah that has been promised from the time of the fall of Adam and Eve who will restore people to a right relationship with him. The people walking in darkness will have a light shine on them just as in the day of Midian's defeat when God delivered them. A child will be born who will be called God and he will reign on David's throne forever.

Verses 8 – 21. Here, God speaks about his anger against the Northern kingdom of Israel and it continues in chapter 10. This explains why Israel's (Ephraim's) plans to overpower Judah and force the Southern kingdom

into an alliance against Assyria (spoken about in chapter 7) will fail. Ephraim (N kingdom) had said with pride that they would rebuild what has fallen and replant the trees destroyed by their enemies, the Arameans and Philistines. Those defeats did not bring the people back to God and they took no thought of or counsel from God. But God says when his judgment comes upon them they will know that it is from him. God says he will cut off from Israel the head (elders and prominent men) and the tail (prophets who teach lies). Their wickedness is such that the different tribes will betray each other.

Chapter 10

Verses 1 – 4. This continues God’s word of judgment against Israel (N kingdom). He says a “woe” against those who make unjust laws, issue oppressive decrees, deprive the poor of their rights, make widows their prey, and rob the fatherless. He asks who they will turn to on the day of reckoning (when he brings judgment upon them) and to whom they will run for help. There will be nothing for them to do but cringe among the captives or fall among the slain.

Verses 5 – 19. As God said in chapter 8, he is going to use Assyria to bring judgment upon them. But he recognizes that Assyria’s purpose is not the same as God’s for the Assyrians’ intent is to totally destroy as many nations as they can. God dealt judgment in the past upon other kingdoms who worshipped idols, so would he not also judge Jerusalem and Samaria. Samaria is part of the Northern kingdom, but Jerusalem is part of the Southern. This should have been a warning to Judah to get rid of idols and return to worshipping God alone.

When God is finished using Assyria as a tool of judgment, he will then punish them for their willful pride. God reminds everyone of his sovereign right and power to accomplish what he wills. He reminds the people that a tool is not more powerful than and cannot do anything without the direction of the one who wields it. So when he is finished with Assyria he will completely destroy them for their pride in thinking that they are in control and can do whatever they want.

Verses 20 – 34. But God says there will be a remnant in Israel and they will truly rely on him. But he says that even though the number of people may be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return to the land because destruction has been decreed against the whole land. God encourages his people who live in Zion not to be afraid of Assyria because soon his anger will be turned from them against that nation. In that day, he says the burden will be lifted from his people’s shoulders. Assyria will go where they want throughout the Northern kingdom but they will stop at the borders of the Southern kingdom (hill of Jerusalem).

Chapter 11

Verses 1 – 9. Now God promises that one will come from the descendants of Jesse (a shoot or root from the stump of Jesse, David’s father) on whom the Spirit of the Lord will rest. He will have wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, and power from God and will give God awesome respect. This is the first advent of the promised Messiah. He will judge not by what he sees or hears but with righteousness and justice. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips will slay the wicked. This is the second advent of the promised Messiah. After this, the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard with the goat, and a little child shall lead them. The animals all will eat vegetation again and dangerous snakes will not harm humans. At that time the whole earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord. This will occur during the Millennial reign of Jesus.

Verses 10 – 16. In the day that all this happens, the Root of Jesse (the Messiah) will be a banner for the peoples, all nations will gather to him, and his place of rest (Jerusalem) will be glorious. In that day, he (Messiah) will reach out to reclaim the remnant that is left of this people from all the lands where they have been scattered. None of the tribes will be jealous of one another (unlike the way they will shortly betray each other). His remnant will take the material things of other nations like taking plunder from a defeated foe. God will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea and break the Euphrates River into seven streams. And he will make a

highway for his remnant to return to the land. This will be at the end of the Tribulation and leading into the Millennium.

Chapter 12

Verses 1 – 6. In that day (when the Messiah reigns on earth), God's chosen people will sing a song of praise recognizing that God is their salvation and strength. They will give thanks to God, call on his name, and make known what he has done among all the other nations of the world.

Chapter 13

Verse 1. This begins a series of ten oracles from God concerning future events. It continues through chapter 23. The first oracle is about Babylon. At the time, Babylon was a city within the Assyrian empire that was asserting itself. Eventually it becomes not only a threat to rule by the Assyrians but also took control.

Verses 2 – 16. This is an introduction to all ten oracles. It explains that God will judge the gentile nations because they refuse to recognize his sovereign authority and exalt themselves. Remember the story of the Tower of Babel and how men rejected God in favor of exalting themselves and how God brought judgment in the form of confused languages upon them. That was a classic example of man rejecting God and exalting himself. God declares that he has commanded his holy ones (angels) to carry out his wrath. He says to listen because he is mustering an army for war that will bring destruction in the day of the Lord. When this happens, hands will go limp, hearts will melt, terror will seize people, and they will writhe like a woman in labor while looking aghast at one another. The day of the Lord will make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars will not show their light. The sun will be darkened and the moon will not shine. In that day God will put an end to the arrogance of man and punish the wicked for their sin.

Verses 17 – 22. Now the future of Babylon is specifically given. God said he would stir up the Medes against them and Babylon would be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah and never inhabited or lived in through all generations, not even by shepherds resting their flocks.

At the time that Isaiah was writing this (late 700s BC), Judah was expecting help from the Babylonian people along with the Egyptians in opposing the Assyrians. The Babylonian people were rising in prominence in the Assyrian empire and becoming a threat to the Assyrian leadership. For this reason, the city of Babylon was destroyed in 689 BC by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, with the help of the Medes. But then it was rebuilt. Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians, overthrew the Babylonian empire in 539 BC but he didn't destroy the city. Daniel was a prominent individual in the city of that time and continued to be during the early years of Darius, who controlled the city. Babylon was again destroyed in 518 BC and was left in ruins.

Although the ancient site of Babylon is in ruins and has been fairly deserted for hundreds of years, the Iraqi people under the leadership of Saddam Hussein began rebuilding the ruins and setting up camps there to reestablish it as a viable city. Some scholars see either the destruction in 689 BC or in 518 BC as fulfillment of this oracle. Others think those may have been a near-term, partial fulfillment, but that there will be a complete fulfillment still in our future when Babylon will be utterly destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah.

Chapter 14

Verses 1 – 2. This ends the oracle with a promise that God will have compassion on Israel and settle them in their land again. People from other nations will join them. This would appear to be a reference to the Millennium.

Verses 3 – 20a. Now God describes the destruction of Babylon's king. Although the king of Babylon has struck down people with unceasing blows and subdued nations with relentless aggression, God will break his

rod of oppression. Then the lands will be at rest and will break into singing. The people who have been killed by him will rise up to meet him as he descends into the grave. They will say that he has become weak and like them. All his pomp and splendor will be gone as the maggots and worms work on his physical body. The one who was once so mighty will be brought low. God says the king of Babylon has said in his heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." This sounds exactly like what the Antichrist will do during the Tribulation as he makes a rebuilt city of Babylon his headquarters and sits himself up as god in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (the mount of God). The dead will stare at him in wonder that he is the one who made kingdoms tremble. All the kings of nations lie in state, each in his own tomb, but the king of Babylon will not join them in burial. This sounds like God throwing Antichrist into the lake of fire at the end of the Tribulation.

Verses 20 b – 23. Now God ends the oracle against Babylon by saying the offspring of the wicked will never be mentioned again. They will not rise to inherit the land because God will cut off everyone from Babylon and sweep it with his broom of destruction.

Verses 24 – 27. This is a prophecy (oracle) against Assyria. God says he will crush the Assyrians and take their yoke off of the Lord's people. This is the plan determined for the whole world by God who is almighty so nothing can turn it back.

Verses 28 – 32. This is a prophecy against the Philistine people and was given in the year that King Ahaz died (715 BC). God warns them not to rejoice that the rod which struck them (Assyria) is broken because from their root a snake will spring up. The Assyrians invaded Philistia in 712 BC and again in 701 BC. Sennacherib continued by punishing anti-Assyrian elements within the Philistines. But just because Assyria is struck down the Philistines shouldn't think that they will take control of the land because God has established Zion (Jerusalem) and there his afflicted people will find refuge. This could be likened to the Palestinian people today thinking they will take control of Israel. God has decreed that his people will find refuge in Zion and eventually he will cause it to happen.

Chapter 15

Verses 1 – 9. This is a prophecy against Moab. Isaiah writes that the two main cities of Moab, Ar and Kir, will be destroyed quickly. Dibon was the site of a temple to the Moabite god, Chemosh. When the cities are destroyed, people will go to the temple to weep. They will also mourn the loss of the cities of Nebo and Medeba as shown by beards being shaved off and wearing sackcloth. Heshbon and Elealeh are cities of the north and weeping there shows they will hear the outcry from the weeping of the people in the south. God expresses his grief over the fugitives fleeing to the south, but although they flee, they will not escape destruction because God will bring more.

Chapter 16

Verses 1 – 13. The Moabite fugitives will send a tribute to Israel asking that they be allowed to have shelter and refuge with them. God says the oppressor will come to an end, destruction will cease, and the aggressor will vanish from the land. He also says a throne will be established with a faithful descendant from the tribe of Judah who will judge with justice and speed the cause of righteousness. This would be the Messiah reigning during the Millennium. God says Moab's pride and conceit are known and though they lament, wail, and grieve for their economic loss, the people only wear themselves out going to their shrine to pray. By doing that, they show that they do not recognize and trust the Messiah who has come to rule. So God says that within three years ("as a servant bound by contract would count them" would indicate that it will seem like a long time) Moab's splendor and all her people will be despised and the survivors few and feeble. Assyria invaded Moab sometime between 715 and 713 BC and Sennacherib destroyed it as a nation in 701 BC.

Chapter 17

Verses 1 – 3. This is a prophecy concerning Damascus. The city is going to be destroyed along with the cities of Aroer. There were several cities with the name of "Aroer." One was on the river Arnon in the land of Moab (Deut 2:36; 3:12; Jos 12:3). There was another city by this name further north, over against Rabbath-Ammon (Jos 13:25). There was a third city by this name in the tribe of Judah (1 Sam 30:28) about 14 miles SE of Beersheba. In the time of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria captured the areas of Gilead, Galilee, and all the land of Naphthali and scattered the people throughout the land of Assyria (2 Kings 15:29). Damascus was destroyed in 732 BC and Samaria in 722 BC. Loss of the fortified city and royal power would indicate the loss of sovereignty and glory.

Verses 4 – 6. "In that day" indicates the following will happen as or after the above happens. The glory of Jacob (the northern kingdom) will fade. The destruction will be like a reaper gathering grain or the harvester beating the olive tree to get the fruit. But God indicates that some will remain. When Tiglath-Pileser scattered the northern kingdom throughout Assyria, he left many of the farmers to tend the land for him. But from the cities he took the leaders and everyone of any influence and scattered them so they wouldn't be able to influence people against him.

Verses 7 – 9. Again, "in that day" men will look to God and not to altars that are the work of their hands. And "in that day" the strong cities will be abandoned and left desolate. This didn't happen in 732 or 722 BC but it will happen at the end of the Tribulation as the Messiah sets up his kingdom.

Verses 10 – 14. The people have forgotten and God. The description of cultivating plants brings to light a pagan custom designed to secure the favor of local gods. Rather than trusting God the people had planted their faith in idols. Isaiah indicates that many nations will rage over the land but God will rebuke them and cause them to dry up and blow away. God says that is the future reward of those nations who plunder his people. The land has been overrun by many nations since 722 BC until the present. But at the end of the Tribulation, God will overcome all those nations and give them their just reward.

Chapter 18

Verses 1 – 8. This is a prophecy concerning Cush. Messengers are told to go to a people tall and smooth-skinned, a people feared far and wide, and an aggressive nation of strange speech whose land is divided by rivers. This could be the people of Egypt or the people of the land surrounding the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (Iraq and Syria). God says he will be quiet and wait, but eventually he will cut those aggressive nations down and they will then bring gifts to him in Mount Zion. This will happen at the end of the Tribulation and into the Millennium.

Chapter 19

Verses 1 – 15. This is a prophecy concerning Egypt. God tells Isaiah that he is going to come against Egypt and that their idols will tremble before him and that he will stir up the people so that they fight against each other. He will cause their plans to fail and their idols will not be able to help them. He will turn them over to a cruel master so that a fierce king rules over them. He will dry up the waters of the river (Nile) and streams so that the plants will die because the land becomes parched. Fishermen will groan because they have lost their trade and all wage earners will be dejected and sick at heart. God declares that the officials are fools and Pharaoh's counselors will give him senseless advice. The officials and counselors of Egypt have led the people astray.

Verses 16 – 25. God says when he brings all that upon the Egyptians that they will shudder with fear. The land of Judah (Israel) will bring terror to the Egyptians, even the mention of their name, because of what the Lord is planning for Egypt. Five Egyptian cities that speak the language of Canaan will swear allegiance to the Lord

and one of those cities will be known as the City of Destruction (Dead Sea Scrolls and some other texts call it the City of the Sun which would be Heliopolis located about 8 mi west of current day Cairo). In the day that God brings this all about, there will be an altar to God in the heart of Egypt and a monument to him at its border, both being a sign and witness to the Lord Almighty. The Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians and they will worship him with sacrifices and grain offerings. When he strikes them with a plague, they will turn to him and he will heal them. In that day, there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria so the people may worship the Lord together. Then God will bless them, calling the Egyptians his people, the Assyrians his handiwork, and Israel his inheritance.

Chapter 20

Verses 1 – 6. This prophecy came in the year that Sargon attacked and captured Ashdod (711 BC). Egypt had encouraged the Philistine cities to resist Assyria with the promise of help that was never provided. Ashdod, located about 35 miles west of Jerusalem, rebelled and the Assyrian king, Sargon II, removed its king and replaced him with another who then also rebelled. So Sargon came after that ruler who tried to flee to Egypt, but the Egyptians bound him and gave him to Sargon to avoid an attack. During this time, God tells Isaiah to take off his sackcloth and sandals so that he has to walk around stripped and barefoot (that may mean he was naked but we can't be sure). For three years that is the way Isaiah walked around. The people may have thought his appearance represented the people of Ashdod, but then the Lord told him to explain that his actions showed how the king of Assyria will lead away captives from Egypt and Cush. This would have put a damper on the Israelites trusting in Egypt or Cush for protection from Assyria. The prophecy was fulfilled in 701 BC when Assyria defeated Egypt at Eltekeh and carried them and the Cushites into captivity.

Chapter 21

Verses 1 – 10. Now God gives a prophecy about the Desert by the Sea. We finally learn that this is about Babylon when we get to verse 9. It is a prophecy of terror and destruction coming upon Babylon by an invader from the desert who comes like a whirlwind from a land of terror. Isaiah considered the vision to be so dire that his body was racked with pain and he was staggered and bewildered by it. God tells him to post a lookout to report what he sees. The lookout reports that a man in a chariot comes and when questioned, answers that Babylon has fallen, has fallen, and that all the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground. It is difficult to identify exactly what destruction is being shown to Isaiah. Assyria put Babylon down in 686 BC but the Babylonians recovered from that and took control of all Assyria in 612 BC. In 539 BC, Babylon was captured by the combined forces of the Medes and Persians under the command of Cyrus, the Mede, and has never been a world power since. The question is whether this prophecy is about one of these times that Babylon fell to its enemies or whether it is the final fall of Babylon revealed to John on the Isle of Patmos and recorded in Revelation 18:2 where he writes "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!" Isaiah ends this prophecy by telling his people who feel crushed on the threshing floor that he has told them what he heard from the Lord. It would have been an encouragement for the people not to trust anyone but God.

Verses 11 – 12. This is a prophecy against Dumah, which means silence or stillness, and is a word play on Edom where the town of Seir is located. The watchman is asked by someone from Edom how long the night will last. That would be a question about how long the oppression (probably by Assyria) would last. After being asked a second time, the watchman replies that morning is coming (hope) but also the night (more oppression). And the people are told to ask and ask again. That indicates Edom would face a long time of darkness before their fate would change so Judah should not place any trust in them.

Verses 13 – 17. This is a prophecy against Arabia, an area southeast of Edom which is now known as Saudi Arabia. The caravans from there would hide in thickets because of the danger (probably from Assyria). They would try to flee from battle, but God says he will bring about their destruction. The fact that it will happen within one year as a servant bound by contract would count it, means it will be a long time in coming.

Chapter 22

Verses 1 – 14. This is a prophecy concerning Judah. The previous prophecy concerning God's chosen people was about the northern kingdom. This one is about the southern kingdom. This first section refers to the city of Jerusalem. Verses 1 – 2a, describe a city filled with joy. But verses 2b – 7 describe the city in turmoil. The leaders have fled and been captured while their enemy was still a long way away and are taken prisoner. The Lord says not to try and console him over the destruction of his people. He has decreed a day of tumult and trampling with the battering down of the walls. This prophecy was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar captured the Jerusalem in 586 BC, just 125 years later. Verse 6 identifies two nations involved in this tumult as Elam and Kir. Elam was east of Babylon and the location of Kir is unknown, but Kir was one of the places to which the Assyrians took captives from the northern kingdom when they overran the area in 722 BC (10 years earlier).

Verses 7 -11 say the defenses of Jerusalem are stripped away and that there are many breaches in the city walls and although the people tried to hold out by building a water reservoir, they would not look to God.

Verses 12 – 14 indicate the Lord would call out to the people to turn to him but they would not. Instead, they would trust in their defenses and when they are about to fail, they would be without hope so much that they would kill and eat their cattle and sheep, the very animals that would have been needed for future living. So God says that their sin of not trusting in him would stay with them until their death.

Verses 15 – 19. This section refers an individual named Shebna who has the position of being in charge of the place. He is using his exalted position to prepare a prominent memory of himself in the future of the city by having a special tomb built for his remains. In this way he is doing like the whole of the nation and trusting in his own strength rather than trusting God. So God says he will be tossed away like a ball into a distant country where he will die. He is a disgrace to his master's house.

Verses 20 – 25. This section refers to another individual named Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah. He will take the place of Shebna and assume his authority to run the house of David. Having the key of the house of David will mean that what he opens or shuts no one else can change. His position will be an honor for his family and all their glory will hang (or rest) on him. He will be like a peg driven firmly in place, but he will not be able to withstand the weight of all his family putting their trust in him rather than the Lord, and he will fail.

We must be careful to put our trust in the Lord, not our surroundings, our own self, or someone else.

Chapter 23

Verses 1 – 7. This is a prophecy concerning Tyre. This first section describes the destruction of the city of Tyre. The city was prominent in the ancient world as a shipping harbor. So her destruction will result in distress to all the cities of commerce around the Mediterranean Sea.

Verses 8 – 14. This section asks who planned the destruction of Tyre and the answer is the Lord. He will cause the destruction of Tyre to bring low those who glory in their own accomplishments. In verse 13 God says to look at the land of the Babylonians which is now a people of no account and an area which the Assyrians have made a place for desert creatures. In the same way, Tyre would be beset by siege towers, have its fortresses stripped bare, and turned into a ruin. Assyria, under Tiglath-pileser, had started this by setting up a military governorship of the city in 738 BC. Later rulers imposed greater restraints as the people continued to resist foreign control and the city moved from the coast to an island a little way off. [The invaders were Sennacherib (705-701 BC), Esarhaddon (679-671 BC), Nebuchadnezzar (585-573 BC), Artaxerxes III Ochus (343 BC), and Alexander (332 BC).] Alexander the Great built a roadway from the coast to the island and captured the city in 332 BC.

Verses 15 – 18. For seventy years Tyre was to be forgotten, but after that time it would return to trade with all the world, but its profit and earning will be set apart for the Lord rather than stored up or hoarded. Its profits will go to those who live before the Lord for abundant food and fine clothes. Exactly when this seventy years are to take place is not known, but it profits going to those who live before the Lord has not happened yet.

Chapter 24

This section of Isaiah from Chapter 24 through 27 is not technically a continuation of the oracles or prophecies of the Lord about different peoples and places. It is more like the climatic finale of a piece of music. It is the triumph of God over those who oppose him.

Verses 1 – 3. This says God will lay waste to the earth, devastate it, and scatter the inhabitants. The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered.

Verses 4 – 6. This describes the earth as being dried up and defiled by the people's disobedience of God's laws and statutes. Therefore the people are burned up and very few are left.

Verses 7 – 13. Because the wine dries up, the gaiety of the people is stilled so they no longer drink wine with a song. The cities lie in desolation, joy has turned to gloom, and gaiety has banished from the earth. The city of man is left in ruins and that's what it will be like on the earth, just like when an olive tree is beaten to harvest the olives or like when the gleanings of the grape harvest are left.

Verses 14 – 20. From the west the majesty of the Lord will be acclaimed, and in the east he will be given glory and his name exalted. From the ends of the earth there will be singing of "Glory to the Righteous One." Although the people cry out that they are wasting away, betrayed by the treacherous, God says whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit and whoever climbs out will be caught in a snare. The earth is going to be broken up, split, and thoroughly shaken until it reels like a drunk person because the guilt of the people is heavy upon it.

Verses 21 – 23. In the day that this happens to the earth and the city of man, the Lord will punish the powers in the heavens above (Satan and the angels following him) and the kings on earth (those following Satan's lies). They will be gathered together, shut up in prison, and after many days be punished. The sun and moon will be dimmed by the glory of the Lord as he reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem.

All of this describes the Tribulation and, verses 21-23, Jesus taking control of his kingdom from Satan, the usurper and those who follow him. The end of the Tribulation comes with Jesus reigning in glory from his headquarters in Jerusalem.

Chapter 25

Verse 1 – 12. Isaiah gives praise to the Lord for the marvelous things he will have done throughout history for those who have trusted him. This is the end of the Tribulation and Isaiah sees that the strongholds of ruthless peoples have been destroyed and those nations will now revere him. God has been a refuge for the poor and needy and a shelter for the storms of life. On Mount Zion (Mt. Moriah), where Jerusalem sits, God will prepare a feast for people and destroy the shroud of death that covers people and put an end to death. He will wipe away the tears from all faces and the disgrace of his people because they return after their disobedience. But Moab will be trampled for their continued disobedience shown in the cleverness to which their pride drives them. He will bring down their fortified walls and turn them into dust.

Chapter 26

Verses 1 – 21. When the events of Chapter 24 take place (Tribulation to Millennium), Isaiah says a song of

praise will be sung about what is happening. It is obviously sung by followers of God because they have a strong city where God makes salvation its walls. The gates should be opened so that the righteous may enter. Those who steadfastly trust in God will have perfect peace while God humbles those who consider themselves lofty and allows their city to be trampled by the oppressed and poor. But the path of the righteous is made smooth as they wait and yearn for God. When God's judgments come upon the earth, people will learn what righteousness is, but even though grace is shown to them, they do not live in righteousness and do not have regard for the majesty of God. The singers ask that the wicked should see God's zeal for his people and be put to shame before they are consumed by the fire reserved for God's enemies.

The righteous recognize that everything they have accomplished has been done for them by God. They recognize that others have ruled over them and have departed but they have only honored the name of the Lord. Those dead rulers are punished and the memory of them is wiped out while God has gained glory and extended the borders of the land. In their times of distress, the righteous came to God with a weak prayer and received God's discipline. Like a woman in childbirth, the righteous cried out to the Lord, but could not bring salvation to the earth. Those who have died in the Lord will rise and shout for joy. They will enter the rooms prepared for them for a short while until God's wrath has passed. The Lord is coming out of his dwelling (heaven) to punish the people of the earth for their sins and the earth will disclose the blood shed upon it and will not conceal any longer those who have been slain.

Chapter 27

Again Isaiah says that in the day the events of Chapter 24 take place (Tribulation to Millennium) that God will punish with his fierce, great and powerful sword the gliding serpent Leviathan, the coiling serpent of the sea. That is an indication of his punishment of Satan for his attempt to take God's rightful place as the object of worship. Isaiah says to sing a song about a fruitful vineyard that the Lord watches over and guards so that no one may harm it. Even if briars and thorns confronted him, he would set them on fire so that the vineyard would come to him for refuge. Isaiah says that in the future, Israel will blossom and fill the world with fruit. The Lord has struck down those who struck her, killed those who killed her. With warfare and exile the Lord has contended with Israel so that Jacob's guilt will be atoned for and removed. God will destroy all the altar stones and Asherah poles. The world's fortified city will stand desolate and abandoned, a place for animals to graze and lie down. The Lord, will not have compassion on those who will not have understanding after he has revealed himself to them. In the day of those events, the Lord will thresh the world from the Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt and he will gather up the Israelites from where they have been exiled and bring them to worship him on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

Chapter 28

The historical context of most of chapters 13 – 27 is the reign of Ahaz (721 – 715 BC). The historical context of chapters 28 – 35 begins in the reign of Ahaz before the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 BC, but is mostly during the reign of Hezekiah (715 – 686 BC).

Verses 1 – 6. Here we see that the northern kingdom, represented by Ephraim, has been basking in their reputation, especially their capital city of Samaria, the wreath of Ephraim. And they have been acting like a bunch of drunkards, boasting in their importance. But God says he has a powerful, strong nation who will come like a hailstorm and destructive wind against them so that they will be trampled underfoot, and picked and eaten like a ripe fig. But God says he will be a glorious crown and a spirit of justice for the remnant of his people (those who trust in him in the midst of this awful time).

Verses 7 – 15. Now Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah (we know from verse 14) about the way they are acting. God says the priests and prophets, those who claim to be working for and speaking for him, are drunkards and cannot render accurate decisions. Their teaching is like what you would teach an infant, do and do, rule on rule, a little here, a little there. Since they will not trust God, follow him, and teach his ways, God

will use foreign lips and strange tongues to speak to his people who are not listening and they will fall backwards, be snared and captured. Those who scoff at impending judgment think Judah cannot be touched have made a covenant with death and the grave. They are trusting in false gods and think that any trouble will pass by them.

Verses 16 – 29. God declares that there is a tested, precious cornerstone in Zion which is a sure foundation and anyone who trusts in it will never be dismayed. Remember that God had promised Adam and Eve that he would send one to restore man's relationship with him and from that time forward they had to trust in that promise as they tried to live a life following God. Throughout the years from then until this time, God had reiterated his promise in various ways and given the people further guidance for living the way he wanted them to live. Jesus spoke about this cornerstone in Matthew 21:42 as the stone that the builders had rejected which has become the capstone as he quotes from Psalm 118:22-23. Luke in writing Acts 4:11 refers to Jesus as the chief cornerstone. And Peter, in 1 Peter 2:4-8 quotes Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 28:16 when calling Jesus the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God. He says that Jesus is a precious stone to believers but for those who won't believe, he is a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. Isaiah is encouraging people to put their trust in God's promise which is a cornerstone to save them. But those who will not put their trust in God's cornerstone, but trust in other means, will be beaten down by the scourge that is coming. God says that understanding this message will bring sheer terror (to those who won't trust him) and nothing they do will protect them. So stop their mocking or their chains will become heavier because God has decreed destruction against the whole land (not just the northern kingdom). Then he gives examples from farming to show what is about to happen. After seed has been sown and harvested, it must be threshed to get rid of the chaff and ground to make the bread people want and need. So, in the same way, the nation will be threshed to get rid of the chaff and the good grain ground so that he can make something good from them.

Chapter 29

Verses 1 – 12. Isaiah now writes God's woe to the southern kingdom, called Ariel, the city where David settled. Like the northern kingdom, they were continuing with their festivals without concern for obeying God. So God says the city will lament and mourn because of a siege against it that will bring it low. The Assyrians under Sennacherib did threaten the city in 702 BC but it wasn't brought low until Nebuchadnezzar captured it and took captives to Babylon in 605 BC. In the midst of the woe to Jerusalem, God gives encouragement because those nations who attack his chosen nation will experience the wrath of God. Their people will be like a hungry or thirsty man who dreams of eating or drinking but when he awakes finds he is still hungry and thirsty. People will be stunned and amazed by what happens and stagger but not from being drunk. Then God says this prophecy will not be understood by people.

Verses 13 – 16. God says people come near to him with their mouths but not with their hearts. Their worship is made up only of rules taught by men. Thus, God will once again astound people with wonders that cause their wisdom and intelligence to be like they had none. And God pronounces a woe upon those who try to hide their plans from him and try to turn his ways upside down (like calling good evil and evil good). They think that they as the clay can tell God, the potter what is right for them.

Verses 17 – 24. This is what the Lord says will happen in a short time – the land of Lebanon will flourish, the deaf will hear the words of the prophecy which was previously not understood, the blind will see, the humble will rejoice in the Lord, and the needy (poor) will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. But, the ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, all who have an eye for evil (who lie and give false testimony) will be cut down. Then the Lord will say to the house (descendants) of Jacob "no longer will you be ashamed and your face grow pale." God says they will acknowledge his holiness and be in awe of him and that they will gain understanding and accept instruction.

Chapter 30

Chapters 28 – 29 were three woes to the nation of Israel, both northern and southern kingdoms, which predicted how he would deal with their disobedience and gave encouragement that he would restore the kingdom. Now in chapters 30 – 33, he gives three more woes which addressed more closely their current situation.

Verses 1 – 5. He says those who carry out plans that are not his and trust in Egypt will be put to shame. Judah was seeking protection through an alliance with Egypt. But Egypt would not (and did not) provide any protection for Israel. Shabako, who was the Pharaoh, was a Nubian, not a native Egyptian. This made for a weak nation because the people would not give the same level of support for that kind of leader.

Verses 6 – 11. Then he gives an oracle (prophecy) concerning the animals of the Negev (desert area in the southern part of Judah). This is not about the animals who live in the Negev but those who traveled through the Negev carrying the burdens of those seeking an alliance with Egypt. He says those people are rebellious and unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction. They do not want visions (messages from God) about what is right and they don't want prophets to confront them with the Holy One of Israel. God says they are putting their trust in Egypt and calls it an unprofitable nation who help is utterly useless. And he calls Egypt Rahab, the do-nothing.

Verses 12 – 18. Therefore God says, since they have rejected his message but relied on oppression and deceit, their sin of disobedience will be like a high wall that cracks, bulges, and collapses suddenly to break in pieces. Since they will not trust God for their salvation and rest, but want to flee, they will indeed flee, but no matter how fast they flee, their pursuers will be faster. God longs to be gracious and show compassion and justice and those who wait on him will be blessed.

Verses 19 – 33. When the people of Zion (Israelites) cry out for help, he will answer them. Although God will give them adversity and affliction, then he will give them teachers of the right way of living and they will follow it. They will defile their idols and throw them away. God will cause the land to produce plentifully and heal the wounds of the afflicted. God will come against those who oppose him with burning anger and his tongue will be a consuming fire. He will shake the nations, but his people will celebrate and rejoice. People will hear his majestic voice and see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire. His voice will shatter Assyria and strike them down. The word "topheth" refers to a funeral pyre, a disgraceful, burning place. A place of burning fire, that has plenty of fuel to keep it burning, has been prepared for those who oppose God.

Chapter 31

Verses 1 – 9. God declares a woe on those who go down to Egypt for help instead of looking to him. The Egyptians are just men, so when God stretches out his hand against his people, those who help (Egyptians) and those who are helped (Israelites) will both fall. So the Egyptians will not be of any help. Like a great lion is not frightened by the shouts of shepherds, so God will not be disturbed when he comes down to do battle on Mount Zion. He will shield Jerusalem, deliver and rescue it. God calls Israel to return to him and in the day he does battle over Jerusalem, his people will reject their sinfulness. But Assyria will fall by a sword that is not of man and it will devour them. They will flee but their stronghold will fall because of terror.

Chapter 32

Verses 1 – 8. God says a time is coming when a king will reign in righteousness and have rulers who rule with justice. No longer will the eyes of people not see nor will their ears not hear. No longer will the fool be called noble. Fools speak folly and busy themselves with evil, practicing ungodliness and spreading error about the Lord. Those who are hungry for truth are left empty by their words. But the noble man makes noble plans and stands by noble deeds.

Verses 9 – 20. God warns the women who feel secure to listen to what he says. In a little more than a year, those who feel secure will tremble. The grape harvest will fail, and the fruit will not mature. So the women should tremble, put on sackcloth and mourn because their fortress will be abandoned, the noisy city deserted until the Spirit is poured upon it from on high making it become a fertile field like a forest. Then justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness in the field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace and God's people will live in peaceful places in security.

Chapter 33

Verses 1 – 6. This begins another woe, this time against the destroyer and traitor who is not directly named. By the time of this prophecy (ca 713 BC), Assyria, under Shalmaneser, had already overrun the northern kingdom of Israel, so the people would understand this to be Assyria. The Assyrians prided themselves in being able to destroy any opponent and they were known for breaking agreements if it served their purposes. This woe indicates the destroyer would be destroyed. Then Isaiah says a prayer of praise to God for his strength and salvation and ends with an encouragement to trust God.

Verses 7 – 12. Shalmaneser's successor, Sennacherib, threatened to destroy Jerusalem (ca 705 BC). So Hezekiah agreed to give him tribute money if he would withdraw. Sennacherib took the money and then turned around and taunted and threatened the residents of Jerusalem. Verses 7 – 9 show the people in distress and weeping. Hezekiah sent word of this to Isaiah and when Isaiah's reply arrived he went to the Lord in prayer asking for deliverance. Verses 10 – 12 indicate that the Lord has determined it is time to rise up and defend his people.

Verses 13 – 24. Now the people are given the encouragement of deliverance. It uses language that relates to Judah's present situation but extends to a future time. God calls for those who are far away to hear and acknowledge his power. Sinners are terrified but those who walk righteously will have their needs supplied. The people will see a king over a land that stretches afar and they will wonder about the arrogant who taunted and threatened Jerusalem. The Jerusalem they see is peaceful, a tent that will never be moved. The Lord is the King and the people who dwell in Jerusalem have their sin forgiven.

Verse 22 was the basis for the Mayflower Compact, the covenant that the Pilgrims made when they left England for America in 1620 AD and thus it was also the basis for the government of the United States, which had its roots in the Mayflower Compact.

Chapter 34

Chapters 34 and 35 bring the first major section of Isaiah to a climax showing God's judgment of the nations for opposing him and the restoration of the land of Israel into a garden land of plenty.

Verses 1 – 4. The Lord is angry with the nations of the world for opposing him so he will totally destroy them. Not only that but the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll.

Verses 5 – 17. Then Isaiah shows the judgment by looking at the fate of Edom (descendants of Esau). It will be destroyed and become a place where wild animals live. Why single out Edom? The Old Testament consistently describes Edom as the opposite of Israel. Remember that Isaac told Esau that he would live in an infertile area (Gen 27:39-40).

Chapter 35

Verses 1 – 10. In contrast to the future of Edom, the land of Israel will be glad because it will bloom with splendor. Feeble hands will be strengthened. Weak knees will be steadied. Blind eyes will be opened. Deaf ears will be unstopped. Lame people will leap like the deer. Those unable to speak will talk. Jesus referred to

this passage to answer John the Baptist's question about his being the Messiah. (Luke 7:22) The burning sand will become a pool and the ground will bubble with water. Where jackals lived, now grass and papyrus will grow. There will be a highway called the Way of Holiness where the redeemed will walk and the ransomed of the Lord will return to Jerusalem. The redeemed will enter Jerusalem singing and joy will crown their heads. No sorrow or sighing will be there – only gladness and joy.

Chapter 36

Chapters 36 through 39 is almost a direct repeat of 2 Kings 18 through 20. It is also paralleled in 2 Chronicles 29 through 32. Some people might think this means Isaiah didn't write these chapters but since they report what he wrote to King Hezekiah, it might be more likely that what is in Kings and Chronicles is taken from Isaiah's writings in this book and those writers added what extra is found there.

Verses 1 – 3. The 14th year of Hezekiah's reign would have been 713 BC. Sennacherib attacks the fortified cities of Judah, but not Jerusalem. Sennacherib's reign was from 705 to 681 BC. So something is messed up in the dating. It is possible that the Hebrew characters used to indicate the number 14 were somehow mistranslated and should have been translated as 24. That would put Sennacherib's attack in 703 BC and that is possible. 2 Kings tells us that Hezekiah sent a message to Sennacherib while he was still at Lachish asking him to withdraw and offering to pay whatever he demanded. Sennacherib exacted 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold which Hezekiah took from the temple and his palace. But Sennacherib still sent his chief officer and a large army to Jerusalem to threaten Hezekiah and the residents. Hezekiah sends three men out to talk with the Assyrian commander.

Verses 4 – 22. The Assyrian commander taunts Hezekiah saying, "On what are you basing this confidence of yours? ... On whom are you depending? ... Egypt, that splintered reed? ... And if you say to me, 'We are depending on the Lord our God' – isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed?" Hezekiah had indeed removed the altars and high places when he first became ruler because he was bringing the people back to the worship of the One True God. The Assyrian commander doesn't understand this and mocks God. He says, "... have I come to attack and destroy this land without the Lord? The Lord himself told me to march against this country and destroy it." Hezekiah's three men ask the Assyrian to speak to them in Aramaic instead of Hebrew so the people on the wall won't understand. Instead, the commander continues to speak directly to the people encouraging them not to trust Hezekiah and God. He tempts them with having plenty of food and water if they will just make peace with the King of Assyria. He says, "Do not let Hezekiah mislead you when he says, 'The Lord will deliver us.' Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the King of Assyria? ... Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the Lord deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" After he finishes his taunts and tempting, the people remain quiet and the three men return to Hezekiah with the commander's message.

Chapter 37

Verses 1 – 7. Hezekiah responds by tearing his clothes and putting on sackcloth, a sign of mourning. He send the three men and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to Isaiah asking him to pray for the remnant of the people that still survive. Isaiah says to return to Hezekiah with God's message "Do not be afraid of what you have heard – those words with which the underlings of the King of Assyria have blasphemed me." God says he will put a spirit into the man so that when he hears a certain report he will return to his own country where he will be cut down with a sword.

Verses 8 – 13. The field commander hears that Sennacherib had left Lachish and is fighting at Libnah, so he withdraws to join his king. After hearing that the Cushite king of Egypt was marching out against him, Sennacherib sends another threatening message to Hezekiah and warning him not to trust God.

Verses 14 – 20. When Hezekiah receives the threatening letter, he goes to the temple and lays it out before God and pleads with God to deliver them.

Verses 21 – 38. Isaiah then sends a message to Hezekiah with God's answer concerning Sennacherib. He describes the Assyrian pride and blasphemy and how Sennacherib has heaped insults on the Lord. But he says he knows where he lives and when he comes and goes. He knows about Sennacherib's insolence and rage against him, so he will put a hook in his mouth and make him return the way that he came. For Hezekiah, God gives this sign. This year they will eat what grows, the second year what grows from that, and the third year they will sow and reap and plant vineyards and eat the fruit so that once more a remnant of Judah will take root and survivors will come out of Mount Zion. God also says that the King of Assyrian will not enter the city, shoot an arrow there, or even build a siege ramp against it. God declares he will defend the city and save it for the sake of David. Then that night the Lord goes out into the Assyrian camp and kills 185,000 men. Sennacherib withdraws from the land of Judah and returns to Nineveh where he stayed. Thirty-two years later, while Sennacherib is worshiping in the temple of his god, Nisroch, two of his sons kill him using a sword and then escape into the land of Ararat (modern day Turkey). And he is succeeded by another son named Esarhaddon.

Chapter 38

Although God's protection of Israel from the Assyrians is told at the end of Chapter 37, Isaiah begins this chapter by telling about an event that happened before God killed the 185,000 Assyrians. The events of this time as recorded in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles also follow this same pattern. In fact, 2 Chronicles doesn't even give as much as is given here but says, "The other events of Hezekiah's reign and his acts of devotion are written in the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel." (2 Chron 32:32)

Verses 1 – 8. Hezekiah is ill with a boil that won't heal so Isaiah goes to him with a message from the Lord to put his house in order because he is about to die. Hezekiah immediately turns away from Isaiah and prays to God, asking him to remember that he has served him faithfully and with devotion and weeps bitterly. So God sent word through Isaiah that he had heard Hezekiah's prayer and saw his tears, so in three days Hezekiah would go to the temple of God, he would add 15 years to Hezekiah's life, and he will deliver the city from the hands of the Assyrians. In 2 Kings 20 we learn that Hezekiah asks for a sign that he will be healed and go to the temple in three days. Like most anyone would, he is more concerned about his own future than the future of the other people. Isaiah asks the king whether the sign should be the shadow of the sun going forward or backward ten steps. Since it is a simple matter for the sun to go forward as it always does, Hezekiah asks that the shadow of the sun would go back ten steps. That means the sun would have to change its position in the sky so that it was ten hours earlier. God causes the miracle to happen to confirm that he would heal Hezekiah and deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrians.

Since Hezekiah died in 686 BC, backing up the 15 years added to his life, puts this mortal illness in 701 BC. There is a question about whether the shadow going back ten steps was only a local phenomenon or was it actually the sun changing its position so that everyone around the world would know something miraculous had happened. This is questioned because no report of this has been found in the writings of any other people group although many, like the Chinese, very accurately recorded the movements of the sun, moon, and stars. Either way, it was a miraculous sign from God seen by travelers that were present and told by the people to other travelers that passed through the land so that the word of the miracle spread to other countries.

Verses 9 – 22. Isaiah then gives a writing the king made after he recovered from his illness. In verses 10 through 14 he describes the depth of his despair. Then, in verses 15 to 20 he tells his faith that the illness happened for his good and that he will praise and walk humbly before God all the rest of his years. Then Isaiah says that he told people to prepare a poultice and put it on Hezekiah's boil so he will recover.

Chapter 39

Verses 1 – 8. After the miraculous change of the sun's position, the king of Babylon sent some men to take a gift to Hezekiah because he heard of his illness and the miracle that happened. 2 Chronicles 32:31 says that God left Hezekiah to his own resources at this time to test everything that was in his heart. Hezekiah gladly receives the representatives from Babylon and takes the opportunity to proudly show them all the riches he had in the palace and everywhere else. When Isaiah hears about the envoy, he goes to the king and asks him who the men were and what they said. Hezekiah replies that they came from Babylon and Isaiah asks what they saw. Hezekiah says he showed them all his treasures. Isaiah then gives him a message from the Lord that the time would come when all his riches will be carried off to Babylon and some of his descendants would be taken away and become eunuchs in the place of the king of Babylon. Hezekiah replies that the word of the Lord is good because he thought at least there will be peace and security in his lifetime. This shows the pride of his heart that God was seeking to reveal. It may also indicate he was trying to get help from Babylon rather than trust completely in God. Merodach-Baladan had been king of Babylon from 722 – 710 BC but was ousted by Sargon II. By 703 BC he was plotting a revolt against the Assyrians so he may have been looking for an alliance and this may have been appealing to Hezekiah.

Chapters 40 to 66

The focus of Chapters 1 – 39 was the time of the Assyrian threat and the primary theme was judgment. There were a lot of historical details and the life of Isaiah was prominent. The Messiah was presented as the root or shoot from Jesse. The focus of Chapters 40 – 66 is the Babylonian captivity and the primary theme is deliverance. There are not a lot of historical details and the life of Isaiah is absent. The Messiah is presented as the servant of the Lord. For this reason some scholars think someone other than Isaiah wrote this and added it to his book at a later time. But these chapters pick up the theme of judgment and develops it into deliverance, showing the people that there is a future after God disciplines them for their unfaithfulness. The nation of Israel would have a glorious future, not because of the people's actions but in spite of the people's actions. Isaiah's audience is not necessarily in the captivity, but his message presupposes the captivity has begun. Chapter 40 begins the message of restoration and deliverance.

Chapter 40

The questions that begin to be addressed in chapter 40 are, "Does the Babylonian captivity mean God could not deliver his people?" and "Does the Babylonian captivity mean God will not deliver his people because of their sinfulness?" We'll see God's answer to both are "No." The new situation does not change God's plan to keep his promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. What it shows is that God is sovereign and if his people trust him, he will deliver them and fulfill his promises.

Verses 1 – 2. God says to comfort his people and declare that the penalty of their sin has been paid. This indicates that the captivity and all the hard times will end. We know that the captivity will end after 70 years as God revealed to Jeremiah (Jer 29:10), but this indicates more than just the ends of the captivity. It points to a forgiveness of their sin. The time in captivity didn't provide forgiveness for their sin, but just a time of discipline to correct their actions and set them back on the path of obedience. But how could God offer comfort to a sinful people. He would break into history.

Verses 3 – 5. A voice will call out in the desert to prepare the way for the Lord and make a straight highway for him. This is the passage that Matthew uses (3:3) to describe John the Baptist as he prepared the way for Jesus to be baptized and his ministry announced. But God's word through Isaiah continues that every valley will be raised up and every mountain and hill be made low and the glory of the Lord will be revealed so that all mankind together will see it. The valleys being raised up and the mountains made low hasn't happened yet. The glory of the Lord was revealed in Jesus but all mankind together didn't see it, but they will when Jesus returns to earth for the second time on the Mount of Olives and it splits apart (Zech 14:4).

Verses 6 – 31. This is an echo of Isaiah's call in chapter 6:8-13. It would appear the one crying out in the wilderness asks what he is to cry out. And the rest of the chapter is the Lord's answer what his message should be. Men are like flowers and grass that wither and fade, but the word of the Lord stands forever. Announce that the Lord is coming and he brings his reward and his recompense with him. The Lord will tend his flock and gather his people to him. Who can be compared to the Lord? He measures the waters in his hand and with his hand marks off the boundaries of heaven. Who has understood the Spirit of the Lord or given him counsel? The nations of the world are like dust to him and there are not enough animals to be a sufficient offering for him. To whom or what image will you compare God? Every image is but an idol made by a craftsman from earthly materials. Since the earth was founded, God sits enthroned above it. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy. He reduces princes and kings to nothing. Who is the equal of God? He created the heavens and brings out the stars. By his power they are maintained. No person's ways are hidden from the Lord. God does not get weary. He gives strength to the weary and those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, soar on wings like eagles, run and not grow weary and walk but not faint.

Chapter 41

Verses 1 – 4. God tells the nations (the islands represent all the Gentile nations) to be silent, gather their strength and meet him at the place of judgment. Then he asks who has stirred up one from the east, calling him into his service. God says he hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him so that he destroys them and travels where he has never traveled before. Then God asks who has done this, calling forth the generations from the beginning. And he answers that it is he who has done it – that he is the first and the last.

Verses 5 – 7. Then God says the nations (islands) have seen it (that he is at work) and feared. They gather with one another, encouraging each other to be strong, but they do not come to the Lord. Their craftsmen create idols – attempting to have something other than God be their god, and nailed the idols down so that they can stand up under God's presence.

Verses 8 – 20. Then God speaks to the Israelite people, identifying them as Jacob's descendants and descendants of Abraham. He announces that he has taken them from the ends of the earth, calling them from the farthest corners and saying that he has chosen them and not rejected them. He tells them not to fear or be dismayed because he is their God, that he will strengthen them, and he will uphold them by his right hand (seen as the place of power and the position of honor). He says that those who rage against and oppose them will be disgraced and perish so that even if the Jewish people look for their enemies they won't be found. Then he reiterates that they should not fear because it is he who takes them by the hand to help them. He indicates they should recognize their insignificance before him, but that he will make them into a threshing sledge that is new and sharp so that they will crush the mountains and reduce the hills to chaff so that they blow away. Then he tells them that they will rejoice in the Lord and the glory of the Holy One of Israel. He says the poor and needy will search for water because they are parched with thirst, but he will answer them and not forsake them. He says he will make rivers flow on barren heights and springs in the valleys. He will turn the desert into pools of water, and plant trees there so that people may see it and understand that it is he, the Holy One of Israel, that has created it.

Verses 21 – 29. Then God turns back to the nations and tells them to present their case, bring in their idols to explain what has happened and declare the future so that people will know that they are deity. At least they should do something good or bad so that people will be dismayed and filled with fear. But he says they are less than nothing, utterly worthless, and detestable. He says that he has stirred up one from the north and from the east (rising sun), who calls on his name and treads on rulers like they were mortar or like he was a potter molding clay. This could be a reference to Cyrus the Persian who eventually conquers the Babylonian empire that God will use to discipline the Jewish nation. In Ezra 1:2-4, Cyrus calls on the name of the Lord and indicates that God has appointed him to build a temple for him in Judah. That doesn't mean Cyrus worshipped God, only that he was allowing the Jews to return to their land (as he did other peoples that the Babylonians had captured) and allowing them to rebuild their temple with the freewill offerings that anyone wanted to give them

for the project. Rather than worshipping God he was allowing the worship of God as he would have allowed the worship of any other deity. Then God asks who has foretold this from the beginning. Obviously the idols had not because God says he is the first to tell Zion (the hill where Jerusalem sits and where God's house was built which indicates the Israelite people) to look because he has given them a messenger of good tidings and there is no one else to give them counsel because they are all false and their deeds amount to nothing. Cyrus can be seen to be God's messenger of good tidings because of his announcement that the captives could return home and rebuild the temple. And the fact that God has announced it before it happens when no idol has shows that they are nothing.

This chapter began with the Servant (Messiah) who faithfully follows God's will to be a light to the nations and ends with the unfaithful servant (Israel) who has not followed God's will to be a light to the nations.

Chapter 42

Verses 1 – 4. Here is the first of four “Servant Songs” that Isaiah announces for the Lord. The other three are found in 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13 – 53:12. They describe the Servant of the Lord which he will send to the people. Here, the Servant is announced as One whom God upholds and in whom he delights. God says he will put his Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations (world). He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets. Although a bruised reed, he will not break or as a smoldering wick, he will not be snuffed out. He will faithfully bring forth justice without faltering or being discouraged. And in his law the islands (world) will put their hope. In other words, he will be mild mannered but will not be stopped in completing his service to God of bringing justice to the world. Obviously Cyrus is not this servant even though he will be God's messenger.

Verses 5 – 9. Then God speaks to the Servant and declares that he who created the heavens, the earth and everything on it, and gives life to people the people on the earth has called the Servant and will take hold of his hand to keep him and make him a covenant for the people and a light to the Gentiles. This indicates that the Servant will be helped by God to fulfill the covenant he had made with the Jewish people. He will also be a covenant that brings light to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people). He will open the eyes of the blind, free captives from prison, and release from the dungeon those who are in darkness. This servant is the Messiah that was promised since the Garden of Eden would come to crush Satan's head. Then God declares that he is the Lord (Yahweh – YHWH) and he will not give his glory to another or allow his praise to go to idols. He explains what has happened and tells of future things before they take place – as opposed to the idols of the nations that he has told to come and do the same.

Verses 10 – 17. Then God says for everyone sing for joy, give glory to him, and proclaim his praise everywhere because he will march out like a mighty warrior and with the shout of a battle cry he will triumph over his enemies. God says he has kept silent for a long time, but now, like a woman in childbirth, he will cry out, lay waste to the mountains and hills, turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools. He will lead the blind by ways they have not known, turn darkness into light before them, and make the rough places smooth. This is what he will do for those who trust him but for those who trust idols, they will be turned back in utter shame.

Verses 18 – 25. Now God describes the condition of Israel. God had called them to be a light to the world to show how to live in a covenant relationship with him. But they were blind and deaf. They have seen God work many miracles before them and for their protection. They have heard his voice as he gave them the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, but they have paid no attention and acted like they heard nothing. They have been plundered, trapped in pits, and hidden away in prisons with no one to rescue them. Now God asks who will listen to him and pay close attention in the time to come. He asks who it was who handed Jacob over to become loot and Israel to the plunderers. And he answers it was he against whom the people have sinned and not obeyed his laws. So he has poured out his anger on them and the violence of war enveloped them in flames, but they did not understand and did not take it to heart.

Chapter 43

Verses 1 – 13. Now that God has described Israel's condition as blind and deaf, he encourages them about the nation's future. He reminds them that it is he who created Jacob and formed Israel and tells them not to fear because he has redeemed them and called them by name since they are his. No matter what problems they face, even if it is deep water, rivers, or fire, they will not be overcome because God is their Savior. He says he gives Egypt for their ransom and Cush (upper Nile) and Seba in their stead. He says that since they (Israel) are precious and honored in his sight and because he loves them, he will give men in exchange for their life. He says not to be afraid and that he will bring their children from the east and west, from the north and south. He says to bring his sons and daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by his name, whom he created for his glory, whom he formed and made. That could be seen to be everyone who is saved by their faith in Jesus, the Messiah. Then he says to lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. That would seem to refer back to his description of Israel. The Jews return from captivity in Babylon is not what is pictured here because it was not from the four corners of the world.

God says all the nations gather and the people assemble and he asks which of them has foretold this and has explained the way things happened in the past. Then he says to let them (the assembled nations and people) to present their witnesses to prove that what they have said is true. But he says to the people he has gathered from the corners of the earth that they are his witnesses so that everyone may know that he is God and there is no other god before or after him, and that apart from him there is no Savior. He declares that from ancient days he is God and that no one can deliver anything out of his hand because when he acts no one can reverse it. This points to the deliverance that God has provided for his chosen people even though they have been blind and deaf in being the light to the world that would show how to have a right relationship with him. That he is the only Redeemer and Savior and that he brings those who are called by his name from the corners of the earth would put the gathering of the nations and his display of the people he has saved who were blind and deaf at the end of the Tribulation.

Verses 14 – 21. Now God speaks to the people of Israel and tells them that he will bring down as fugitives all the Babylonians. So that means their upcoming captivity will end and God will take charge because he is the Holy One, Israel's Creator and their King. In Samuel's time the people had rejected having God as their king in favor of an earthly king. But God is declaring that he has always been and will always be their King. He reminds them that it was he who made a path through the waters (Red Sea) and caused the chariots, horses, and army that followed them into that path to die there. And he says not to dwell on the things of the past because he is doing a new thing. He says that he is making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. The wild animals will honor him because he provides water in the desert to give a drink to his people, his chosen that he formed for himself, so that they may proclaim his praise.

Verses 22 – 28. God now proclaims that the salvation of his people is because of his mercy not because anything they have done. He starts by saying they have not called upon him or wearied themselves on his behalf. They have not honored him with offerings and sacrifices and he has not burdened them with demands for incense. But they have burdened him with their sin and offenses. So he reminds them that it is he who blots out their sin for his own sake and remembers them no more. And he asks them to recall the past and argue the case for their innocence. And he reminds them that their first father (Adam) sinned and their spokesmen rebelled against him (tribal leaders, kings, and religious leaders). So God says he will disgrace the dignitaries of their temple and bring Israel to scorn.

Chapter 44

Verses 1 – 5. Again God calls on Israel to listen and not be afraid because he will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground. Then he specifically says he will pour out his Spirit and his blessing on their descendants and they will spring up like grass or a tree by a flowing stream. And those people will acknowledge that they belong to him.

Verses 6 – 8. God declares that he is the first and last – that there is no other God apart from him. He calls anyone who thinks they are like him to declare it, to proclaim what has happened since he established his ancient people and to foretell what will come. He tells his people not to tremble or be afraid. They are his witnesses. Again he declares there is no God like him – not one.

Verses 9 – 20. Now God describes what all the idols really are that are compared to him. All who make idols are nothing and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who speak up for idols are blind and ignorant. Why make an idol which can be of no profit. All such craftsmen will be put to shame and their end will be terror and infamy. Whether the craftsman works with metal or wood, he works with something that came from the world and some of what he uses to make the idol is used for other common purposes. Then the craftsman prays to the idol he has made, saying “Save me. You are my god.” But the idol is nothing, cannot see, nor understand. No one stops to think how foolish it is to put their trust in something they have made. Their heart is deluded. They cannot save themselves. And they won’t recognize that the thing they made is a lie.

Verses 21 – 23. God calls on Jacob to remember these things because he has made them his servants and he will not forget them. At some time he will wipe away their sin like the morning mist. So they should return to him and the heavens and earth will sing and shout because God has redeemed Jacob and displays his glory in Israel.

Verses 24 – 28. God again declares that he is the one who created all things, foils the signs of false prophets, overthrows the learning of the wise, and fulfills the predictions of his servants. He declares that Jerusalem will be inhabited and he will restore the towns of Judah so that they are rebuilt. Then he predicts that Cyrus will accomplish all that God wants done and will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.” God foretells this (ca 712 BC) long before Cyrus is in any leadership position to be able to do it because he wasn’t born until 600 BC. But after the people have been in captivity in Babylon for 70 years, Cyrus will defeat the Babylonians and write the decree that the Jews should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. (2 Chron 36:23; Ezra 1:2-4) This prophecy was fulfilled in 538 BC. Cyrus died in battle in 530 BC and his son Cambyses II became King of Persia.

Chapter 45

Verses 1 – 13. Here God begins with his promise that Cyrus would be his instrument to subdue the nations and ends with a warning to anyone who would quarrel with his decisions as the Maker. In the middle he once again proclaims that he is God and that there is no other. He will strengthen Cyrus even though Cyrus doesn’t acknowledge God. It is because Cyrus is named over 100 years before he is born that some scholars claim this portion of Isaiah was written by someone else at a much later date. In Jeremiah 1:5 God tells the prophet, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” So, if God knows a person and his life before he is even created in the womb, it is not impossible to believe that God can also tell Isaiah Cyrus’ name 100 years before he is born. Since God exists outside of our space-time universe, he sees and knows everything before it happens. God chose to use Cyrus to keep his promises to the descendants of Israel. And we see God can, and will, use even those who don’t believe in or acknowledge him to accomplish his purposes. He says that he will use Cyrus to set his people free from captivity in Babylon and this would have been a hope the exiles held for the 70 years of their captivity.

Verses 14 – 25. God encourages his people that in the future the goods from Egypt and Cush will become theirs and that those people will come to them in chains, bow down before them, and plead that God is with them and there is no other god. All the makers of idols will go off into disgrace together. But Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation and never be put to shame “to ages everlasting” (meaning forever). The Lord who created everything has declared this. And again God says he is the Lord and there is no other. God hasn’t said all this in secret but so that people would follow him and be gathered from the nations. Again, God says he is the only God and everything he has said will surely happen. Every knee will bow before him and every tongue will swear by him and say righteousness and strength are only in the Lord. All who have raged against

God will appear before him and be put to shame. But the descendants of Israel will be found righteous. These things haven't happened but they will be fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation and beginning of the Millennium.

Chapter 46

Verses 1 – 13. God now declares his power and superiority to gods that are made and carried by people.

In his study of Isaiah, Dr. Thomas Constable writes the following: “Bel and Nebo were the two chief gods of Babylonia. Bel (“lord,” cf. the Canaanite Baal) was the title of the father of the gods in the Babylonian pantheon, whose name was Enlil. Bel was also later the title of Marduk, the city god of Babylon and the hero of *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian Creation account. Nebo was Bel’s son and was supposedly a wise administrator. He was the god of learning, writing, and astronomy. The Babylonians carried images of these prominent gods in their New Year’s Day parades.”

God says these false gods will be carried but they will be carried off into captivity. God reminds Israel that it is he who has carried them since he formed them and asks to whom they can compare him. The false idols are made from silver and gold and people carry it to a spot from which it doesn't move. Even though people cry out to it, it cannot answer or save them from their troubles. So again, God reminds them that he is the Lord and there is none like him. He makes known the end from the beginning and everything that he declares will happen just as he has said it. He will use whatever he has made, even people, to accomplish his will. So he declares that he is bringing his righteousness to those who are not righteous and his salvation will not be delayed. He will grant salvation to Zion and his splendor to Israel.

Chapter 47

Verses 1 – 15. God now depicts the future of Babylon after he has finished using it to discipline his people. Babylon will be exposed, their shame uncovered. God will take vengeance and spare no one. No longer will Babylon be called the queen of kingdoms. God may have given his people into their hands a short time for discipline, but Babylon showed them no mercy, laying a heavy burden even on the aged, all the time thinking that they will endure forever. So he tells them to listen while taking their ease. God will never be a widow or suffer the loss of his children, but the Babylonians will have both happen to them even though they use all their sorceries and spells (magic). Disaster, calamity, and catastrophe will come on them unexpectedly so God tells them to keep on with their sorceries and astrologer predictions, but they will not save anyone because they can't even save themselves.

Chapter 48

Verses 1 – 11. Now God speaks to Israel. He says they take oaths in his name and call upon him but not in truth or righteousness. Tradition and pretending to follow God are not the same as actually obeying him. God says he announced all this before it happened because he knew they were stubborn and didn't want them to be able to say their idols had done anything to help them. He says he will tell them of new things, unknown to them, so they will not be able to say in the future that they didn't know about them. He says he is delaying his wrath for his own name's sake, for the sake of his praise. But he will do these things because he cannot let his name be defamed and because he will not yield his glory.

Verses 12 – 15. God calls his people to listen. He is the first and the last. He laid the foundations of the earth, spread out the heavens, and when he summons them they respond. The Lord's chosen ally will carry out his purpose against Babylon (that would be Cyrus that he has previously named). God says he has called him and he will succeed.

Verses 16 – 22. Again God calls his people to listen to him. He declares that it is he who teaches what is best for them and directs the way they should go. If only they had paid attention to his commands they would have

had peace, numerous descendants, and not be destroyed. But now, their release from captivity in Babylon has been announced so, when they have the opportunity, they should flee from Babylon and proclaim with joy that he has redeemed them. The fact that some of the Israelites remained in Babylon after Cyrus declared they could go is an indication that some still disobeyed God's will after 70 years of captivity. When they left Egypt and wandered through the desert, they did not thirst because God provided water for them. But, God declares that "there is no peace ... for the wicked." The word translated "peace" is "shalom," which refers to the fullness of divine blessing that comes from a right relationship with God.

Chapters 49 to 55

In chapters 40 to 48, Isaiah revealed that God would redeem his people from the Babylonian furnace of adversity to which they were going to be sent as discipline to purify them from their disobedience and that he would use Cyrus as his servant to have them released. Now, in chapters 49 to 55, he reveals that God will eventually deal with the problem of sin not just their disobedience but that of the whole world.

Chapter 49

Verses 1 – 7. The anticipation of a future freedom from sin and "shalom" with God begins with a review of the calling and ministry of the Servant (Messiah) that was announced in 42:1 – 9. This is the second of the four Servant Songs. The one who is speaking is the Servant, called from before his birth and from his birth God has mentioned his name (Luke 1:31-33 is the fulfillment of this). He would be protected by God to bring God's chosen people, the descendants of Jacob, back to himself. The servant is not the nation of Israel but a person who will fulfill what the nation was intended to do but never did because of their disobedience, namely show the world how to have a right relationship with God. The Servant would be hidden by God until the right time and then would display God's splendor. His voice would be like a sharpened sword, cutting to the heart of everything by what he said. It may look like the Servant has labored in vain because the descendants of Jacob have disobeyed – some have been captured by the Assyrians and lost to history, others will go into captivity in Babylon, and the Messiah would even be rejected by the people when he came. But the Servant says what is due him is in God's hands and his reward is with God. The Servant knows that God will accomplish what he says he will do. Now God says it is too small a thing for the Servant to just bring salvation to the descendants of Jacob, but that he will make him a light to the Gentiles that he may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. God declares that kings will see him and rise up (an attitude of respect) and princes will see him and bow down (also an attitude of respect) because he is God's chosen one.

Verses 8 – 13. Now more of the work of the Servant is revealed. God says in the time of his favor (when he decides it is right) he will help his Servant and make him be a covenant for the people. Since he will be a light and salvation to the Gentiles as well as Jacob's descendants, this covenant will be greater than the previous covenant with just the Israelites and in fact will include them and fulfill the previous covenant. The blessing of that covenant relationship will result in the restoration of the land and the calling of everyone living in the darkness of captivity of sin to come out and be free from it. Paul quotes this verse in 2 Cor 6:2 as he proclaims that now is the time of God's favor and the day of salvation. Of course Paul didn't mean the verse had been fulfilled but that it was being fulfilled by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus by which every person who accepts it may be freed from sin and have a right relationship with God. The complete fulfillment of this will be experienced in the Millennium when people will come to Jerusalem from all over the world and there will be rejoicing in the heavens and in the earth because they too have been freed from the curse from Adam's sin.

Verses 14 – 26. Now, God speaks to the Israelites who will think that he has forgotten his covenant with them. Using family language, he assures them that the descendants of Jacob will be numerous, even seeming to be more than the land can support, and that they will be brought back by Gentiles. The nation will not have to worry about those who have oppressed them because God will contend with their oppressors himself.

Chapter 50

Verses 1 – 3. These verses are more of a conclusion to the previous 13 verses than an introduction to the next verses. While referring to the nation as his wife, God now turns to the people as his children and asks them to produce a certificate of divorce or a bill of sale that shows he has terminated his covenant with them. Of course they can't because God hadn't rejected them. They were sold into slavery (captivity in Babylon) because of their disobedience, but God has not rejected them. But he asks why none of them were there when he called to them. Surely it wasn't because he lacked the power to rescue them because he can dry up the sea, turn rivers into a desert, and clothe the sky with darkness simply by his word.

Verses 4 – 9. This is the third of the four Servant Songs. Unlike the first two Songs, this one doesn't specifically mention the Servant. But it is apparent from what is written that it is about the Servant. God gives the Servant an instructed tongue so he knows what to say to give comfort to the weary. God is with him from the very beginning of each morning and opens his ears so he knows what the Lord wants done. The Servant has not drawn back from his mission or been rebellious. The Servant offers his back to those who beat him, his cheeks to those who pull out his beard, and does not hide his face from those who mock and spit on him. These are all things that happened to Jesus during his trial and crucifixion. Because he knows God will help him and that he will not be shamed, he sets his sights on finishing the work God has given him to do. He is not afraid of his accusers because God will vindicate him and all his accusers will wear out like a garment.

Verses 10 – 11. These verses transition from the Servant Song to a new topic – the importance of listening to the Servant and God. Those who revere God and listen to the Servant's word will walk in the light (even though he walks in darkness) and will rely on God. But everyone who provides his own light rather than listening to the Servant, will receive what they deserve – torment.

Chapter 51

Verses 1 – 8. Now God calls his people to listen and respond to the Servant. Since God has said they would go into captivity in Babylon, the people of Isaiah's day may have had a hard time accepting that God would restore and bless the nation. So God reminds them of Abraham and Sarah who were old, yet had a son through whom the nation was brought from one to many. If the Lord could do that seemingly impossible thing, then he would surely have compassion on Zion and her ruins so that her deserts will be like Eden, a garden of the Lord, and she will echo with sounds of joy, gladness, thanksgiving and singing. Again he calls them to listen because his law will go out from him and his justice will become a light to the world so that the world will look to him in hope. He proclaims that the heavens will vanish, the earth will wear out, and people die like flies, but his salvation will last forever and his righteousness will never fail. Again he calls to the people, specifically those who know what is right and have his law in their hearts, not to fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults because all that will pass away, but his righteousness will last forever.

Verses 9 – 16. This is the first of three passages calling people to awake, first to the fact that God's power had not changed, second to his purpose or plan for their lives, and third to his peace that would come because he will not abandon them. God reminds them that it was he who cut Rahab to pieces. This is not a reference to the woman who helped the spies at Jericho, but a reference to Egypt. (See other instances of this in Job 9:13; 26:12; Psalm 87:4; 89:10; and Isa 30:7) It was God who dried up the sea and made a way for them to pass safely through. He promises that the ransomed people will return to Zion with singing and everlasting joy will crown their heads, but sorrow will flee from them. He asks why they should fear mortal men, and forget the Lord who stretched out the heavens, so that they live in constant terror about the wrath of the oppressor. When the Lord acts, where will be the wrath of the oppressor? The oppressor's prisoners will be set free and they will not lack for food to eat. The God who controls the sea, establishes the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth has said to Zion that they are his people. So why should they fear?

Verses 17 – 23. This is the second of three calls for the people to awake. This call is for them to awake to his purpose or plan for the nation. Because of their continued disobedience, God would cause them to drink the cup of his wrath. Eventually they would find that there was no one to guide the nation and no one to take care of it. The Babylonian captivity is not specifically mentioned here or in some way implied so it appears God has more in mind than just that seventy year time. Ever since they went into the Babylonian captivity, the nation has not had someone to lead or care for it like Moses, Joshua, David, or Solomon. There have been minor leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah, but for the most part the nation has continued to stagger and have calamity upon calamity come upon it. When God says “therefore” in verse 21, it indicates a change in the nation’s situation. He says for them to “see” that he has taken from their hand the cup that made them stagger, the goblet of his wrath, and that they shall never drink it again. That’s a promise of a restored relationship with him that shall never end. And he says he will put that cup of his wrath into the hands of the nation’s tormentors. That is a promise that is still unfulfilled but one day will be.

Chapter 52

Verses 1 – 12. This is the third of three calls for the people to awake. This call is for them to awake to the peace that would come because he will not abandon them. It is a preparation for them to receive the salvation that he will send by his Servant. Israel can’t save itself, but it should prepare to joyfully receive what God is preparing as their salvation. No one forced God to sell them into captivity and no one will need to pay him to redeem them. A long time ago, the nation willingly went to Egypt and there became captives. Not long before the time of Isaiah’s writing, the Assyrian nation has oppressed Israel (especially the northern kingdom). And when God looks at his people what he sees is that they have been taken away for nothing and those who rule, mock them. All day long God’s name is blasphemed, but his people will know his name and that it is he who foretold all this to them. It will be good news and joyfulness will abound when the watchmen announce the news that Israel’s God reigns. That means the nation will once again have one leading and caring for it because God has redeemed Jerusalem and all the world will see his salvation. The people should leave the place where they have been captive without touching unclean things. They should leave the unclean and be pure, carrying the things of the Lord. But they will not leave like someone fleeing, but their leaving will be orderly because God will go before them and guard behind them as they go. Their freedom from captivity will be in God’s timing and in his power.

Verses 13 – 15. This begins the last of the four Servant Songs and continues through the end of chapter 53. The three previous passages have given a little insight into the work of the Servant and this identifies that work in more detail. God has promised to save his people and most anybody would expect that to be a show of his power that forces those who have oppressed the people to let them go free. This passage explains the work of the Servant and how the freedom of the people will be accomplished. The Servant will wisely complete God’s work and be exalted. Just as many are appalled because his appearance was disfigured and marred beyond human likeness, so many nations will marvel at him and kings will shut their mouths because what they were not told they will see and what they have not heard they will understand. The rulers of the world apparently have not heard or seen that one who is humble and lowly can be an exalted leader of the world, but they will eventually understand. This says the Servant will experience humiliation and physical suffering just like the people have, but eventually will be recognized for who he is by the nations and kings of the world.

Chapter 53

Verses 1 – 12. According to Dr. Thomas Constable, there are about 80 references found in the New Testament from the book of Isaiah and most of them come from this chapter which is the middle of part 2 of Isaiah (chapters 40 – 66). The first question is who has believed the message and to whom has the arm (power and strength) of the Lord been revealed. The Servant grows up like a tender shoot or a root out of dry ground which indicates that he has no recognized position or power. The Servant’s appearance has nothing that would attract people to him. People despise and reject him. He is familiar with sorrow and suffering. Nothing about him causes people to esteem him. He takes the sorrows and infirmities of people and yet they consider him afflicted

and stricken by God. He is pierced and crushed because of our disobedience and receives the punishment we deserve so that we can be healed. Every one of us has strayed from obeying God, so God lays our disobedience on him. Even though he is oppressed and afflicted, he quietly goes like a lamb to slaughter and does nothing to stop it although he could. By oppression and judgment the Servant is killed for the disobedience of the people. Though he does no violence or lying, he joins the wicked and rich in death. But it is God's will that the Servant should suffer and that his life would be an offering that overcomes the guilt of disobedience. But the Servant will not only have offspring, but he will prosper and his days prolonged. After suffering and death, he will return to life and be satisfied that he has borne the disobedience of many and justified them. Because of the Servant's work, God will give him an exalted position and the Servant will divide the reward of his work with many. "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12)

Chapter 54

Verses 1 – 10. Now God tells the barren woman to rejoice. This is not directed at unmarried women or married women who have never conceived a child. This is about spiritually barren people who are saved by the work of the Servant as described in chapter 53. God uses the analogies of a barren woman, wife that has been deserted, and bringing that wife back. Persons redeemed by the Messiah should rejoice and burst into song even though previously they have never had any spiritual children because now their children will be so numerous that they will have to enlarge their tents. That is exactly what has been happening ever since Jesus paid the price of death for the disobedience of people so they can have a right relationship with God. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the sand on the sea. Everyone who has faith in Jesus as the Messiah God promised becomes a spiritual descendant of Abraham who believed God and had righteousness credited to him (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3). This will continue until Jesus returns and establishes his kingdom. No one who has faith in Jesus will be ashamed when the kingdom is established but they will forget the shame and disgrace of their youth when they didn't believe. For a brief moment (in God's timing) it seems like he abandoned people because of their sin, but in the fullness of time he redeemed them by the work of the Messiah and when the time is right he will call believers to be with him. God recalls his promise to Noah never to cover the earth by water again and declares that he has sworn that his love will not be shaken nor his covenant of peace removed because he will never rebuke people again. This is his promise for believers.

Verses 11 – 17. The analogy now changes from a restored wife to a rebuilt city. Although the city has experienced storms and was not comforted, God says he will rebuild it with precious stones. Compare this description with that of New Jerusalem in Rev. 21:15-21. The people of the city will be taught by God and their peace will be great. Tyranny and fear will be far from them. Anyone who attacks will surrender to them and no weapon will prevail against them. The people will refute everyone who accuses them. This is to be the heritage of God's servants.

Chapter 55

Verses 1 – 5. This is an invitation to respond to what God will do through the Messiah. Everyone who is hungry or thirsty is offered water and food from God that cannot be bought with money. People are invited to come and hear God so that their soul may live. He made a promise to David and David is his witness that the promise will be kept. In the millennium the people of Israel will speak to nations they don't know and those people will hasten to listen because God has endowed the nation with splendor.

Verses 6 – 13. These verses repeat and refocus the invitation just given. People should seek the Lord while there is still time and forsake their evil ways. Turn to God and find mercy and pardon. The reason for responding to the invitation is that God's thoughts and ways are so much higher than that of men. When God's word goes out it accomplishes what God desires. The result of responding to the invitation is that those people will go forth in peace and the world will be changed.

Chapters 56 to 66 are the last section of Isaiah. We've just heard the invitation to respond to the work of the suffering servant as described in chapter 52:13 – 53:12. Now these chapters are going to describe the characteristics of those who do respond. They clarify the relationship between works and grace. It is important for people to demonstrate God's righteousness in their lives but that is impossible without God's help. Isaiah is writing to the people of Israel, but we know that what he writes applies to everyone who accepts Jesus as the Messiah and has faith that his work on the cross restores them to a right relationship with God, their Creator. So, as we read these chapters, we need to seek to apply what we find to ourselves as much as Isaiah applied them to his people.

Chapters 56 and 57 introduce the main subject of this section, namely the need for humility and holiness. If salvation grows out of God's grace, as Isaiah has previously shown, do people have any responsibility other than receiving the grace? Was simply being a member of the covenant community and fulfilling the Mosaic Law an adequate response or did God expect something more? Twice before (chapters 42 and 36) Isaiah has mentioned his servant being a light to the Gentiles. God had wanted his covenant relationship with the Israelites to be a light to the world to show them how to have a right relationship with him but it only showed how man cannot accomplish this by his own power. So God expects people who have accepted his grace to display it to the world so others will know about it and want it.

Chapter 56

Verses 1 – 8. The Jews returning from the captivity would see this as referring to their salvation from that. But we must see it as the Messiah's birth, death, and resurrection which revealed God's righteousness and salvation. Maintaining justice and doing what is right do not bring about righteousness or salvation. They should be the result not the cause. Ethical conduct, obeying God's will, brings blessing. This would apply not only to Jews, God's chosen people, but also to anyone who chose to obey God and do what pleased him. Even those who were excluded from Israel's public worship (eunuchs) could be accepted and have a place in worshipping God. And not only that, those who bind themselves to the Lord and serve him, love him, and worship him he will bring to his holy mountain, give them joy in his house of prayer (temple) and their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on his altar. God says his house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. And the one who gathers the exiles of Israel declares: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."

Verses 9 – 12. God's accusation against the leaders of Israel for spiritual blindness and wickedness. He calls the beasts of the field to come against them. He says they are all just dogs who can't bark, but lie around and sleep and dream. They lack understanding, turn to their own understanding, and seek their own gain. They fill themselves with wine and beer and think tomorrow will be like today or even better.

Chapter 57

Verses 1 -2. This is a continuation and a consequence of verses 9 – 12. The number of righteous people in the nation dwindled but no one seemed to recognize or understand it. They find their rest from the wicked world as they die and go to be with the Lord.

Verses 3 – 13. Now Isaiah exposes those who claim to be part of the covenant community but by their actions show that they do not obey the Mosaic Law and do not obey God's commands. They break every one of the Ten Commandments but think that because they are circumcised Jews and obey rituals that all the disobedience doesn't matter. But God says when they cry out for help they should look to their idols for the help but it will not come. But everyone who makes God their refuge will inherit his land and possess his mountain.

Verses 14 – 21. These verses tell what the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, will do for the person of contrite heart who makes God their refuge. He heals, guides, restores, comforts, and creates praise on their lips. But for the wicked, there is no peace - just restlessness like a tossing sea whose waves cast up mud and mire.

Chapter 58

Verses 1 – 5. Again God presents the danger of simply going through the motion of religious ritual without a real relationship with God. He specifically mentions their fasting which was supposed to show that they were humbling themselves before God. Yet on the day of their fasting they did what they pleased and exploited their workers and their fasting ended in quarreling and strife and fighting with fists. God asks how they can fast like that and expect their voice to be heard on high by God. God asks if he has chosen that a fast should only be a day for a man to humble himself, bowing his head like a reed and lying on sackcloth and ashes. This is false worship.

Verses 6 – 14. Now God describes what he considers true worship. He says the kind of true fasting he has chosen is to loose the chains of injustice and to take care of those who can't take care of themselves. That is exactly what he does for mankind. He says that when we do that our righteousness will go before us and his glory will be our rear guard and when we cry for help he will hear us, guide us, strengthen us, and meet our needs. He promises that those people who offer true worship will rebuild the ancient ruins and raise up age-old foundations and that they will be called "Repairer of Broken Walls" and "Restorer of Streets with Dwellings." God tells the Israel people that if they honor him by keeping the Sabbath and obeying his commands then they will find their joy in him and they will feast on the inheritance that God promised to Jacob.

Chapter 59

Verses 1 – 8. Isaiah notes that it isn't because the Lord is not powerful enough to save or that he doesn't hear what is happening. It is because the people's disobedience has separated them from God that he has hidden his face from them and refuses to hear from them. Their deeds and thoughts are evil so ruin and destruction mark their ways. That's why God has refused to listen to them.

Verses 9 – 15a. Now Isaiah speaks for the Israelite people to acknowledge their unrighteous and sinful condition. He says justice is far from us. Our offenses are ever with us and we acknowledge our iniquities. Truth is nowhere to be found.

Verses 15 b – 21. "The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intercede;" So what would the Lord do in such a situation? "So his own arm worked salvation for him and his own righteousness sustained him." This is what Jesus accomplished with his first advent and his death on the cross. Then Isaiah says "He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak. According to what they have done so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes; he will repay the islands their due. From the west, men will fear the name of the Lord, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the Lord drives along." This describes what Jesus will accomplish with his second advent at the end of the Tribulation. Then God declares that his covenant promises will be fulfilled. He says, "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever."

Chapter 60

Chapter 60 begins a section of three chapters that describe the position and work of Israel and the Lord's people among the nations of the world during the kingdom reign that Jesus will establish.

Verses 1 – 9. In Isaiah 43:10-12 God declared that Israel was to be his witness to the world that he is God, the only God, and the only Savior. But they had not been a good witness. After Jesus returns and establishes his kingdom on earth and fulfills God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, Israel will become the witness that they were meant to be. That's why God's says for them to arise and shine for the glory of the Lord

rises upon them. That's why the nations will come to their light and riches be brought to them to honor the Lord. It is all because God has endowed Israel and the land with splendor.

Verses 10 – 14. Not only will Israel and the land be endowed with splendor, but gentiles will rebuild the walls and their kings will serve Israel. The city gates will always stand open because there will be peace and so that people will be able to bring their tribute in triumphal procession. Those who had oppressed Israel will come and bow at the feet of Israel and call Jerusalem the City of the Lord.

Verses 15 – 22. God recognizes that Israel has been forsaken and hated. But he will make them the pride and joy of all generations and then they and everyone else will know and acknowledge that he is their Savior, the Mighty One of Jacob. He will make peace be their governor and righteousness their ruler so that violence and destruction will no longer be in the land. No longer will the sun light their day nor the moon light their night because the Lord will be in their midst. Then all their people will be righteous.

Chapter 61

Verses 1 – 3. This is a very familiar passage because after Jesus returned from his temptation in the wilderness and went to the synagogue he was given the Isaiah scroll to read. He opened it to this passage, read it from verse 1 through the first half of verse 2, sat down and said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." The people were furious when they heard him and sought to throw him over a cliff. Jesus' first advent was the beginning of his fulfillment of this prophecy. The finishing of the fulfillment will occur when he establishes his kingdom after his second advent. That's when the last half of the second verse and the third are fulfilled – "the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair." Who are the "they" who will be called oaks of righteousness? They would be the Lord's people.

Verses 4 – 11. The people living in the land during the Millennium will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places that have been devastated for generations. The aliens and foreigners that shepherd the flocks and work the lands are not Jewish people because the Jewish people will be acting as priests of the Lord for all the world. They will receive their food and housing from the wealth that is brought to honor the Lord just like the Levites received theirs from the tithes and offerings brought to the temple during the OT times. The Israelite people will receive a double portion of inheritance like the firstborn son did in OT times did because they are the first with whom he made the covenant. Everyone who sees the Israelite people will acknowledge that they are a people he has blessed. The chapter ends as Isaiah has the nation recognize its delight in the Lord.

Chapter 62

Verses 1 – 9. To the people of Isaiah's day all of this must have seemed impossible to believe, but God says for Zion's sake he will not keep silent or be quiet and he will cause it to happen so that the nations will see their righteousness and all kings will see their glory and they will be called by a new name and that he will crown them with splendor. No longer will the Israel land be called deserted and desolated but it will be called married (Beulah) and the delight of the Lord (Hephzibah). Like a young man marries a maiden so your sons will marry you (they would not leave it) and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride so God will rejoice over you. God says he has posted watchmen over the walls of Jerusalem that will never be silent day or night until he makes it the praise of the earth by fulfilling the promises that he has made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, etc. The Lord has sworn that a time will come when he will never again give their grain or wine to their enemies or foreigners.

Verses 10 – 12. Based on what he has told them, God says to prepare. Build up the highway. Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations. The Lord has made a proclamation to the ends of the earth: "Your

Savior comes! Your reward is with him. His recompense accompanies him. The people will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord. And the city will be called sought after and no longer deserted.

Chapter 63

Verses 1 – 6. Suddenly, Isaiah sees someone coming from the southeast, from the direction of Edom, a long time enemy of Israel and a distant relative (the brother of Jacob). This individual is robed in splendor but his garments are stained crimson, and he strides forward with greatness of strength. As he comes forward he says, “It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.” That identifies him as the Messiah. So, he is asked, why his garments are stained red and he replies because he, alone, has trampled the nations in the winepress of his anger and their blood has stained his garments. The year of redemption and the day of vengeance came, so by my own arm I worked salvation. I trampled the nations and poured their blood on the ground. This is what the Lord has said all along would happen to evildoers – those who refused to bow their knee and acknowledge that he is God and rightfully in control of all of the universe. So this is the time that he causes that to happen – the end of the Tribulation.

Verses 7 – 10. Isaiah now begins a prayer. Thinking of what the Lord is promising as a future, don’t forget what the Lord has already done in the past. There were many things that God had done throughout the history of the people of Israel. They should not forget that just because God had promised them a glorious future and thus get depressed because they don’t have the promised future yet. In the midst of their distress he too was distressed. In his love and mercy, he redeemed them, lifted, and carried them. Yet they rebelled, so he became their enemy and fought against them.

Verses 11 – 14. Then the people recalled the days of old when they followed Moses and the Holy Spirit was among them gaining renown for the Lord. They were led by the Lord, given rest by him, and he made a great name for himself.

Verses 15 – 19. Look down upon us now. Where are your zeal and might? Why are your tenderness and compassion withheld? Why do you make us wander from your ways? Return for the sake of your servants. For a little while for people possess your holy place and your sanctuary but now your enemies rule over them and trample them down. This is the people’s complaint.

Chapter 64

Verses 1 – 7. Isaiah longs for the Lord to make an appearance like he had done in the past making the mountains tremble. He recognizes that God comes to the aid of those who gladly do right, those who remember and follow his ways, but when we continue to disobey, he is angry and how can we then be saved. And he confesses that no one calls on God’s name or strives to obey so God has hidden his face and made them waste away because of their disobedience.

Verses 8 – 12. But he appeals to God on the basis of the people’s righteousness but on the basis that he had brought them into existence and was responsible for them regardless of their condition. He was the potter. They were just the clay from which he made the nation to be a witness to the world. All of what he had previously made in Zion and Jerusalem, the glorious temple and all lay in ruins. Would he now keep silent and allow the people to be punished beyond measure? This ends his prayer.

Chapter 65

Verses 1 – 7. God now begins to respond to Isaiah’s prayer. He begins by saying he revealed himself to those who did not ask for him and was found by those who did not seek him – to a nation that did not call on his name he said, ‘Here I am.’ This indicated he would reach out to the Gentiles. While all day long he held out his hands to an obstinate people who wanted to walk in ways not good, according to their own imaginations,

continually provoking him, offering sacrifices and unclean meat, and saying “keep away for I am too sacred for you.” But God says it stands written before him and he will not keep silent but will pay back in full because they burned sacrifices on the mountains and defied him on the hills through the generations. Some scholars think this will be part of the cleansing of the Jewish people that will take place during the Tribulation.

Verses 8 – 16. There will be a remnant of all the tribes remaining after the cleansing is complete and they will possess the land. But those who forsake the Lord and forget his holy mountain to follow the gods of fortune and destiny (occult gods) will be slaughtered because they chose evil and did what displeased God. Then God gives a comparison between his servants and everyone else. His servants will eat, drink, rejoice, and sing out of the joy of their hearts. Others will go hungry, thirst, be put to shame, cry out from anguish of heart and wail in brokenness of spirit. The Jews will no longer be known as a rebellious people because everyone who invokes a blessing will do so by the God of truth and swear by the God of truth and past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from God’s eyes.

Verses 17 – 25. Then he says he will create a new heavens and new earth and the former things will not be remembered. He will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. Never again will there be an infant that live but a few days or an old man who does not live out his years. He who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth and he who does not reach a hundred will be considered accursed. This is not the new heavens and new earth of Revelation 21 because in Revelation 20:14 death has been thrown into the lake of fire and in Revelation 21:4 we are told that there is no more death for the old order has passed away. And in this new heavens and new earth that is described in Isaiah there is aging and death. So this is a description of the conditions in the Millennium. There will be prosperity, longevity, many descendants, instant communication with God, peace and safety.

Chapter 66

Verses 1 – 6. The Jews and many Christians have been overly concerned with a building in which to worship the Lord, and here God asks us to consider the house we will build for him. He reminds us that heaven is his throne and earth is his footstool and his hand made all these things, so where will his resting place be? Then he says, “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.” He goes on to point out that anyone who is assertive, choosing their own way and harsh treatment over others, is no better than one who offers pigs blood on the altar. He has chosen what displeases the Lord. Anyone who trusts in ritual to satisfy a relationship with God is repulsive to him. He wants a relationship not a ritual. Those who trust in ritual often look down on those who tremble at his word and say let the Lord be glorified that we may see your joy. But the Lord warns people to listen to the noise from the temple that is the sound of the Lord repaying his enemies all that they deserve.

Verses 7 – 14. The Lord asks who has ever heard of a woman delivering a son before she goes into labor and pains come upon her. Can a nation or a country be born in a day? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children. The Lord is promising to give birth to the nation of Israel which means that he knows it was going to fall into non-existence for a period of time and need a rebirth. This is not the present nation of Israel but the rebirthed Israel in the Millennium. For this rebirthed Israel, the Lord says he will extend peace like a river and the wealth of the nations like a flooding stream, but his fury will be shown against his foes.

Verses 15 – 24. He says he will come with chariots like a whirlwind and bring down his anger with fury and his rebuke with flames of fire. With fire and with his sword he will execute judgment. Those who purify themselves according to the abominable practices of those following evil meet their end along with those practicing that evil. The Lord says that he is about to come and gather all nations and tongues and they will see his glory. He will set a sign among them and send some to the nations and distant lands to proclaim his glory among them. And they will bring their brothers (the Jews) from all the nations to his holy mountain (Zion) and some will be chosen to be to be priests and Levites. From one new moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before the Lord and will look upon the dead bodies of those who

rebelled against him. Their worm will not die. Their fire will not be quenched. And they will be loathed by all mankind. That will be a terrible reminder of the price of disobedience and not letting God be the ruler of the universe that he created.